

ENROLLED SENATE
BILL NO. 1328

By: Cain of the Senate

and

Greenwood and Gilbert of
the House

An Act relating to schools; creating the Oklahoma Educational Interpreter for the Deaf Act; providing short title; stating essential needs; providing definitions; requiring educational interpreters in public schools to meet certain requirements; specifying requirements; exempting persons from certain requirements for certain period of time; stating date by which requirements must be met; directing the State Department of Education to adopt rules and collaborate with the State Department of Rehabilitation Services; requiring State Department of Education to maintain a registry of individuals meeting qualifications; requiring establishment of system of continuing education; stating minimum continuing education requirements; providing for codification; providing an effective date; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 13-115 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

This act shall be known and may be cited as the "Oklahoma Educational Interpreter for the Deaf Act".

SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 13-115.1 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

It is essential for the well-being and educational growth of deaf and hard-of-hearing students that education programs recognize the unique nature of deafness and ensure that all deaf and hard-of-hearing students have appropriate, ongoing, and fully accessible educational opportunities. It is essential that deaf and hard-of-hearing students, like all students, are provided an education in which their unique communication mode is respected, utilized, and developed to an appropriate level of proficiency.

SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 13-115.2 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

As used in the Oklahoma Educational Interpreter for the Deaf Act:

1. "Communication mode or language" means one or more of the following systems or methods of communication applicable to deaf and hard-of-hearing students:

- a. American Sign Language,
- b. English-based sign systems, or
- c. oral, aural, or other speech-based communication;

2. "Educational Interpreter" means a person who possesses a combination of interpreting skills for expressing and receiving information in a variety of signed and oral languages and modes;

3. The Oklahoma "Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST)" means a tool used for the comprehensive evaluation of interpreters;

4. "Interpreter Training Program" means a training program in an accredited college or university for preparing interpreters for the deaf;

5. "Work Experience" means a minimum of three (3) years of full-time-equivalent work in the field of deaf education; and

6. "Comparable Level of Proficiency" means a comparable level of proficiency on any other national- or state-recognized educational interpreter assessment as determined and recognized by the State Department of Education.

SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 13-115.3 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. Except as otherwise provided in this section, any person who functions as an educational interpreter in a public school shall have the interpersonal skills to work effectively and collaboratively with staff and students within the instructional setting as well as a comprehensive, general knowledge of academic subjects and current events, educational processes and organization, principles and practices of special education, aspects and issues of deaf culture, and have:

1. Completed an interpreter training program;
2. Attained a bachelor's degree; or
3. Worked three (3) or more years in an area related to the field of deaf education.

B. In addition to the requirements of subsection A of this section, a person who functions as an educational interpreter in a public school shall attain one or more of the following:

1. Certification by the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf (RID);
 2. National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Level IV or better;
 3. Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST) Level III or better;
- or
4. A comparable level of proficiency.

It shall be desirable for an educational interpreter to hold either a bachelor's or associate's degree.

C. A person who has never worked as an educational interpreter in any public school, who meets the requirements as provided in subsection A of this section, who does not meet the requirements of subsection B of this section, and who has attained the Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST) Level I or II, may be employed as an educational interpreter for up to three (3) years. The person shall not be eligible to be employed as an educational interpreter in any public school of this state after the third year until the person attains one of the proficiency levels as provided in subsection B of this section.

D. Any educational interpreter employed by a public school on the effective date of this act who does not meet the requirements of subsection B of this section shall be required to attain QAST Level I or a comparable level of proficiency by July 1, 2004. An educational interpreter shall have until July 1, 2006, to meet the requirements of subsections A and B of this section or a comparable level of proficiency.

SECTION 5. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 13-115.4 of Title 70, unless there is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

The State Department of Education shall adopt rules to implement the provisions of this act in collaboration with the State Department of Rehabilitation Services. The State Department of Education shall:

1. Maintain a registry of individuals who meet the qualifications as educational interpreters as set forth in this act; and
2. Establish a system of and requirements for continuing education. Such system shall require completion of the minimum QAST continuing education units per year, in which fifty percent (50%) of such units include training in educational interpreting.

SECTION 6. This act shall become effective July 1, 2002.

SECTION 7. It being immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety, an emergency is hereby declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

Passed the Senate the 1st day of May, 2002.

Presiding Officer of the Senate

Passed the House of Representatives the 8th day of April, 2002.

Presiding Officer of the House
of Representatives