

Issue Brief – Community Center for the Deaf

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION – OFFICE OF REHABILITATION

PED IB-USOR 3

SUMMARY

The Division of Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH) helps increase the productivity, independence, and community integration of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing. The majority of services offered by the division, at the Sanderson Community Center for the Deaf include: information and referral, educational classes, counseling and case management services, recreation and leisure activities, telecommunication services for the deaf, assistive technology, interpreter services, and library services.

OBJECTIVE

This brief details two budget increase requests submitted by the division.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Case Manager Assistant – \$40,000

The Sanderson community employs a mental health counselor and a case manager. Both of these individuals are fluent in American Sign Language. The division indicates that the counselor and case manager are the only social workers in Utah who provide mental health and other social services in American Sign Language.

Over the past several years, referrals from other human service agencies have increased. The division indicates that in FY 2002, 178 individuals were served by these counselors and approximately

550 in FY 2005. Further, the division anticipates that in FY 2007 approximately 650 individuals will seek services from the division's counselors.

The division requests funding to hire a case manager assistant that will assist the counselors by making phone calls for clients, preparing client documents, providing information and referral to clients, and other coordinating activities. The division anticipates that this FTE position will enable the counselors to better meet the anticipated caseload in FY 2007.

Recommendation: The Analyst recommends that the subcommittee prioritize the request of \$40,000 in Uniform School Fund revenue to provide a case manager assistant at the deaf center.

Sanderson Community Center Operations

The division requests additional funds from the Legislature to help support building operations at the Sanderson Community Center. The community center is a state-owned building that houses the offices of the DSDHH and provides facilities used by the deaf community. These facilities include a gymnasium, lecture hall, classrooms, testing facilities, and training labs. During business hours the facility is used for counseling, case management, vocational rehabilitation services, and interpreter certification. In the evenings and Saturdays, the community center is used to host classes, community meetings, sporting events, and conferences.

The Division of Facilities Construction and Management (DFCM), at the request of DSDHH, provides limited maintenance of the facility.

Services provided by DFCM are limited to regular and preventative maintenance on the mechanical systems of the building. As a result, increased maintenance costs have been covered by the division with the help of federal funds, reduction of operating hours, and other free revenue when available. According to the division, the annual maintenance costs of the building total \$338,000.

When the Sanderson Community Center was completed in 1992, the division retained its maintenance staff from the prior location. Due to the unique nature of serving the deaf community, the center has opted to employ maintenance staff that can communicate with the deaf and hard of hearing individuals using the facility.

Recommendation: The subcommittee may wish to evaluate the request for \$75,000 in Uniform School Fund revenue to assist the Sanderson Community Center with building operations and maintenance and prioritize this item among the other requests before the subcommittee.

In addition, the subcommittee may wish to request that the Utah State Board of Education evaluate the usage of the community center, the potential impact of implementing a fee-for-use system to help recoup some of the costs associated with hosting community activities, and report back to the subcommittee before the 2007 General Session.

LEGISLATIVE ACTION

This section provides a guide of what actions might be taken if the Legislature wishes to adopt the recommendations presented in this brief.

1. Consider prioritizing an increase of \$40,000 in Uniform School Fund revenue and an increase of 1 FTE employee to the Division of Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to hire a case manager assistant.
2. Evaluate the request for additional revenue to support the operation and maintenance of the Sanderson Community Center. Further, the subcommittee may wish to recommend that the State Board of Education evaluate the usage of the community center, determine the feasibility of implementing a fee-for-use system at the center, and report to the subcommittee before the 2007 General Session.