



OKLAHOMA STATE
DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: OSDE Office of Special Education Services; Oklahoma school districts
FROM: Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) Office of Legal Services
DATE: June 2021
SUBJECT: Provisional eligibility to serve in Oklahoma schools for deaf education interpreters who have passed comparable professional competency exams in other jurisdictions

Oklahoma law provides for certain state-specific qualifications an individual must hold in order to be employed by a public school district as an educational interpreter for deaf students. *See* 70 O.S. § 13-115.3. The requirements for serving as an educational interpreter for Oklahoma public school students are:

1. 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;
2. Completion of an interpreter training program;
3. Attainment of a bachelor's degree; OR
4. Completion of three (3) or more years of work in an area related to the field of deaf education; AND
5. One or more of the following:
 - Certification by the Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf (RID); OR
 - National Association of the Deaf (NAD) Level IV or better; OR
 - Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST) Level III or better; OR
 - Documentation of a comparable level of proficiency.

(See 70 O.S. § 13-115.3(A),(B).)

It is the OSDE's understanding that there may be appropriately proficient deaf education interpreters who Oklahoma public schools wish to employ in that role, but who have obtained their training and credentials in other states and so do not initially meet the Oklahoma statutory requirements. Further, the OSDE understands that many jurisdictions outside Oklahoma have established their own assessments of the skills required to successfully serve as a deaf education interpreter, which are substantially equivalent to the Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST) used in Oklahoma.

Due to the need for additional skilled deaf education interpreters to provide instructional support to Oklahoma public school students who are deaf or hearing impaired, the OSDE Office of Special Education Services has advised that it would be educationally appropriate for Oklahoma schools to provisionally employ interpreters who can document appropriate proficiency (QAST Level III or better) through their performance on another state's exam that is substantially similar to the QAST.

In order to be eligible for non-provisional employment, such individuals would be required to attain a qualifying rating on the QAST or one of the other professional skill assessments listed at 70 O.S. § 13-115.3(B) within one hundred eighty (180) calendar days of their initial employment date with an Oklahoma school district. Such provisional employment may only extend for one 180-day period, to begin from the first date the individual is employed by any Oklahoma school district.

The individual seeking to demonstrate that they hold an appropriate proficiency level to serve as an educational interpreter shall be responsible for obtaining and providing documentation showing that the out-of-state proficiency determination is based on an assessment substantially comparable to the QAST, and that the level of their performance on the assessment meets or exceeds the Oklahoma standards to serve as an educational interpreter.

Appropriate documentation may include: complete sample assessments; full official descriptions of the assessment(s) that are provided by the assessing entity, including a detailed breakdown of areas and skills assessed; or other detailed documentation sufficient for the purpose of substantive comparison.

(Please note that like every employee of an Oklahoma public school, a deaf education interpreter is subject to the state and national criminal history record check requirements of 70 O.S. § 5-142, which authorizes a maximum period of sixty (60) calendar days that an individual may be temporarily employed by a school district pending the receipt of national criminal history check results. This 60 day limitation on public school employment prior to the receipt of a national criminal history record check cannot be extended.)

It is the recommendation of the OSDE that provisional public school employment of deaf education interpreters who are qualified in other states, but have not yet completed Oklahoma's statutory requirements under 70 O.S. § 13-115.3(B), be permitted for up to 180 days provided that:

- The criminal history check requirements of 70 O.S. § 5-142 are fulfilled;
- The individual provides documentation that shows their level of competency attained on the out-of-state assessment of interpretive skills, equivalent to QAST III or above; AND
- The individual provides documentation that enables substantive comparison of the out-of-state assessment instrument with the Quality Assurance Screening Test (QAST).