We want to recognize all of the time, effort, and planning the Department of Education and individual school districts have taken in regards to the safety of students and staff as we begin the 2020-2021 school year. We know that children who are deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) have additional areas of concern to ensure communication access and wanted to compile some tips and discussion topics for individual families and their school districts to help ensure all needs are met for students who are D/HH in our state.

–SDSD and South Dakota Hands & Voices

If Remote/Distance/E-Learning:

Does the student have technology such as a computer or tablet and high-speed internet? If not, where can a family go to connect with technology?

Does the child use an interpreter in the classroom? If so, the interpreter needs to be present in the video conferencing room as well. Also, consider the screen size for the interpreter so the student can understand what is being said.

If a student uses captioning services, the school should ensure the same captioning service is accessible in the video conferencing room as well as checking for accuracy.

If the student uses an assistive listening device (ALD), also referred to as hearing assistive technology (HAT), the school should ensure the student can access through their device what is being said in the video conferencing room.

If a teacher presents videos to be watched, is there captioning and/or is an interpreter present to ensure access?

If a student did not use these services or devices in the past, a family can request accommodations or other services if the student is having a hard time understanding what is presented in the class.

How will being separated from peers, both hearing and D/HH affect the student socially?

Does the student have access to teachers of the deaf, audiologists, speech pathologists, SDSD Outreach, etc?

Who does the family contact within the school district if questions or concerns arise regarding the needs of their child who is D/HH?

Does an immediate IEP or 504 meeting need to be called?

Are IEP or 504 Accommodations being provided?

Who does a family contact for IT troubleshooting?
If In-Classroom Learning

Will masks/face covering/shields be required?

If so:

1. Will children and staff be required to wear face coverings?

2. Will a clear mask/shield be available for staff working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing? Fellow peers? Educators?

3. If required, will children have alternate plans for speech therapy?

4. How will masks affect students who are deaf and hard of hearing socially?

5. Do students have the self-advocacy skills to ask for repeated statements or clarifications?

Will preferential seating be affected due to classroom layout?

How will student spacing affect classroom acoustics for students who are deaf and hard of hearing?

Will students be able to sit in a semi-circle formation for students who are deaf and hard of hearing to see facial expressions of peers or will all students be facing one direction in the classroom?

Will doors remain closed to keep hallway noise down or will doors be propped open for ventilation?

Will any air circulation devices affect a student’s assistive listening device?

If temperatures are being taken, ear molds may cause false positive temperature spikes if checked in the ear. Consider an alternate thermometer.

For additional support, please reach out to:

South Dakota School for the Deaf

605-367-5200 sddeaf.org

Hands & Voices- South Dakota

sdhandsandvoices@gmail.com