

Antoinette Dunbar, Deputy Superintendent
Curriculum and Instruction

SUBJECT: REQUEST AUTHORIZATION FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS WITH EIGHT INTERPRETER OR CAPTION/COMPUTER-ASSISTED REAL-TIME TRANSCRIPTION (CART) PROVIDER REFERRAL SERVICE AGENCIES TO PROVIDE AMERICAN SIGN-LANGUAGE INTERPRETER/CAPTION AND CART SERVICES FOR DEAF AND HARD-OF-HEARING STUDENTS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$1,250,000, EFFECTIVE JULY 1, 2007, THROUGH JUNE 30, 2008

COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

LINK TO DISTRICT

STRATEGIC PLAN: GENERAL OPERATIONS

Authorization is requested to enter into contractual agreements with eight interpreter/caption Computer-Assisted Real-time Transcription (CART) provider referral service agencies for students in programs for deaf and hard-of-hearing, effective July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008, at an hourly rate of \$65 to \$125, in an amount not exceed \$1,250,000. The range of these hourly rates is based on competitive rates in the profession and the levels of experience of the interpreters and captionists/CART providers. Due to the attrition and the critical shortage of interpreters and captionists/CART providers, a need for additional staff exists. These contractual agreements have been in effect since May 2003.

Interpreter referral service agencies serving South Florida are:

- Accessible Communication for the Deaf, Inc.
- Accommodating Ideas, Inc.
- Carmazzi of Florida, Inc.
- CODA Link, Inc.
- Deaf Services Bureau, Inc.
- Florida Realtime Reporting Services, Inc.
- Innovative Communication Services for the Deaf, LLC
- Nationwide Interpreter Resource, Inc.

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A primary need of deaf and hard-of-hearing students is that communication and instruction are accessible and allow for effective and efficient social interaction and the acquisition and sharing of ideas and concepts. In recent years, both state and federal 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 interpretation services, quality educational captioning service; and
- equal access to all components of the educational process, including fieldtrips, extracurricular social and athletic activities, and other school sponsored activities.

These services are needed to provide deaf and 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 and hard-of-hearing students may experience limited learning opportunities and human isolation.

The Professional Services Contract Committee established by School Board Rule 6Gx13-3F-1.021, reviewed this Board item on March 22, 2007, and recommended that an exception to the rule regarding bids or Request for Proposals be granted as these agencies have specific expertise. The specific expertise of these agencies is based on the fact that they provide interpreter services to individuals, companies, and agencies throughout South Florida. A request for Proposals (RFP) was not initiated since these agencies do not have enough staff to provide services to the District on a full time basis. Collectively, they can meet the need to fulfill this critical need.

This program is evaluated by administrative and support staff from the Division of Special Education. The evaluation, including school site visits and monitoring student records and program delivery models, found the services ensure compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requirements.

The President of Accessible Communication for the Deaf, Inc., is Ms. Lisa Gauntlett; the Community Liaison for South Florida Division of Accommodating Ideas, Inc., is Ms. Dianne Nosch; the President of Carmazzi of Florida, Inc, is Mr. James Carmazzi; the President of CODA Link, Inc., is Ms. Donna Fernandez; the Executive Director of Deaf Services Bureau, Inc., is Mr. Robert Fifer; the President of Florida Realtime Reporting Services, Inc., is Ms. Tanya English; the Executive Director/Interpreter Coordinator of Innovative Communication Services for the Deaf, LLC, is Mr. Lazaro Fernandez; and the President of Nationwide Interpreter Resource, Inc., is Ms. June Backer.

The appropriation for this item will be included in the Other Federal Programs Fund (Contracted Programs Fund) of the 2007-2008 Tentative Budget to be recommended for adoption in July 2007 under Fund 0420, Function 5200, Program 3420, Object 5310, Location 9615.

RECOMMENDED: That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, authorize the Superintendent to:

1. enter into contractual agreements with Accessible Communication for the Deaf, Inc.; Accommodating Ideas, Inc.; Carmazzi of Florida, Inc.; CODA Link, Inc.; Deaf Services Bureau, Inc.; Florida Realtime Reporting Services, Inc.; Innovative Communication Services for the Deaf, LLC; and Nationwide Interpreter Resource, Inc., to provide American Sign-Language interpreter/caption and Computer-Real-time Transcription (CART) services for deaf and hard-of-hearing students, in an amount not to exceed \$1,250,000, effective July 1, 2007, through June 30, 2008; and
2. grant an exception to School board Rule 6Gx13-3F-1.021, based on specific expertise.

The appropriation for this item will be included in the Other Federal Programs Fund (Contracted Programs Fund) of the 2007-2008 Tentative Budget to be recommended for adoption in July 2007.

LCR/BB:jf