MEMORANDUM

To: County Superintendents
   County Special Education Directors
   County Personnel Directors
   WV Advisory Council for the Education of Exceptional Children
   RESA Special Education Administrators

From: Pat Homberg, Executive Director
       Office of Special Programs

Lisa Hedrick, Executive Director
Office of Professional Preparation

Date: June 21, 2013

RE: Educational Interpreters

Effective July 1, 2013, House Bill 2470 strengthens the requirements for educational sign language interpreters and changes class titles for service employees. Additionally, WVBE Policy 5202: Minimum Requirements for the Licensure of Professional/Paraprofessional Personnel and Advanced Salary Classification and West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing regulations establish requirements for educational interpreters. This memorandum clarifies districts' responsibilities for the provision of qualified interpreters in accordance with the above requirements.

HB 2470 revises the service employee class previously referred to in WV Code §18A-4-8 as a "braille or sign language specialist", creating two separate classes, braille specialist and sign support specialist. Sign support specialists are not intended to support students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Additionally, two new class titles, educational sign language interpreter I and educational sign language interpreter II are established as the minimum requirement to provide interpreter services for any student who is deaf or hard of hearing whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Section 504 plan requires sign language or interpreting services. The new class titles in state code align with the existing paraprofessional certificates in WVBE Policy 5202, Section 12, educational interpreter, initial and permanent.

Paraprofessional
Interpreting requires knowledge and skills well beyond the knowledge and skills of a skilled signer. Educational interpreters meet the minimum requirements in WVBE Policy 5202 for certification as paraprofessionals. Additional requirements for educational sign language interpreter I and II are as follows:

Educational sign language interpreter I (valid for one year), Position Code 516, Pay Grade F
- A minimum score of 3.0 on the Educational Interpreter Proficiency Assessment (EIPA); a valid National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Certification-Level III or higher; a valid Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Certification; or, a valid National Interpreter Certification (NIC).
• Initial certification can be renewed two times with the recommendation of the district’s superintendent and completion of a minimum of 15 clock hours of WVDE approved professional development.

*Educational sign language interpreter II (permanent), Position Code 517, Pay Grade G*
• A minimum score of 3.5 on the Educational Interpreter Proficiency Assessment (EIPA); a valid National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Certification-Level III or higher; a valid Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) Certification; or, a valid National Interpreter Certification (NIC).
• A passing score on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment- Written Test (EIPA-WT).

HB 2470 requires the cost of certification renewal and satisfying the requirements of the West Virginia Registry of Interpreters to be paid in full by the employer. This includes the cost of testing, training or continuing education to advance from sign support specialist to educational sign language interpreter I or II or from educational sign language interpreter I to II.

*Professional (effective July 1, 2013)*
Districts also have the option to employ interpreters as professionals. WVDE has established a professional classification for educational interpreters on the annual certified list of personnel. Currently, only two states offer this option; therefore, this classification provides a strong incentive for recruitment and retention of qualified interpreters. This new position code is not state aid eligible, nor does it count toward the required professional instructional personnel ratio. Requirements are as follows:

*Professional educational interpreter (Position Code 330)*
• Meets the definition of professional personnel in WV Code §18A-1-1.
• Possesses at least a bachelor’s degree from an accredited institution of higher learning.
• A minimum score of 3.6 on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment
• A passing score on the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment- Written Test (EIPA-WT).

Please note the above requirements pertain to educational interpreters. Teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing are not educational sign language interpreters unless they have met the qualifications listed above.

*Registration with West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing*
As of October 1, 2013, all educational interpreters must register with the WV Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. 192 CSR 3 *Establishment of Required Qualifications and Ethical Standards for Interpreters* requires all interpreters, including educational interpreters, to register with the commission. The rule recognizes all educational interpreters employed in public schools who meet the standards of WVBE Policy 5202 as qualified. Additional information may be found at: http://www.wvdhhr.org/wvcdhh/interpreters.cfm.

*Critical Shortage of Educational Interpreters*
West Virginia has a critical shortage of qualified interpreters, including both educational and community interpreters. This does not negate the administrator’s responsibility to make a good faith effort to find the most qualified interpreter nor the responsibility for the IEP Team to determine the student’s needs regardless of availability. However, it often requires an administrator to utilize non-traditional sources in
the recruitment efforts, such as Interpreter Training Programs, the West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Interpreting Agencies (both in West Virginia and surrounding states) and disability-specific listservs, to identify appropriate candidates. The established professional level position enables West Virginia districts to be competitive in the recruitment of highly qualified educational interpreters.

What if qualified interpreters are not available? **Determining the “most” skilled applicant**

If an applicant holds a valid interpreter certification or has been assessed through the EIPA, administrators have a basis for determining the most skilled applicant. Without any valid assessment, this determination is difficult at best.

A sign support specialist (Position Code 518) may be assigned to a student who is deaf or hard of hearing only if an educational sign language interpreter I or II is not available, and the sign support specialist is executing a professional development plan while seeking certification as an educational sign language interpreter. After two years the sign support specialist may remain in the assignment only if an educational sign language interpreter remains unavailable and approval is granted by WVDE.

In the absence of an interpreter assessment, districts should establish a team to screen and prioritize the interpreting skills of the applicants. Membership on this team should include teacher(s) of the deaf and educational interpreter(s) from the district or surrounding districts.

A predetermined rubric addressing both expressive and receptive skills should be used to ensure unbiased recommendations.

If the district does not have the capacity to screen interpreting skills, administrators may want to use the pre-hire screen offered by the Educational Interpreter Performance Assessment (EIPA) Diagnostic Center, Boys Town National Research Hospital. To obtain this pre-hire screen, the hiring administrator may contact Boys Town and request the screening material. Upon receiving the material, the interpreter will then need to complete the video screening and return it to Boys Town. A final report from Boys Town will be sent to the administrator within a week. It should be noted that this pre-hire screening does not replace the EIPA. Additional information may be found at the following website: [http://www.classroominterpreting.org/EIPA/prehire/index.asp](http://www.classroominterpreting.org/EIPA/prehire/index.asp).

For further information, please contact Annette Carey at acarey@access.k12.wv.us.

cc: Chuck Heinlein, Deputy Superintendent  
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