

SENATE BILL 248

By Massey

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 10, Part 9, relative to deaf mentor programs.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49-50-1008, is amended by deleting the section and substituting the following:

(a)

(1) The Tennessee School for the Deaf, together with the West Tennessee School for the Deaf, shall maintain a deaf mentor program to assist families and agencies in implementing bilingual and bicultural home-based programming for young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind.

(2) The program must be available at each of the following locations: the West Tennessee School for the Deaf in Jackson, the Tennessee School for the Deaf, Knoxville campus, and the Tennessee School for the Deaf, Nashville campus.

(3) The program must focus on:

(A) Preventing language deprivation;

(B) Providing a positive impact on a child's social and emotional development through a deaf role model; and

(C) Ensuring that children who are deaf have equal access to learning opportunities at home and in the community.

(4) The program must use a deaf mentor curriculum.

(5) The program must provide hearing parents of children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind with the option of using a deaf mentor to expose the parents' children to American Sign Language and deaf culture, allowing the children to grow and learn in a bilingual and bicultural milieu of hearing and deaf cultures instead of limiting the children's exposure to a signed or spoken English-only environment and the hearing culture of the children's families.

(b) Deaf mentors shall:

(1) Make regular visits to the homes of young children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deaf-blind;

(2) Interact with the children using American Sign Language;

(3) Demonstrate to family members how to use American Sign Language; and

(4) Help families understand and appreciate deafness and deaf culture.

SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.