

# Communication Plan

## for Alabama Students who are Deaf/deaf/Hard of Hearing (“Hearing Impaired”) or Deaf-Blind

_____	_____	_____	_____
Legal Name of Student	DOB	School/School District	Date

### INTRODUCTION:

Educators and parents have a shared goal best achieved through strong home/school partnerships. Both educators and parents want students to receive a quality education. Students who are Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind have unique instructional and access needs that must be addressed for them to achieve educational success. The challenge is multifaceted. First, students who have hearing differences are a low incidence population. It is not unusual for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing to be the only student in his or her school or school district who has a hearing difference. Second, this group of students is a diverse population with diverse needs. The specialized instruction, auxiliary aids, and services appropriate for one Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind student may be wholly inappropriate for another even when the students may seem similar. Lastly, the specialized knowledge, expertise, and experience to appropriately meet the needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing is not widespread. Fortunately, guidelines exist which support educators' and parents' efforts to deliver meaningful instruction to students who have hearing differences.

One source of guidance is included within the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) legislation and its successors. In developing each child's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), the IEP Team is directed to consider: (i) The strengths of the child; (ii) The concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child; (iii) The results of the initial or most recent evaluation of the child; and (iv) The academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child. [34 CFR § 300.324\(a\)\(1\)](#) and [AAC 290-8-9.05\(6\)](#). As appropriate, the results of any general State or district wide assessments must also be considered. [AAC 290-8-9.05\(6\)](#)

The IEP team also must consider special factors unique to students who are Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. For a child/student who is Deaf/deaf/hard of hearing (“hearing impaired”) or deaf-blind, the special factors the IEP Team must consider include the child's/student's (1) language and communication needs, (2) opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child's/student's language and communication mode, (3) academic level, (4) full range of needs (e.g. social, emotional, cultural, etc.), (5) opportunities for direct instruction in the child's/student's language and communication mode and (6) whether the child/student needs assistive technology devices and services. [34 CFR § 300.324\(a\)\(2\)\(ii, iv, v\)](#) and [AAC 290-8-9.05\(6\)\(l\)\(m\)](#)

The primary purpose of this Communication Plan is to provide educators and parents with a structured format to support review of both the general and special factors that must be considered when planning with and on behalf of students who have hearing differences. The Communication Plan should be the starting point for the IEP, and the results of the discussion it prompts should be used to identify the student's present educational levels as well as to complete other sections of the IEP.

By using this Communication Plan, educators and parents (as well as the student, when appropriate) outline the unique communication and language access needs of the child/student, build a foundation of mutual understanding beneficial to student success, and establish shared, written documentation that all special factors have been considered as they uniquely apply to the student named above. A Communication Plan should be completed for any child/student who is Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind even if a hearing difference is not identified as the child's/student's primary exceptionality.

### CHILD/STUDENT DETAILS:

Describe the child's/student's hearing levels and type of hearing difference:

Summarize the diagnostic timeline:

Is the child/student Deaf Plus?  Yes  No

If yes, what is/are the child's/student's exceptionality/exceptionalities?

### AFFIRMATION:

The child/student named above is Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. The IEP team has conscientiously discussed and considered each area listed below, and has not denied instructional opportunity based on the child's/student's hearing level(s) or the ability of the parent(s) to communicate. To the extent appropriate, inputs about this child's/student's communication and related needs, as suggested from adults who are Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing or deaf-blind and who utilize the same communication mode as the child/student, have been considered. This Communication Plan is considered an integral part of the child's/student's IEP. [34 CFR §300.324\(a\)\(2\)\(ii, iv, v\)](#) and [AAC 290-8-9.05\(6\)\(l\)\(m\)](#)

## 1. LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION:

**1a.** The child's/student's **primary mode of communication\*** is identified by the child's parent(s)/guardian(s) and/or self-identified by the student as: \_\_\_\_\_

[34 CFR §303.25\(b\)](#) and [AAC 290-8-9.00\(13\)\(b\)](#)

*\*If the family needs support to make an informed decision regarding their child's/student's mode of communication, 'Actions needed' should include Parent Counseling and Training that incorporates directing the family to [www.ALhearinglossoptions.org](http://www.ALhearinglossoptions.org) (See Item # 1f).*

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1b. The child’s/student’s **primary language** is one or more of the following. (Check all that apply.)

Receptive

- Listening to Spoken American English
- American Sign Language
- Other Native Language (Spanish, German, etc.);  
Specify the language: \_\_\_\_\_  
Is the language spoken or signed? \_\_\_\_\_
- Combination of two or more languages
- No formal language emerging or established

Expressive

- Spoken American English
- American Sign Language
- Other Native Language (Spanish, German, etc.);  
Specify the language: \_\_\_\_\_  
Is the language spoken or signed? \_\_\_\_\_
- Combination of two or more languages
- No formal language emerging or established

Describe, including explanation of multiple languages, if necessary:

1c. The child’s/student’s **primary mode of communication** is implemented using one or more of the following:  
(Check all that apply.)

Receptive

- American Sign Language
- Listening – Following Auditory/Oral Method(s)
- Listening – Following Auditory-Verbal Principles
- Fingerspelling
- Speech reading
- Written English
- Tactile Sign Language
- Signing Exact English
- Signed English
- Cued Speech/Cued English
- Conceptual signs (Pidgin Signed English or Conceptually Accurate Signed English)
- Touch Cues
- Picture symbols/pictures/photographs
- Gestures
- No emerging formal language
- Combination of two or more languages
- Other

Expressive

- American Sign Language
- Speaking/Spoken Language
- Fingerspelling
- Written English
- Tactile Sign Language
- Signing Exact English
- Signed English
- Cued Speech/Cued English
- Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) Device
- Conceptual signs (Pidgin Signed English or Conceptually Accurate Signed English)
- Touch Cues
- Picture symbols/pictures/photographs
- Gestures
- No emerging formal language
- Combination of two or more languages
- Other

Describe, including explanation for multiple modes of communication, if necessary:

1d. The family reports the following strengths and challenges when communicating with their child/student:

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**1e.** Based on data from annual multidisciplinary evaluations and assessments, describe the child’s/student’s language and communication skills. Please include all data relevant to the child’s/student’s mode(s) of communication (e.g., receptive and expressive language abilities, including vocabulary/semantics, syntax, morphology, and pragmatics; auditory skill development; speech recognition in quiet and in noise; benefit from speech reading; sign language skill development, written language abilities; articulation; etc. - as appropriate). [34 CFR §300.304\(b\)](#) and [AAC 290-8-9-.02 \(d, l\) Conduct of Evaluation, variety of tools and strategies, not use single measure or assessment](#)

**1f.** Are any supports needed to increase parent(s) understanding of the child’s/student’s language and communication needs, the proficiency of parent(s) and family members in communicating with the child/student in the child’s/student’s communication mode (**defined at 1a**), and/or the parent(s) ability to make an informed decision regarding their child’s/student’s mode of communication? [34 CFR §300.34\(c\)\(8\)\(i, iii\)](#) and [AAC 290-8-9.07\(5\) Parent Counseling and Training](#)

Considerations:

### **Action(s) Needed Regarding Language and Communication Factors**

List:

## **2. OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIRECT COMMUNICATION WITH PEERS AND PROFESSIONAL PERSONNEL IN THE CHILD’S/STUDENT’S LANGUAGE AND MODE OF COMMUNICATION**

**2a.** Does the child/student use the same language and mode of communication at home, at school, and in the community?  Yes  No

Describe:

**2b.** Describe the opportunities for, and limitations to direct, two-way communication between the child/student and adults in the school environment outside of the instructional setting.

**2c.** Describe the opportunities for, and limitations to direct, two-way communication between the child/student and peers in the school environment. Consider both peers who use the same mode of communication and language as the child/student and peers who do not.

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**2d.** Describe the child’s/student’s need for (1) adult role models who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind and use the same communication mode(s) as the child/student and (2) peer group(s) in sufficient numbers of children/students who are deaf or hard of hearing and use the same communication mode and/or language as the child/student. Document who on the team will be responsible for arranging for adult role model connections and opportunities to interact with peers who also have hearing differences. [34 CFR §300.324\(a\)\(2\)\(iv\)](#) and [AAC 290-8-9.05\(6\)\(l\)](#)

*Opportunities considered:*

### **Action(s) Needed Regarding Opportunities for Direct Communication Factors**

*List:*

### **3. ACADEMIC LEVEL**

[“Unless the language levels of deaf [or hard of hearing] children are within 1 or 2 years of the levels of those in the regular class in which they are placed, they are virtually cut off from the entire verbal input process that is basic to educational experiences.” McConkey Robbins (2000)]

**3a.** Using data from annual multidisciplinary evaluations and assessments ([see also 1e](#)) in addition to general State or district wide assessments, consider the child’s/student’s academic level and the language and communication supports necessary for the child/student to access and make progress in the curriculum as well as to acquire grade-level academic skills and concepts of the general education curriculum in the general education setting.

Select One:

The student has the language and communication necessary to acquire grade-level academic skills and concepts in the general education setting. The following supports are needed to continue proficiency in grade-level academic skills and concepts of the general education curriculum and maintain annual progress. (Particular attention to reading and written language skills is recommended).

*Describe:*

The student requires supports to increase proficiency in communication language, literacy, and/or written language skills to achieve grade-level academic skills and concepts of the general education curriculum and account for accelerated progress needed to close skill gaps with peers who have typical hearing levels.

*Describe:*

The student requires supports to increase proficiency in communication language, literacy, and/or written language skills. The student is working toward the Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards. The goals and benchmarks established for the student should be appropriately ambitious and include opportunities to achieve challenging objectives.

*Describe:*

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**3b.** In addition to academic instructional needs, a child/student who is deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind possesses instructional needs that result from the child’s/student’s hearing difference. Although not included in the general education curriculum, IDEA directs that these developmental and functional instructional needs also be addressed. When knowledge and skills are developed in exceptionality specific domains, children/students are better able to access the general education curriculum and be full participants in the classroom and school. [34 CFR § 300.39\(b\)\(3\) and AAC 290-8-9.00\(21\)\(b\)\(3\) adapting content, methodology, or delivery of instruction, 34 CFR § 300.39\(b\)\(3\)\(i\) and AAC 290-8-9.00\(21\)\(b\)\(3\)\(i\) address unique needs, \[ADA Title II 28 CFR §. 35.160\(a\)\(1\)\].](#)

*Identify the child’s/student’s developmental and functional instructional needs that arise from the child’s/student’s hearing difference (e.g., self-advocacy, self-determination, self-awareness, support networks, community resources, career education, visual and auditory technologies, using interpreters or transliterators, management of auditory/listening fatigue, communication repair skills, etc.)*

**3c.** How will the student’s progress be comprehensively monitored to insure appropriate annual progress (a minimum of 1 month’s progress in one month’s time unless the student is working toward Alabama Alternate Achievement Standards)? What evaluations and assessments must be included ([see also 1e](#)), which team member will complete the evaluations or assessments and when? [34 CFR §300.304\(b\) and AAC 290-8-9-.02 \(d, l\) Conduct of Evaluation, variety of tools and strategies, not use single measure or assessment](#)

*Considerations:*

### **Action(s) Needed Regarding Academic Level Factors**

*List:*

## **4. FULL RANGE OF NEEDS**

**4a.** Nonacademic and extracurricular school services and activities in which the child/student participates have been identified and will be presented with effective and fully accessible communication. Consideration of the entire school day (e.g., recess, lunch, routine daily public address announcements, assemblies, field trips, clubs, athletic teams etc.), daily transition times (e.g., arrival, dismissal, change of classes, etc.), and what the student needs for communication that is as effective as what peers who have typical hearing levels receive in all activities will allow more complete and meaningful educational benefits for the student. [34 CFR § 300.324\(a\)\(2\)\(iv,v\) and AAC 290-8-9.05\(6\)\(l\)\(m\) Communication, Assistive Technology; 34 CFR § 300.107 and AAC 290-8-9.07\(3\)\(a\) Non-academic services, 34 CFR § 300.117 and AAC 290-8-9-.06\(2\) Non-academic settings, \[ADA Title II 28 CFR § 35.104 \(1\)\], \[ADA Title II 28 CFR § 35.160\(a\) \(1\)\].](#)

*Issues considered:*

**4b.** How will the student be effectively communicated with during emergency situations such as fire alarms, practice drills, tornado alerts, lockdowns, etc.?

*Issues considered:*

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## Action(s) Needed Regarding Full Range of Needs Factors

List:

### 5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR DIRECT INSTRUCTION

**5a.** An accurate and complete explanation of all the educational options along the continuum of education placements available for the child/student has been provided to the parent(s). Discussion should include both Local Education Agency (LEA) resources and programs as well as special schools for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind [e.g., Alabama Institute for Deaf and Blind (AIDB), Woolley Institute for Spoken-Language Education (WISE), etc.] [34 CFR § 300.115 and 290-8-9.06\(3\) Continuum of alternative placements](#); [34 CFR § 300.327](#), [34 CFR § 300.501\(c\)](#), and [AAC 290-8-9-.06\(1\)\(a\) Parents must be members of any group making placement decisions](#).

Placements explained:

Describe how the placement options impact the child's communication access and educational progress in light of the child's/student's language and communication mode:

**5b.** The teachers, interpreters, related service providers, and other special instructional personnel providing services and auxiliary aids outlined in this Communication Plan must have demonstrated proficiency in and ability to accommodate for the child's/student's primary communication mode and language, implement the child's/student's primary communication mode and language with fidelity, and communicate effectively. [34 CFR § 300.39\(b\)\(3\) and AAC 290-8-9.00\(21\)\(b\)\(3\) adapting content, methodology, or delivery of instruction](#), [34 CFR § 300.39\(b\)\(3\)\(i\) and AAC 290-8-9.00\(21\)\(b\)\(3\)\(i\) address unique needs](#), [ADA Title II [28 CFR §. 35.160\(a\)\(1\)](#)].

Write a statement of the strengths and challenges related to this consideration. Include information regarding certification(s), training, and experience specific to the child's/student's communication mode and language:

**5c.** Are supports needed to increase staff/personnel understanding of the child's/student's language and communication needs and/or the proficiency of staff/personnel in communicating with the child/student using the child's/student's mode of communication and primary language? [34 CFR § 300.320\(a\)\(4\) and AAC 290-8-9.05\(6\)\(c\) Supports for Personnel](#)

Write a statement of the strengths and challenges related to this consideration. Include information regarding opportunities and need for professional development training, in-service training, mentoring, etc. specific to the impact hearing differences have on educational performance and outcomes and/or the child's/student's communication mode and/or language:

## Action(s) Needed Regarding Opportunities for Direct Instruction Factors

(Note: Support for Personnel Planning is a related service separate and distinct from direct service minutes provided to the child/student):

List:

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### 6. ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY, AUXILIARY AIDS, AND SERVICES

In November 2014, the U.S. Department of Justice and the U.S. Department of Education issued the document “Frequently Asked Questions on Effective Communication for Students with Hearing, Vision, or Speech Disabilities in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools” (DOJ-DOE FAQ). This document reflects many of the questions parents, families, teachers, service providers, and administrators may have regarding the communication needs of students who are deaf or hard of hearing and clarifies the interplay between the regulatory requirements outlined by IDEA, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504), and the Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Schools must not wait for a child/student or the child’s/student’s family to request assistive technology, auxiliary aids, or services before acting. IDEA establishes that schools have a responsibility to determine whether a child/student needs assistive technology devices and services [34 CFR §300.324(a)(2)(ii, iv, v) and AAC 290-8-9.05(6)(l)(m)]. The DOJ-DOE FAQ document provides additional guidance, delineating the fact that, while IDEA establishes a basic floor for consideration of assistive technology, auxiliary aids, and services needs, meeting IDEA requirements may be necessary, yet insufficient to meet all obligations with respect to the communication access needs of individuals who are Deaf, deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind. Congress also found that “...research and experience has demonstrated that the education of children with disabilities can be made more effective by - ...supporting the development and use of technology, including assistive technology devices and assistive technology services, to maximize accessibility for children with disabilities [20 US Code §1400(c)(5)(H)]”.

This section of the Communication Plan draws from guidance provided by both IDEA and the DOJ-DOE FAQ. The team will consider not only communication-accessible academic instruction, but all school services and programs across the entire school day, daily transition times, and extracurricular activities to ensure effective communication access. 34 CFR § 300.324(a)(2)(vi, v) and AAC 290-8-9.05(6)(l)(m); 34 CFR § 300.34 and AAC290-8-9.00(18); 34 CFR § 300.105, 34 CFR § 300.5-6 and AAC 290-8-9.07(6); 34 CFR § 300.107 and AAC 290-8-9.07(3)(a); 34 CFR § 300.117 and AAC 290-8-9-.06(2); 34 CFR § 300.101 and AAC 290-8-9-.05(1)(b), ADA Title II 28 CFR 35.104(1), DOJ-DOE FAQ, p. 7

**6a.** Does the student require auxiliary aids and services such as qualified interpreters or transliterators, notetakers, transcription/captioning services, hearing assistive technology, etc., to achieve communication that is as effective as communication for individuals without disabilities?  Yes  No

*Describe the assessment(s) employed to determine whether the child/student needs assistive technology(ies), auxiliary aids, or services.:*

*Please explain how the IEP Team is ensuring the student is receiving communication that is as effective as what nondisabled peers are receiving and specify what auxiliary aids and services the student is receiving.*

*In the case of interpreters, transliterators, notetakers, and transcription/captioning services, explain how student readiness for mediated communication was established.*

*In the case of hearing assistive technology, include inputs from a qualified pediatric educational audiologist who specializes in the child’s technology and communication mode. (Educational Audiologists are singularly qualified to select, fit and verify hearing assistive technology.)*

*In all cases, explain the assessments used to verify effective communication.*

**6b.** “The school must honor the individual’s choice unless the school can prove that an alternative auxiliary aid or service provides communication that is as effective as that provided to students without disabilities and affords an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from the service, program, or activity.” DOJ-DOE FAQ, p. 9

Are the auxiliary aids and services provided by the school primarily based on the preference(s) of the child/student or his/her parents/guardians? DOJ-DOE FAQ, p. 19  Yes  No  Not Applicable

*If yes, please document informed decision making by describing the options considered and the reasons the child/student/family provided for their preference. This explanation can include the reasoning for declining a recommended auxiliary aid or service.*

*If no, explain. (i.e. the family requires Parent Counseling and Training to formulate a preference [See Item 1f] or the school can demonstrate that the auxiliary aid or service preferred by the child/student or his/her parents/guardians [please list below] would result in a fundamental*

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alteration in the nature of a service, program or activity [The school must provide a written statement of the reasons for reaching that conclusion and provide a satisfactory alternative auxiliary aid or service. [ADA Title II 28 CFR 35.164](#), [DOJ-DOE FAQ](#), pp. 12-13]]

If not applicable, explain (e.g., assessment(s) determined that auxiliary aids and services are not needed.)

**6c.** Are the auxiliary aids and services provided in a timely manner? [ADA Title II 28 CFR 35.160 \(b\)\(2\)](#)

Explain:

**6d.** Does the child/student use hearing assistive technology or personal hearing devices (e.g., hearing aid(s), cochlear implant(s), or osseointegrated auditory prosthetic(s) at school?  Yes  No

If yes, explain who is responsible for checking the function of these devices, how often the devices will be checked, and the procedures for completing and documenting monitoring activities. [34 CFR § 300.113](#) and [AAC 290-8-9.07\(2\) \(a\) Routine checking](#)

**6d.** Describe the alternate plan in place to maintain effective communication during academic instruction, school services, and extracurricular activities with the student if any of the following events happen:

- Interpreter is absent
- Hearing aid(s)/cochlear implant(s) is/are not working (batteries are dead, components missing, left at home, etc.)
- Hearing Assistive Technology is not working
- Closed Captions are not available, including videos posted online or digital curricula
- Trained notetaker is absent
- Real-time captioning services are not available
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe issues considered and alternate plans:

### **Action(s) Needed Regarding Assistive Technology Factors**

List:



This Communication Plan was adapted by Alabama Hands & Voices from State Communication Plans referenced in Appendix A of National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE), (2018). [Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: Educational Service Guidelines, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.](#) (Specifically: Colorado, Florida, New Hampshire, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia).