

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and the National Association of the Deaf

I. Purpose

In order to advance, improve and expand employment outcomes for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Association of the Deaf (NAD), herein commit themselves to work cooperatively in implementing the objectives set forth in this Agreement.

The CSAVR, an advisory body to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in the U.S. Department of Education on policy, regulations and the administration of programs affecting persons with disabilities, provides a forum for the collective deliberation of State Vocational Rehabilitation agencies on issues affecting the provision of vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities; and informs the public about the effect of disability on the lives of persons with disabilities, particularly with respect to employment and economic independence.

A private, non-profit organization, the NAD is a dynamic federation of 51 state association affiliates including the District of Columbia, organizational affiliates, and direct members. The mission of the National Association of the Deaf is to promote, protect, and preserve the rights and quality of life of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the United States of America. It was through the advocacy efforts of NAD that CSAVR re-established the Committee on Services to Persons who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened and DeafBlind, which is now a full standing committee.

II. Statement of Need

The CSAVR and NAD believe that quality employment outcomes for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind can be substantially increased and improved through a collaborative working relationship between State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies and state association affiliates of the NAD.

It is projected that the number of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind will continue to increase in proportion to the total population of the country due to the aging of our society. The "Baby Boom" population, consisting of individuals born during the 20 years following the end of World War II in 1945, is now rapidly moving into the age group where hearing loss becomes considerably more prevalent.

With this, there needs to be a growing awareness of the multitude of variables which impact the capabilities of individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind. The general community, as well as rehabilitation professionals and consumers themselves, need to understand these variables and the specific needs involved, especially as these relate to employment issues at all levels.

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The ongoing creation and development of new technological devices and systems which can be used to improve access can play a major role in improved provision of rehabilitation services to individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind. Greater focus must be placed on how best to encourage employers in particular, but also employees, consumers and professionals, to fully utilize these devices and systems. For example, reasonable accommodations in the workplace may include provision and/or use of instant messaging, e-mail, handheld or mobile devices such as pagers and PDAs, telecommunications equipment and relay services, including videophones and Video Relay Services.

III. Terms

The CSAVR and NAD will communicate to their respective networks the desire for State VR agencies and state association affiliates of the NAD to establish agreements and the intended outcome of such agreements. CSAVR and NAD will work together as outlined within this agreement in order to improve the personal and public perception of people who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind.

The NAD will encourage and assist its state association affiliates in gaining a working knowledge of the services and rehabilitation programs available through their State and local VR agencies. The NAD will encourage its state association affiliates and members to serve on State VR Rehabilitation Councils and/or to participate in the meetings of the Councils as appropriate. Involvement with other related community resources such as the One-Stop Career Centers will also be encouraged. This kind of collaboration will help assure that the citizens of each State who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, or deaf-blind shall have a ready source of information available regarding VR and related services available to them. It is equally important for referral purposes that State VR agencies be familiar with the resources of NAD and state association affiliates. This information exchange will facilitate the referral of persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, or deaf-blind to the agencies which can best meet their needs.

CSAVR and NAD will recommend proactive policies to RSA that will help to advance job training and employment for deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened and deaf-blind Americans. This includes provision of full communication and services accessibility in One-Stop Career Centers throughout the nation as well as in State VR offices. This also includes advocacy for re-establishment within RSA of an office that specifically focuses on deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened and deaf-blind needs. In addition, CSAVR will share information with the NAD on a timely basis to facilitate NAD advocacy with RSA and other federal offices on issues concerning proposed legislation, policy, or practice that would impact service options for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind.

The CSAVR and NAD will act as liaisons to their respective affiliate agencies and state association affiliates to facilitate the establishment of agreements or Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) between State VR agencies and state association affiliates of the NAD. Such agreements/MOUs, intended to identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership between State VR agencies and

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state association affiliates of the NAD, can result in improved services and increased employment outcomes for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, and deaf-blind.

The CSAVR and NAD will share information and coordinate activities, as appropriate, to carry out and support the objectives of this Memorandum of Understanding. The CSAVR and NAD will also provide technical assistance and support to any State VR agency or state association affiliate of the NAD that requests their assistance in facilitating the development of a State or local agreement/MOU.

IV. Authority

This Memorandum of Understanding does not in itself authorize the expenditure or reimbursement of any funds by the undersigned parties. Nothing in this agreement shall obligate the parties to expend appropriations or other monies, or to enter into any contract or other obligation.

Further, this Memorandum of Understanding shall not be construed to limit, supersede, or otherwise affect either party's normal operations or decisions in carrying out its mission, statutory or regulatory duties. Nothing in this agreement shall be construed as altering any eligibility requirements for the public VR program authorized under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act.

V. Effective Date/Duration

This Memorandum of Understanding shall become effective upon the signature of the parties. This agreement may be terminated at any time upon 30 days advance notice by one party to the other, and may be amended by the written agreement of the undersigned parties or their authorized designees.

H.S. "Butch" McMillan, President
Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

Date



Bobbie Beth Scoggins, President
National Association of the Deaf

April 18, 2007

Date