

Mercedes Toural, Chief Education Officer  
and Deputy Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT:           REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT TO  
ENTER INTO CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS WITH SEVEN  
AGENCIES THAT ARE INTERPRETER REFERRAL SERVICE  
AGENCIES TO PROVIDE SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETING  
SERVICES IN PROGRAMS FOR DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING  
STUDENTS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$500,000**

**COMMITTEE:       EDUCATION AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS**

Authorization is requested to enter into contractual agreements with seven agencies that are interpreter referral service agencies to provide sign language interpreting services in programs for deaf or hard-of-hearing students, effective July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005, at an hourly rate of \$50 to \$65, in an amount not to exceed \$500,000. The range of these hourly rates is based on competitive rates in the profession as well as the levels of experience of the interpreters. Due to attrition of staff and the critical shortage of sign language interpreters, a need for additional staff exists. It is anticipated that at least 8-10 interpreters will be needed for the 2004-2005 school year. These contractual agreements have been in effect since May 2003.

Interpreter referral service agencies serving South Florida:

- Accommodating Ideas, Inc.
- Center for Independent Living, Inc.
- CODA Link, Inc.
- Deaf Services Bureau
- League for the Hard of Hearing
- Nationwide Interpreter Resource, Inc.
- Sign Language Services, Inc.

A primary need for deaf or hard-of-hearing students is a communication system that is accessible and allows for effective and efficient social interaction and the acquisition and sharing of ideas and concepts. In recent years, both federal and state laws have recognized the unique educational needs of students with hearing loss. These unique needs include:

- accommodations, in the general education classroom, including but not limited to, quality educational interpreting services; and
- equal access to all components of the educational process, including lunch, recess, fieldtrips, and extracurricular social and athletic activities.

These services are needed to provide deaf or hard-of-hearing students with an education that is rich in communication so that they may achieve their academic, social, emotional, and vocational potential in adulthood. Without communication access, deaf or hard-of-hearing students may experience limited learning opportunities and human isolation.

In order to ensure equal access to all providers, selection criteria will be based on availability of time, ability to provide services, qualifications of the interpreters, and cost effectiveness.

The Committee established by School Board Rule 6Gx13- 3F-1.021 reviewed this item on March 18, 2004, and recommended that an exception to the rule regarding bids or Request for Proposals be granted as otherwise determined by the Committee as these seven agencies fulfill this critical need.

The appropriation for this item will be included in the General Fund of the 2004-2005 Tentative Budget to be recommended for adoption in July 2004 under Fund 0100, Function 5217, Program 6840, Object 5310, Location 9731.

The Director of Accommodating Ideas, Inc., is Ms. Rebecca Kerr; the Executive Director of Center for Independent Living, Inc., is Ms. Kelly Greene; the Executive Director of CODA Link, Inc., is Ms. Donna Fernandez; the Program Administrator of Deaf Services Bureau is Ms. Clara Gantes; the Executive Director of League for the Hard of Hearing is Ms. Kim Schur; the President of Nationwide Interpreter Resource, Inc., is Ms. June Backer; and the President of Sign Language Services, Inc., is Mr. Terry Johnson.

**RECOMMENDED:** That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida:

1. authorize the Superintendent to enter into contractual agreements with Accommodating Ideas, Inc.; Center for Independent Living, Inc.; CODA Link, Inc.; Deaf Services Bureau; League for the Hard of Hearing; Nationwide Interpreter Resource, Inc.; and Sign Language Services, Inc., to provide sign language interpreting services in programs for deaf or hard-of-hearing students, in an amount not to exceed \$500,000, effective July 1, 2004 through June 30, 2005; and
2. grant an exception to School Board Rule 6Gx13- 3F-1.021.

The appropriation for this item will be included in the 2004-2005 Tentative Budget to be recommended for adoption in July 2004.

RKF/BB:amp