The program supports students in their educational placements and helps them understand and manage their hearing loss now and into the future.

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program

The Sonoma County Office of Education established the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Program in 1984 with one teacher and five students. Today, ten teachers, one educational audiologist and an audiology assistant serve over 200 students in schools across Sonoma County. The program also provides educational interpreters for students and operates the Regional Secondary Deaf Program at Santa Rosa High School. A special education principal oversees the program.

DHH teachers are credentialed by the state, most with graduate-level specialization in deaf and hard of hearing education. Many also hold multiple- or single-subject teaching credentials. All of the teachers meet federal No Child Left Behind proficiency standards and are authorized to serve students who are English-language learners.

The program’s audiologist is certified by the American Board of Audiology and has experience in clinical, educational and research settings. The audiologist serves on a contractual basis and provides training and supervision for the audiology assistant.
**Program overview**

The DHH Program serves deaf and hard of hearing students from 3 to 22 years old, whose hearing losses range from mild to profound.

The program offers a continuum of services that is based on student need and responds to communication preferences. Students are enrolled in regular, resource, special day, preschool, or home-based programs and receive DHH services in conjunction with their instruction. Itinerant DHH teachers travel from school to school to provide services for individual students.

DHH services range from assessment and consultation to direct instruction and coordination. A DHH teacher serves as a member of the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) team and works in cooperation with audiologists, parents, school staff and community agencies to provide services. The teacher may also act as the student’s IEP case manager.

**Range of services**

DHH staff can help evaluate the educational needs of students with hearing loss, provide support to facilitate student integration in current educational settings and coordinate support services. Depending on individual needs, students may receive a selection of the following services.

**Evaluation**

- Assess auditory, communication, speechreading and compensatory skills
- Evaluate the need for specialized equipment and services
- Provide ongoing and up-to-date information about the functional aspects and implications of students’ hearing, communication and self-help skills as it relates to their hearing loss

**Instructional support**

- Make recommendations about the scope and extent of services required to facilitate the student’s educational placement
- Support IEP goals and objectives and/or classroom instruction as applicable

- Provide direct instruction in auditory, communication and compensatory skills
- Monitor student progress and adjust instruction and support services as changes occur
- Assist with appropriate use of note-takers, sign language interpreters and signing assistants

**Technical assistance**

- Request and manage specialized low-incidence equipment such as FM and amplification systems
- Perform periodic checks of amplification systems and provide troubleshooting assistance
- Teach students to use and care for hearing aids, cochlear implants and FM systems

**Consultation**

- Participate as a member of the student’s IEP team
- Help students, staff and parents understand audiological reports and their educational implications
- Consult with students, school staff and parents regarding educational placement and program adaptations
- Interface and consult with local, regional, state and national agencies

**Personal development**

- Help students understand, accept and manage hearing loss
- Provide inservice to parents, school staff and classmates
- Support student transition from one grade level to the next, to post-secondary programs and adulthood
- Facilitate specialized co-curricular activities, such as an annual gathering for hard of hearing students in Sonoma County
Eligibility, screening and referral

Students are considered for DHH services if both of the following criteria are met:

1. The student has a mild to profound, permanent or fluctuating, hearing loss in one or both ears that is documented in a current written report from a clinical audiologist.

2. The hearing loss affects the student’s educational performance.

Requesting Service: School personnel or parents may request a screening to determine student eligibility for services by contacting the DHH Program office at (707) 524-2862. Private audiologists may also request that a student be screened for eligibility.

Screening: When a request for screening is received, DHH Program staff send a screening packet to the student’s school. The school completes and compiles the following documents, which are used to determine if the student meets eligibility requirements.

- Screening request form
- Current clinical audiogram. Audiograms must be no more than one year old. Please note that a screening by a school nurse does not constitute clinical audiological data.
- Student checklist. Student checklists should be completed by all school personnel familiar with the student and the student’s parents.
- Consent to Release Information form, signed by the parent
- Other pertinent information, such as current IEP, speech-language and/or psychological reports, report cards, etc.

Referral: Once student eligibility has been confirmed, a SELPA Special Education Referral form is completed and signed by appropriate school personnel. The referral is sent to the DHH Program office and a DHH teacher is assigned to the case.

Referrals are processed in a timely manner in accordance with the policies of the Sonoma County SELPA and DHH Program. An acknowledgment is mailed to the parents, along with program materials, contact information, and the Special Education Rights of Parents and Children document. An Assessment Plan form – which must be completed, signed and returned to the DHH Program office – is also included in the packet.

The next step is for the DHH teacher to assess the student, compile a report, and call for an Individualized Education Program (IEP) meeting. The IEP team reviews the results of the testing, then determines the level of DHH service, if any, that is needed to support the student’s current educational placement.

Referral steps

1. School, parent or audiologist requests screening
2. Documentation is submitted by school and reviewed by DHH staff to determine student eligibility for services
3. If eligible, referral form is completed by school
4. Parent signs and submits Assessment Plan form
5. Student undergoes DHH assessment
6. IEP meeting is held to review assessment results and determine level of DHH services needed
7. Services are provided to student