

CHAPTER 256C

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BLIND PERSONS

256C.01 POSITION OF THE STATE WITH REGARD TO THE BLIND AND HANDICAPPED.

The state of Minnesota shall encourage and enable the blind, the visually handicapped, and the otherwise physically disabled to participate fully in the social and economic life of the state and to engage in remunerative employment. The blind, the visually handicapped, and the otherwise physically disabled shall be employed by the state, its political subdivisions, the public schools, and in all other employment supported in whole or in part by public funds on the same terms and conditions as the able-bodied, unless it is shown that the particular disability prevents the performance of the work involved.

History: 1969 c 900 s 1; 1971 c 70 s 3.

256C.02 PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS.

The blind, the visually handicapped, and the otherwise physically disabled have the same right as the able-bodied to the full and free use of the streets, highways, sidewalks, walkways, public buildings, public facilities, and other public places; and are entitled to full and equal accommodations, advantages, facilities, and privileges of all common carriers, airplanes, motor vehicles, railroad trains, motor buses, boats, or any other public conveyances or modes of transportation, hotels, lodging places, places of public accommodation, amusement, or resort, and other places to which the general public is invited, subject only to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all persons.

Every totally or partially blind, physically handicapped, or deaf person shall have the right to be accompanied by a service dog in any of the places listed in section 363.03, subdivision 10. The person shall be liable for any damage done to the premises or facilities by such dog. The service dog must be capable of being properly identified as from a recognized school for seeing eye, hearing ear, service, or guide dogs.

History: 1969 c 900 s 2; 1977 c 247 s 1; 1984 c 655 art 1 s 42; 1986 c 444; 1987 c 141 s 1

256C.025 HOUSING ACCOMMODATIONS.

Subdivision 1. Blind persons, visually handicapped persons, and other physically disabled persons shall be entitled to full and equal access, as other members of the general public, to all housing accommodations offered for rent, lease, or compensation, subject to the conditions and limitations established by law and applicable alike to all persons.

Subd. 2. "Housing accommodations" means any real property, or portion thereof, which is used or occupied or is intended, arranged, or designed to be used or occupied, as the home, residence or sleeping place of one or more human beings, but shall not

include any single family residence the occupants of which rent, lease, or furnish for compensation not more than one room therein.

Subd. 3. Nothing in this section shall require any person renting, leasing, or providing for compensation real property to modify the property in any way or provide a higher degree of care for a blind person, visually handicapped person, or other physically disabled person than for a person who is not physically disabled.

Subd. 4. Every totally or partially blind, physically handicapped, or deaf person who has a service dog, or who obtains a service dog, shall be entitled to full and equal access to all housing accommodations provided for in this section, and shall not be required to pay extra compensation for such service dog but shall be liable for any damage done to the premises by such service dog.

History: 1971 c 70 s 1; 1977 c 247 s 2; 1986 c 444; 1988 c 637 s 1

256C.03 BLIND OR DEAF PEDESTRIANS; CIVIL LIABILITY.

The driver of a vehicle approaching a totally or partially blind pedestrian who is carrying a cane predominantly white or metallic in color, with or without a red tip, or using a service dog, or totally or partially deaf person with a service dog identified with a burnt orange collar or leash, shall bring such vehicle to a stop and give the right-of-way at any intersection of any street, avenue, alley, or other public highway to such blind or deaf pedestrian.

History: 1969 c 900 s 3; 1971 c 70 s 4; 1977 c 247 s 3; 1988 c 637 s 2

256C.04 PROCLAMATION BY GOVERNOR.

Each year, the governor may take suitable public notice of October 15 as white cane safety day and may issue a proclamation in which the governor:

- (1) comments upon the significance of the white cane,
- (2) calls upon the citizens of the state to observe the provisions of the white cane law and to take precautions necessary to the safety of the disabled,
- (3) reminds the citizens of the state of the policies with respect to the disabled herein declared and urges the citizens to cooperate in giving effect to them, and
- (4) emphasizes the need of the citizens to be aware of the presence of disabled persons in the community and to keep safe and functional for the disabled the streets, highways, sidewalks, walkways, public buildings, public facilities, other public places, places of public accommodation, amusement and resort, and other places to which the public is invited, and to offer assistance to disabled persons upon appropriate occasions.

History: 1969 c 900 s 4; 1986 c 444

256C.05 CRIMINAL PENALTY.

Any person, or the agent of any person, firm, or corporation who denies or interferes with admittance to or enjoyment of the public facilities enumerated in section 256C.02 or housing accommodations contrary to section 256C.025, or otherwise interferes with the rights of a totally or partially blind or otherwise disabled person under section 256C.02 shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

History: 1969 c 900 s 5; 1971 c 70 s 5

256C.06 CITATION.

Sections 256C.01 to 256C.06 shall be known and may be cited the "Minnesota white cane law."

History: 1969 c 900 s 6; 1971 c 70 s 6

HEARING IMPAIRED PERSONS**256C.21 HEARING IMPAIRED SERVICES ACT; CITATION.**

Sections 256C.21 to 256C.27 may be cited as the "hearing impaired services act."

History: 1980 c 574 s 1

256C.22 PURPOSE.

It is the purpose of the "hearing impaired services act" to establish a statewide network of coordinated services to alleviate the developmental, social, educational and occupational deprivation of hearing impaired persons by establishing regional service centers and strengthening services delivered by state, local and regional agencies.

History: 1980 c 574 s 2

256C.23 DEFINITIONS.

Subdivision 1. For the purposes of sections 256C.21 to 256C.27 the terms defined in this section shall have the meanings given them, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

Subd. 2. "Hearing impaired person" means a person who has a loss of hearing in both ears and has difficulty hearing and understanding speech in the ear with better hearing.

Subd. 3. "Regional service center" means a facility designed to provide an entry point for hearing impaired persons of that region in need of human services.

Subd. 4. "Human services" means correctional, educational, occupational, health, mental health, financial and social services.

Subd. 5. "Human services agency" means a state, regional or local agency that provides human services.

History: 1980 c 574 s 3

256C.24 REGIONAL SERVICE CENTERS.

Subdivision 1. **Location.** The commissioner of human services shall establish up to eight regional service centers for hearing impaired persons. The centers shall be distributed regionally to provide access for hearing impaired persons in all parts of the state. The center shall maintain a current registry of those persons having or suspected of having a hearing impairment who live in that region. A special task of the registry is to assure that referrals and follow-up services are completed with respect to persons in the register.

Subd. 2. **Responsibilities.** The regional service center shall:

(a) serve as the central entry point for hearing impaired persons in need of human services and make referrals to the services needed;

(b) employ staff trained to work with hearing impaired persons;

(c) provide to all hearing impaired persons access to interpreter services which are necessary to help them obtain human services;

(d) assist the central interpreter referral agency with local and regional interpreter referrals;

(e) implement a plan to provide loan equipment and resource materials to hearing impaired persons; and

(f) cooperate with responsible departments and administrative authorities to provide access for hearing impaired persons to services provided by state, county, and regional agencies.

Subd. 3. **Advisory committee.** The commissioner of human services shall appoint an advisory committee of eight persons for each regional service center. Members shall include persons who are hearing impaired, parents of hearing impaired children, and representatives of county and regional human services, including representatives of

private service providers. At least 50 percent of the members must be hearing impaired. The commissioner of human services shall designate one member as chair. The commissioner of human services shall assign staff to serve as ex officio members of the committee. The compensation, removal of members, and filling of vacancies on the committee shall be as provided in section 15.0575.

History: 1980 c 574 s 4; 1984 c 654 art 5 s 58; 1Sp1985 c 14 art 9 s 24; 1986 c 444; 1987 c 302 s 1,2

256C.25 INTERPRETER SERVICES.

Subdivision 1. Establishment. The commissioner of human services shall supervise the development and implementation of a statewide interpreter referral service. The commissioner of human services shall contract with an appropriate agency to provide this centralized service.

Subd. 2. Duties. The central interpreter referral agency shall:

(a) Establish and maintain a statewide interpreter referral service, maintain statistics related to interpreter referral services, and maintain a statewide directory of qualified interpreters;

(b) Cooperate with the regional service centers in providing interpreter referral service; and

(c) Cooperate with the regional service centers on projects to train interpreters and advocate for and evaluate interpreter services.

History: 1980 c 574 s 5; 1Sp1985 c 14 art 9 s 25; 1987 c 302 s 3,4

256C.26 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES.

The commissioner of jobs and training shall develop a plan to deal with the underemployment of hearing impaired persons. The plan shall provide for training regarding the nature of hearing handicaps for department staff who consult with prospective employers or who provide job placement services.

History: 1980 c 574 s 6; 1Sp1985 c 14 art 9 s 26; 1987 c 403 art 2 s 102

256C.27 DUTIES OF THE COMMISSIONER OF HUMAN SERVICES.

In order to ensure that hearing impaired persons have full access to all local, county and regional human service programs, the commissioner of human services shall:

(a) Provide training to the social service or income maintenance staff employed by counties or by organizations with whom counties contract for services to ensure that communication barriers which prevent hearing impaired persons from using services are removed;

(b) Assess the ongoing need and supply of services for hearing impaired persons in all parts of the state and cooperate with public and private service providers to develop these services;

(c) Provide training to state and regional human service agencies regarding program access for hearing impaired persons;

(d) Assist the regional service centers in the development of technical assistance and outreach programs; and

(e) Develop, where possible, innovative approaches to providing services to hearing impaired persons. The commissioner of health shall establish standards for screening for hearing impairments with special emphasis on screening of persons from birth through school age and persons over age 65.

History: 1980 c 574 s 7; 1984 c 654 art 5 s 58

256C.28 COUNCIL FOR THE HEARING IMPAIRED.

Subdivision 1. Membership. The Minnesota council for the hearing impaired consists of seven members appointed at large and one member from each advisory

committee established under section 256C.24, subdivision 3. At least 50 percent of the members must be hearing impaired. Members shall include persons who are hearing impaired, parents of hearing impaired children, and representatives of county and regional human services, including representatives of private service providers. Council members are appointed by the commissioner of human services for a two-year term and shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. The commissioner of human services shall appoint one member as chair.

Subd. 2. Removal; vacancies; expiration. The compensation, removal of members, and filling of vacancies on the council are as provided in section 15.0575. The council expires as provided in section 15.059, subdivision 5.

Subd. 3. Duties. The council shall:

(1) advise the commissioner and governor on the development of policies, programs, and services affecting the hearing impaired, and on the use of appropriate federal and state money;

(2) create a public awareness of the special needs and potential of hearing impaired persons; and

(3) provide the commissioner and governor with a review of ongoing services, programs, and proposed legislation affecting the hearing impaired.

History: *1Sp1985 c 14 art 9 s 27; 1987 c 302 s 5,6; 1988 c 629 s 56*