

## Serving children and youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind, or visually impaired

The Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority (APSEA) is an interprovincial co-operative agency established in 1975 by joint agreement among the Ministers of Education of New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island.

The Agreement provided for the creation of the Atlantic Provinces Special Education Authority and authorized it to provide educational services, programs, and opportunities for persons from birth to 21 years of age with low incidence sensory loss. This includes children and youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind, or visually impaired and who are residents of Atlantic Canada.

The APSEA Agreement is the only one of its kind in Canada, and as such, may serve as a model for service delivery at a regional level. Operational costs are shared among the four provinces.

### **Board of Directors**

APSEA is governed by a Board of Directors of 12 persons, three from each province. The Deputy Minister of Education from each province is a permanent member of the Board. The two additional members from each province are appointed by the Lieutenant Governor-in-Council for two-year terms. The Board is responsible for overall planning and policy.

### **Standing Committees of the Board**

The Executive Committee, comprised of the four Deputy Ministers of Education, is responsible to consider and present recommendations to the Board of Directors on major issues having an overall impact on the management and operation of APSEA.

The Program Advisory Committee, comprised of the provincial Directors of Student Services and government-appointed members from each province, is responsible for advising the Board on matters relating to programs and services for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind, or visually impaired.

The Financial Advisory Committee, comprised of the Director of Finance in each Department of Education, is responsible for providing expertise and support, through the Executive Committee, to the Board of Directors, in the financial management of APSEA.

There are two Trust Fund Committees which determine how monies for scholarships, awards, or special projects will be distributed; one for the trust funds for children who are blind or visually impaired and one for the trust funds for children who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. Each committee consists of three members; the Program Director, the Director of Finance and Administration, and an individual from the community. The APSEA Board of Directors is the final authority for the administration of trust funds.

School districts/boards are recognized as having responsibility for the education of the school-age population. Programs and services offered by APSEA provide support to school districts/boards implementing services for children and youth who are deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind, blind or visually impaired. The extent to which APSEA programs and services are utilized by individual provinces depends on the needs of each province.

APSEA supports a service delivery system which makes it possible for each child to receive an educational program designed to meet the child's individual needs.

APSEA continues to extend its service delivery system to include a variety of educational settings and supports for students in the public school system.

### **Programs and Services for Children who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or Deafblind**

- S Direct instruction is provided in public schools to individual students by itinerant teachers for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. A tutor provides direct service to an individual student under the supervision of an itinerant teacher. An educational interpreter/assistant interprets information presented by teachers through either sign or oral language.
- S Short-term programs are provided for children and youth from 5 to 21 years of age. These programs are one to two weeks in length and have a clearly defined, focused curriculum intended to provide the student with specific skills in a designated area. These programs focus on issues such as; social skills acquisition, language, career education, interpreter issues, organizational skills, etc.
- S Language transition programs may be provided in public schools for students from 5 to 21 years of age. These programs are provided to students who require more intensive language instruction.
- S Preschool and parent education services.
- S Assessment and prescriptive programming for all children and youth from birth to 21 years of age who are deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind.
- S Consultative services including workshops for parents, teachers, provincial Departments of Education, health care personnel, service agencies, and interested community groups.
- S Provision and maintenance of amplification equipment.
- S Library services.
- S Transition planning for students from 14 to 21 years of age.
- S Student and family consultative services.
- S Parent Education Workshops/weekend workshops are held each year at the APSEA Centre.

## **Programs and Services for Children and Youth who are Blind or Visually Impaired**

- S Direct instruction is provided in public schools to individual students by itinerant teachers for students who are blind or visually impaired.  
A tutor provides direct service to an individual student under the supervision of an itinerant teacher.
- S Short-term programs are designed to provide a comprehensive level of programming which may be difficult to incorporate in an inclusive setting. They have a focused curriculum intended to provide the student with specific skills in a designated time period. One-to-three week programs address very specific skills and have clearly defined goals and objectives to be accomplished (e.g., programs addressing such issues as night mobility, orientation and mobility awareness, use of adaptive technology, career exploration, and parent coaching). Three-to-five month programs generally address a much broader array of student needs and involve completion of the local school mathematics and language arts programs during the program (e.g., rehabilitation of a child who is newly blinded, independent living skills, co-operative education programming, and compensatory skill development).
- S Preschool and parent education services.
- S Assessment and prescriptive programming for all children and youth from birth to 21 years of age who are blind or visually impaired.
- S Consultative services including workshops for parents, teachers, provincial Departments of Education, health care personnel, service agencies, and interested community groups.
- S Braille transcription and production of alternative format materials.

- S Library service.
- S Provision of low vision aids, technological equipment services, adapted educational aids and materials.
- S Orientation and mobility services.
- S Transition planning for students from 14 to 21 years of age.
- S Student and family consultative services.

*For further information, please contact:*

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