

Mercedes Toural, Chief Education Officer  
and Deputy Superintendent of Schools

**SUBJECT: REQUEST FOR AUTHORIZATION FOR THE SUPERINTENDENT TO ENTER INTO CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS WITH EIGHT 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, EFFECTIVE MAY 15, 2003 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2004**

**COMMITTEE: EDUCATION AND SCHOOL OPERATIONS**

Authorization is requested to enter into contractual agreements with eight agencies that are interpreter referral service agencies to provide sign language interpreting services in programs for deaf or hard-of-hearing students. Due to attrition of staff and the critical shortage of sign language interpreters, a need for additional staff exists.

Interpreter referral service agencies serving South Florida:

- Accommodating Ideas, Inc.
- Center for Independent Living of South Florida
- CODA Link, Inc.
- Deaf Service Bureau, Inc.
- League for the Hard of Hearing
- Nationwide Interpreter Resource
- Sign Language Interpreters, Inc. of South Florida
- 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 contractual agreement on April 24, 2003, and recommended that an exception to the rule regarding bids or Request for Proposals be granted as these eight agencies are the sole providers to fulfill this critical need.

The appropriation for this item is included in the General Fund of the 2002-2003 Adopted Budget under Fund 0100, Function 5217, Program 6840, Object 5310, Location 9731. Next year, the appropriation for this item will be included in the General Fund 2003-2004 Tentative Budget to be recommended for adoption in July 2003 under Fund 0100, Function 5217, Program 6840, Object 5310, Location 9731.

**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 of South Florida; CODA Link, Inc.; Deaf Services Bureau, Inc.; League for the Hard of Hearing; Nationwide Interpreter Resource; Sign Language Interpreters, Inc. of South Florida; 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 May 15, 2003 through June 30, 2004; and
2. grant an exception to School Board Rule 6Gx13- 3F-1.021.

The appropriation for this item is included in the General Fund of the 2002-2003 Adopted Budget. Next year, the appropriation for this item will be included in the 2003-2004 Tentative Budget to be recommended for adoption in July 2003.

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