268A.16 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PERSONS WHO ARE DEAF, DEAFBLIND, OR HARD-OF-HEARING.

Subdivision 1. **Deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing grants.** (a) The commissioner shall develop and implement a specialized statewide grant program to provide long-term supported employment services for persons who are deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing. Programs and services eligible for grants under this section must:

(1) assist persons who are deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing in retaining and advancing in employment;

(2) provide services with staff who must possess fluency in all forms of manual communication, including American Sign Language; knowledge of hearing loss and psychosocial implications; sensitivity to cultural issues; familiarity with community services and communication strategies for people who are hard-of-hearing and do not sign; and awareness of adaptive technology options;

(3) provide specialized employment support services for individuals who have a combined hearing and vision loss that address the individual's unique ongoing visual and auditory communication needs; and

(4) involve clients in the planning, development, oversight, and delivery of long-term ongoing support services.

(b) Priority for funding shall be given to organizations with experience in developing innovative employment support services for persons who are deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing. Each applicant for funds under this section shall submit an evaluation protocol as part of the grant application.

Subd. 2. **Employment services for transition-aged youth who are deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing.** (a) The commissioner shall develop statewide or regional grant programs to provide school-based communication, access, and employment services for youth who are deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing. Services must include staff who have the skills addressed in subdivision 1, clauses (2) and (3), and expertise in serving transition-aged youth.

(b) Priority for funding shall be given to organizations with experience in providing innovative employment support services and readiness for postsecondary training for transition-aged youths who are deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing. Each applicant for funds under this section shall submit an evaluation protocol as part of the grant application.

Subd. 3. **Administration.** Up to five percent of the biennial appropriation for the purpose of this section is available to the commissioner for administration of the program.

History: *2014 c 312 art 3 s 14*