

Teacher of the Deaf Apprenticeship Certification Program

Position Title: Teacher of the Deaf Apprentice - Certification Program

Program Sponsor: Pennsylvania West University

Employer: The Western PA School for the Deaf

This is an Apprenticeship Opportunity (Not Employment)

Position Summary

The Teacher of the Deaf Apprentice Program is a structured training pathway designed to support paraprofessionals in developing the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to become certified Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Apprentices work under the supervision of certified Teachers of the Deaf while completing on-the-job training and related technical instruction through an approved teacher preparation program.

The program combines practical experience in educational settings serving students who are deaf or hard of hearing with formal coursework leading toward teacher certification.

Hybrid Program

The Teacher of the Deaf Apprenticeship Program is a hybrid model consisting of:

- Time-based training
- Competency-based skill attainment

Apprentices progress through the program by completing required on-the-job training hours while demonstrating mastery of professional competencies aligned with state teaching standards.

The term of the apprenticeship is 18 months, consisting of:

- 3000 hours of On-the-Job Training (OJT)
- 495 hours of Related Technical Instruction (RTI)

OJT occurs within classroom and school settings under the supervision of certified Teachers of the Deaf. RTI consists of coursework in deaf education and teacher preparation provided by an approved college or training provider.

Probationary Period

All apprentices will complete a probationary period at the beginning of the program.

The probationary period will not exceed:

- 25% of the total program length, or
- One year, whichever is shorter.

During the probationary period:

- Apprentices will be evaluated on job performance
- Apprentices must demonstrate progress toward required competencies
- Either the apprentice or sponsor may terminate participation without adverse impact.

The probationary period shall represent approximately 25% of required competencies.

On-the-Job Training (OJT)

Apprentices will complete structured on-the-job training that includes, but is not limited to:

- Supporting instruction for students who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Implementing Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
- Language development and communication strategies
- Use of assistive technology and hearing devices
- Collaboration with audiologists and related service providers
- Behavior management and classroom organization
- Data collection and student progress monitoring
- Instruction in American Sign Language (ASL) and/or spoken language approaches
- Family and community engagement

Related Technical Instruction (RTI)

Apprentices will participate in related technical instruction through PennWest University leading toward certification in Deaf Education.

Minimum Qualifications for Applicants

Applicants must meet all of the following requirements to be eligible for admission to the apprenticeship program.

A. Age

Applicants must meet the minimum age requirement established by the program sponsor and be at least 18 years of age at the time of entry into the program.

B. Education

Applicants must possess all of the following:

- A High School Diploma, or
- General Educational Development (GED) certificate, or
- Other recognized high school equivalency credential
- **AND** Bachelor's Degree in any content area earning a 2.8 or higher GPA.
- Preference may be given to candidates currently employed as paraprofessionals or instructional aides working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing.

C. Physical Requirements

Applicants must be physically capable of performing the essential functions of the apprenticeship program with or without reasonable accommodation, and without posing a direct threat to the health or safety of themselves or others.

D. Other Requirement

To be considered eligible for the program, candidates must meet the following criteria: Be a resident of PA. Pass a criminal background check, including Act 114 Fingerprinting, Act 151 PA Childline, Act 34 PA State Police, Act 126 Mandated Reporter Training, and Act 168 Employment History Review.

Equal Opportunity Statement

The Teacher of the Deaf Apprenticeship Program is committed to equal opportunity in apprenticeship and will not discriminate based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, or any other protected status in accordance with federal and Pennsylvania apprenticeship regulations.

To ensure that only the most motivated and suitable candidates are selected for the Deaf Education Teacher Apprenticeship Program, PennWest University has established a fair and equitable selection procedure. This comprehensive process is structured to evaluate the candidate's commitment, potential and qualifications.

Each employer will screen possible candidates and recommend candidates to apply to PennWest University. The application process is hosted by PennWest and includes employment history, educational/training background, a professional statement as to why they want to become a teacher apprentice and three professional references (one

reference must be from the employer making the recommendation). Once candidates have met the eligibility criteria, applications will be reviewed and scored by a selection committee including two supervisors for each Local Education Agency (LEA). (See TAP.PA Handbook for example of Apprentice Application Screening Matrix and scoring rubric).

The highest-scoring candidates will be invited to participate in an interview to determine the fitness of the applicants to enter the apprenticeship program. The interview is designed to assess the candidate's communication skills, teaching potential and commitment to the program. Each LEA will document all interview questions and the general nature of the response. An interview rubric will be used to document each question's scores and summary scores for each candidate. Professional references will be checked and scored. Apprentices selected for admission shall be notified by email and a follow-up phone call. Applicants not chosen will be sent a rejection letter, reason, and a right to appeal. Applications for applicants not initially selected will be kept for (6 months) and/or applicants can reapply for the apprenticeship after a period of 1 year.