

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

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

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

(1) establish connections and collaborations and explore colocating with other public and private entities providing services to persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing in the region;

(2) for those in need of services, assist in coordinating services between service providers and persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing, and the persons' families, and make referrals to the services needed;

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

(4) if adequate services are not available from another public or private service provider in the region, provide individual assistance to persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing, and the persons' families. Individual culturally affirmative assistance may be provided using technology only in areas of the state where a person has access to sufficient quality telecommunications or broadband services to allow effective communication. When a person who is deaf, a person who is deafblind, or a person who is hard-of-hearing does not have access to sufficient telecommunications or broadband service, individual assistance shall be available in person;

(5) identify regional training needs, work with deaf and hard-of-hearing services training staff, and collaborate with others to deliver training for persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing, and the persons' families, and other service providers about subjects including the persons' rights under the law, American Sign Language, and the impact of hearing loss and options for accommodating it;

(6) have a mobile or permanent lab where persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing can try a selection of modern assistive technology and equipment to determine what would best meet the persons' needs;

(7) 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 children who are deaf, children who are deafblind, or children who are hard-of-hearing and to support school personnel serving these children;

(8) 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 persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing from using services are removed;

(9) provide training to human service agencies in the region regarding program access for persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing;

(10) assess the ongoing need and supply of services for persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing in all parts of the state, annually consult with the division's advisory committees to identify regional needs and solicit feedback on addressing service gaps, and cooperate with public and private service providers to develop these services;

(11) provide culturally affirmative mental health services to persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing who:

- (i) use a visual language such as American Sign Language or a tactile form of a language; or
- (ii) otherwise need culturally affirmative therapeutic services; and

(12) establish partnerships with state and regional entities statewide that have the technological capacity to provide Minnesotans with virtual access to the division's services and division-sponsored training via technology.

Subd. 3. **Advisory committee.** The director of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Services Division shall appoint eight advisory committees of up to nine persons per advisory committee. Each committee shall represent a specific region of the state. The director shall determine the boundaries of each advisory committee region. The committees shall advise the director on the needs of persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing and service gaps in the region of the state the committee represents. Members shall include persons who are deaf, persons who are deafblind, and persons who are hard-of-hearing, persons who have communication disabilities, parents of children who are deaf and parents of children who are hard-of-hearing, parents of children who have communication disabilities, 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 have a communication disability. Committee members shall serve for a three-year term, and may be appointed to 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; 2013 c 62 s 20; 1Sp2017 c 6 art 1 s 38-40