

**The North Dakota School for the Deaf
Future Services Plan Transition Team
2009-2010**

“.... the excellence and successes of the past blended with the opportunities of the future.”

The North Dakota School for the Deaf Future Services Plan Transition Team, a group of 13 individuals representing a broad-based constituency, selected and appointed by the ND Superintendent of Public Instruction was charged with the task of identifying a plan to meet the changing needs of deaf and hard of hearing students and citizens of the state as mandated in HB 1013, Section 19.

During its 10-meeting/11-month process the Transition Team addressed and responded specifically to each of the six (6) tasks identified in HB 1013. Their recommendations are included in the full summary and may be reviewed for their specific content. The following is a synopsis of the Team’s conclusions and recommendations.

History and Tradition:

The Transition Team supports:

- The continued availability of all existing services in an integrated service-delivery system that is based on individual needs and choices.
- The preservation of and access to the materials, artifacts and memorabilia that reinforce the link/bridge from the past, to the present, and on to the future.

Continuum of Service - NDS/D/State Center of Excellence:

Based on an inventory of needs and existing services, identified gaps in services, and the potential service and program options needed to close the gaps, the NDS/D Future Services Plan Transition Team recommends:

- That the “North Dakota School for the Deaf/State Center of Excellence” be established and charged with the responsibility for the development, coordination and maintenance of a comprehensive continuum of non-duplicative services (on and off-site) for all citizens who are deaf or hard of hearing (Note: The scope of services assigned to the Department of Public Instruction has been expanded to include all ND citizens with hearing loss - infants through senior citizens).
- The establishment of the NDS/D/State Center of Excellence Advisory Council reflecting a broad, comprehensive membership including stakeholders/consumers, alumni, administrators, legislators, services partners and Future Services Plan Transition Team representatives. This group should have clearly defined responsibilities and an active role in the development and ongoing operations of the NDS/D/State Center of Excellence.
- The development of a strategic plan and an ongoing outcomes-based process to assess and evaluate needs, progress and effectiveness.
- That the NDS/D/State Center of Excellence serve as the responsible entity for research, data gathering and information (and referral) regarding issues related to deafness and hearing loss.
- That the NDS/D/State Center of Excellence work in partnership and collaboration with stakeholders and service providers to identify and meet existing and changing needs and develop and provide appropriate, responsive services and programming.

Empowerment/Advocacy/Information/Referral:

The Transition Team recognized and supports the development of philosophies, values and services that promote and support the individual (and family) and recommends that individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing (and their families) be provided with the information necessary to make decisions or choices, and that they be assisted and supported in the development and exercise of the skills needed to advocate for themselves. Similarly, deaf and hard of hearing individuals should share in the processes, decisions and responsibilities of their own service plans and the planning for future services.

Technologies:

The unique demographics and geography of North Dakota assert some challenging demands on the provision of and accessibility to services. The Transition Team recognized that advances in technology, care, treatment, and educational approaches are coming on scene with increasing speed and recommends that a significant level of effort and investment be made in identifying, implementing and sustaining technologies that support these advances and opportunities and the efficiencies that they represent.

Efficiencies and Good Stewardship:

The Transition Team values the needs of the “individual” and respects the costs of meeting those needs and agreed that these components are not mutually exclusive, but carry with them the need for an honest commitment to make the difficult decisions and budgetary choices for the right reasons and, with both long and short-term goals in mind. The Transition Team recommends that a combination of these approaches be adopted and that changes in the funding structure be thoughtfully pursued in a phased-in approach with the needs of the individual being the determining factor.

Facilities and Revenues:

The Transition Team recommends that a thoughtful, coordinated approach be utilized in planning for use of the campus and its facilities, as well as, the development of revenue generating activities. The respective planning efforts should be joined and coordinated with the Future Services Planning efforts under the purview of the NDSU/State Center of Excellence Advisory Council.

Certification and Licensing of Interpreters:

The Transition Team acknowledged the absence of a uniform, consistent process for training, certifying and monitoring sign language interpreters in numbers that will meet the existing and growing needs and recommends that efforts be initiated to address this widening service gap.

Universal Infant Screening:

The Transition Team notes the fact that North Dakota is one of only three (3) states that does not provide a universal infant screening program and recommends that such a program (with the necessary staff training and equipment) be established and maintained in all of the state’s birthing hospitals.

Sign Language Recognition:

The Transition Team recommends the recognition of American Sign Language (ASL) as a credited option for foreign language requirements in all North Dakota high schools and that a similar designation be considered within the state’s higher education system.

The Transition Team recognized and accepted the fact that it was unrealistic to expect its product could include the answers to all of the questions, responses to all of the needs, and a plan/blueprint that would address all of the issues. The Transition Team chose to address this limit and its responsibilities by embracing the concept of a comprehensive continuum of services and the establishment of an organizational structure within which such a continuum could develop, expand and respond to the current needs and those yet to be identified. Subsequently, it was also apparent to the Transition Team members that the actions, activities and initiatives necessary to establish and maintain the continuum could only be achieved by a steady and ongoing, long-term process endowed with the necessary resources, authority, oversight and flexibility. This is the primary focus and ultimately the “pillar” recommendation of the Transition Team.