

Montana School for the Deaf and Blind

Montana School for the Deaf and Blind does a quality job of providing services to its students; however, improvements could be made to manage workload.

Audit Findings

The performance audit of the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind (MSDB) had three positive conclusions, two of which related to the on-campus services provided to students and one in the area of school safety.

Statutory guidance for the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind details specific services the schools must provide. State law requires the school to provide an education commensurate with sighted and hearing peers that will enable the students to become independent and self-sustaining citizens. As well, statute requires the school to assist students in locating suitable employment. Based on our review of accreditation standards, educator credentials, recruitment and retention data, student assessment scores, academic curriculum, and parent survey responses, we conclude MSDB provides its students an education similar to that provided to students in public schools. Based on audit work, we also conclude MSDB provides transition, independent life skills and work experience programs in compliance with state law. These programs focus on providing students with the knowledge and experience to transition into independent adults.

Audit work found MSDB has taken steps to assure student safety on campus. The school meets all of the Office of Public Instruction's (OPI) state guidelines for a safe school. In addition, the school has taken precautionary steps to provide assurance

the school is a safe place. Such steps include video surveillance, installing new doors and working with the Great Falls police to establish a crisis management plan.

Audit Recommendations

The performance audit of MSDB includes two audit recommendations. One relates to the school's potential eligibility for additional federal funds and the other recommendation seeks to improve the school's workload management.

Chapter II addresses MSDB's funding sources. Audit work found MSDB may be eligible to receive additional federal funds by using free and reduced lunch counts as a poverty factor. We recommend the school work with OPI to examine the efforts required to comply with Title I of No Child Left Behind and if appropriate, ensure the school receives equitable distributions of Title I and state at-risk funds. Furthermore, we recommend MSDB and OPI work together to secure Individuals with Disabilities Education Act funds for the school based on the poverty factor.

Chapter V discusses outreach services provided by MSDB to students in Montana's public schools. MSDB provides outreach services to public schools throughout the state. The majority of students served by MSDB are through its outreach services. For the 2007-2008 school year, outreach caseload

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comprised approximately 330 students. Audit work revealed outreach caseloads have increased over a three year period. However, management does not collect data on workload activities to effectively manage

growing caseloads. We recommend the school determine relevant workload factors and collect data on such factors to help MSDB better manage their outreach caseloads.

For a complete copy of the report (07P-13) or for further information, contact the Legislative Audit Division at 406-444-3122; e-mail to lad@mt.gov; or check the web site at <http://leg.mt.gov/audit>