

**256C.24 REGIONAL SERVICE CENTERS.**

Subdivision 1. **Location.** The Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services Division shall establish up to eight regional service centers for deaf and hard-of-hearing persons. The centers shall be distributed regionally to provide access for deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons in all parts of the state.

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

(a) serve as a central entry point for deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons in need of services and make referrals to the services needed;

(b) employ staff trained to work with deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons;

(c) provide to all deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons access to interpreter services which are necessary to help them obtain services;

(d) implement a plan to provide loaned equipment and resource materials to deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons;

(e) cooperate with responsible departments and administrative authorities to provide access for deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons to services provided by state, county, and regional agencies;

(f) collaborate with the Resource Center for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Persons, other divisions of the Department of Education, and local school districts to develop and deliver programs and services for families with deaf, deafblind, or hard-of-hearing children and to support school personnel serving these children;

(g) when possible, 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 deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons from using services are removed;

(h) when possible, provide training to state and regional human service agencies regarding program access for deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons; and

(i) assess the ongoing need and supply of services for deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing persons in all parts of the state and cooperate with public and private service providers to develop these services.

Subd. 3. **Advisory committee.** The director of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services Division shall appoint an advisory committee of up to nine persons for each regional service area. Members shall include persons who are deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing, persons who are communication-impaired, parents of children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, parents of communication-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 deaf or deafblind or hard-of-hearing or communication-impaired. Committee members shall serve for a three-year term and shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. Each advisory committee shall elect a chair. The director of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services Division shall assign staff to serve as nonvoting members of the committee. Members shall not receive a per diem. Otherwise, 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; 1991 c 292 art 3 s 8; 1993 c 306 s 12; 1995 c 190 s 14; 1996 c 392 s 3; 2003 c 130 s 12*