

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

No. 1265

S. P. 407

In Senate, March 15, 1979

Referred to the Committee on Health and Institutional Services. Sent down for concurrence and ordered printed.

Presented by Senator Hichens of York.

MAY M. ROSS, Secretary of the Senate

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED
SEVENTY-NINE

AN ACT to Establish an Office of Deafness and Communications Disorders.

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine, as follows:

Sec. 1. 22 MRSA c. 713-A is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 713-A

OFFICE OF DEAFNESS AND COMMUNICATIONS DISORDERS

§ 3071. Office of Deafness and Communications Disorders

There shall be within the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation, the Office of Deafness and Communications Disorders.

§ 3072. Definitions

As used in this chapter, unless the context indicates otherwise, the following terms shall have the following meanings:

1. **Advisory board.** "Advisory board" means the advisory board for the Office of Deafness and Communications Disorders.

2. **Commissioner.** "Commissioner" means the Commissioner of Human Services.

3. Communications disorders. “Communications disorders” means handicaps of receptive or expressive language, including, but not limited to, deafness, hearing impairment, laryngotomy, aphasia, stuttering, and articulation and voice disorders resulting from either physical or emotional causes. It shall not include normal difficulties related to language barriers.

4. Deaf or deafness. “Deaf or deafness” means a hearing handicap which impairs the ability of a person to avail himself of one more more community services.

5. Statewide registry. “Statewide registry” means a current list maintained by the Office of Deafness and Communications Disorders of all persons in the State who are handicapped by deafness, a hearing impairment or a communications disorder.

§ 3073. Powers and duties

In order to coordinate and provide assistance to community agencies, both public and private, in developing effective programs and resources for the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders, the Office of Deafness and Communications Disorders shall have the power and duty to:

1. Provide advocacy. Provide advocacy for the rights of the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders in the areas of employment, education, legal aid, health care, social services, finance, housing and other personal assistance;

2. Statewide registry. Maintain and update a statewide registry of the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders, use of this list being restricted to section 3062;

3. Information. Provide information to the public on questions and issues related to deafness, hearing impairment and communications disorders;

4. Cooperation and coordination. Develop a framework for greater cooperation and coordination among agencies and organizations serving or having the potential to serve the deaf, hearing impaired or those with communications disorders;

5. Needs. Advise the commissioner on the needs of the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders by preparing an annual report which reviews the status of all state services provided to individuals with these handicaps;

6. Community service centers. Establish 3 community service centers statewide for the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders;

7. Promote accessibility. Promote accessibility to all governmental services for Maine residents who are deaf, hearing impaired or have communications disorders;

8. **Maintain cooperation.** Maintain cooperation among the organizations which provide interpreting services and interpreting training in order to ensure the highest possible quality of interpreting services; and

9. **Recommendations.** Make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature with respect to modifications in existing services, or establishment of additional services for the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders.

§ 3074. **Advisory board**

There shall be within the Department of Human Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation, an advisory board which shall consist of 15 members who are citizens of the State and who shall be appointed by the commissioner. One member shall be appointed from each of the following areas and agencies: Social services; health services; Bureau of Rehabilitation; mental health; education; manpower affairs; Maine Association of the Deaf, Inc.; Maine Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf; Maine Speech and Hearing Association and Governor Baxter State School for the Deaf. Five members of the board shall be citizens of the State, who are deaf, hearing impaired or those with communications disorders.

Members shall be appointed for a term of 3 years, except that of the members first appointed, 5 shall be appointed for a term of one year, 5 shall be appointed for a term of 2 years and 5 shall be appointed for a term of 3 years; and except that any member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the expiration of the term for which his predecessor was appointed shall be appointed for the remainder of that term.

Members shall be eligible for reappointment for not more than 2 consecutive full terms of 3 years each and may serve after the expiration of their terms until their successors have been appointed, qualified and taken office. The commissioner may terminate the appointment of any member of the board for good and just cause and the reason for the termination of each appointment shall be communicated to each member so terminated. Members shall receive no compensation in the form of salary, but shall be reimbursed for their actual and necessary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties for the board.

The commissioner shall designate the chairman from among the members appointed to the board. The chairman shall serve in that capacity for not more than a 3-year term. The board shall meet at the call of the chairman, but not less often than 4 times during a calendar year. The chairman may delegate as necessary, duties to members to carry out the functions of the board.

§ 3075. **Board; powers and duties**

The board is authorized to employ, subject to the Personnel Law and with the approval of the Director of the Bureau of Rehabilitation, an executive director who shall be responsible for implementing the policies of the board. The executive

director may employ, subject to the Personnel Law, such staff as is necessary to carry out the objectives and policies of the board. The executive director and staff shall be qualified in the areas of deafness and rehabilitation and have the ability to communicate on a meaningful basis with the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders.

The chairman of the board shall prepare an annual report which shall be a public document to the extent that it complies with section 3062. The report shall include, but not be limited to:

1. **Review.** A review of the status of services to the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders;
2. **Recommendations.** Recommendations for priorities for the development and coordination of services to the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders;
3. **Evaluation.** An evaluation of the progress made as the result of any recommendations made in the preceding report of the chairman;
4. **Statement of goals.** A statement of goals for activities of the office during the next following fiscal year; and
5. **Implementation of functions.** The steps to be taken by the office to implement the functions listed in section 3073.

Sec. 2. Appropriation. The following funds shall be appropriated from the General Fund to carry out the purposes of this Act.

1979-80

HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF

Bureau of Rehabilitation

Positions	(4)
Personal Services	\$45,700
All Other	15,250
	\$60,950
Total	\$60,950

The commissioner is authorized to seek and receive funds or personal property from the Federal Government and private sources in order to carry out the purposes of this Act.

STATEMENT OF FACT

The purpose of this bill is to coordinate and provide assistance to community agencies and other resources in developing effective programs for the deaf, hearing impaired and those with communications disorders.