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Delaware mantiene su escuela para Deaf dentro de un único distrito local, y ningún documento público dice cuánto cuesta

Heather Grizzle · September 5, 2026

Delaware keeps its only school for deaf children inside one local district. No public document says what that arrangement costs. NDEDI's Delaware file.

What the Delaware state file in the National Deaf Education Data Index found...

Delaware debía ser el caso fácil. Diecinueve distritos escolares, veintidós agencias charter, una escuela para niños sordos y un estado lo bastante pequeño como para que una familia de Selbyville pueda ir en coche a la única escuela para sordos del estado y volver en una tarde. Cuando construí el archivo de Delaware para el National Deaf Education Data Index en agosto, esperaba un perfil breve. Lo que produjo el registro, en cambio, fue el arreglo de gobernanza más inusual de los ocho estados examinados hasta ahora, un modelo de financiación que ningún documento publicado cuantifica, y una denuncia federal de derechos civiles vigente cuya cifra central nadie, ni siquiera el estado, puede verificar.

El Index es un proyecto de referencia de cincuenta y un jurisdicciones que documenta, únicamente a partir de fuentes primarias, dónde se educa a los estudiantes Deaf y con dificultades auditivas, qué fondos públicos los siguen y qué maquinaria institucional rige la prestación. Se auditaron las cuarenta y una agencias educativas locales de Delaware, cada cifra a continuación es rastreable hasta una fuente pública identificada, y donde el registro guardaba silencio, el archivo lo indica en lugar de llenar el vacío. Esa disciplina importó más en Delaware que en ningún estado anterior.

Una escuela estatal que pertenece a un distrito

The Delaware School for the Deaf in Newark is a public residential school with a statutory basis, state-funded staff positions, and accreditation from the Conference of Educational Administrators of Schools and Programs for the Deaf. It is also a school of the Christina School District, one of Delaware's nineteen local districts, and so is Statewide Programs for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind, the umbrella that serves deaf children in the other forty agencies. Where Alabama runs its deaf school through a state agency and Connecticut buys places at a private one, Delaware keeps a public school and places the whole apparatus inside one local district.

El estatuto operativo, 14 Del. C. § 1331, se lee más como un plan de personal que como una carta constitutiva. Establece proporciones para maestros de recursos, tutores de intérpretes, especialistas en alfabetización y asesores residenciales, declara a todos ellos puestos de unidad estatal, y nunca menciona a Christina. No se pudo localizar ninguna disposición del Título 14 que asigne la escuela a algún distrito, por lo que la asignación parece descansar en la práctica administrativa más que en la ley expresa. Eso no es un punto académico. El 1 de enero de 2023 la Asamblea General usó el lenguaje de epílogo presupuestario para trasladar la Office of Statewide Autism Programs fuera de Christina y hacia el Department of Education. El mecanismo para desprender un programa estatal del distrito existe, se ha usado en los últimos cuatro años, y los programas para sordos, con dificultades auditivas y sordociegos son los únicos que aún permanecen allí.

Dinero que fluye por tres canales y no aparece en ninguno

Christina's own budget documents describe the school as one of three programmes for which the district is fiscal agent and state that they "are all partially state funded with the remainder coming from tuition billing." The state's share arrives through the ordinary unit count. In the certified 2025-26 count the school carries 105 students generating 40.38 units, every one of them in the complex special education unit and none in preschool, basic or intensive. The remainder arrives as bills. Delaware law lets a receiving district charge tuition for a nonresident pupil counted in the complex unit, and because every student at the school is a complex-unit student, every one of them is billable to the district or charter where the family lives. Those sending agencies pay from a local tuition tax that each board may levy without a referendum.

The consequence is that no state budget document isolates a dollar figure for the Delaware School for the Deaf. The Governor's FY2026 recommended budget itemises no district and no statewide programme. No per-pupil tuition rate is published, and no

document states whether charters are billed on the same basis as districts or whether families pay anything for the residential programme. Capital is the one clean case: the State Auditor's records show roughly thirty-nine million dollars in state construction appropriations between 2007 and 2010. Operating cost is invisible.

I want to be precise about what that does and does not mean. A legislator, a parent, an advocate or an auditor asking what Delaware spends on deaf education cannot answer the question from published sources. That is not evidence of anything improper. It is evidence that the school's finances are structurally hidden by the design of the funding, which is a more durable problem than any particular funding level would be. One illustration: a court-ordered property reassessment in New Castle County forced Christina to reset its tuition tax rate from $0.8903 to $0.1981 per hundred dollars of assessed value, and that levy is the one from which tuition billing is paid. A county reassessment reaches, three steps removed, the local tax that helps fund the state's only school for deaf children.

Cuarenta agencias, un solo nombre

Delaware has no listening and spoken language educational placement. There are no OPTION Schools members, no auditory-oral school, and no auditory-verbal track anywhere in the state; the only such service is clinical, inside the cochlear implant programme at Nemours Children's Health. Christina therefore holds both ends of the pathway. What it does not hold is the day-to-day instruction of mainstreamed deaf children. Its outreach arm describes itself as a provider of "technical assistance, coaching, and professional development," and its service list is addressed to district staff rather than to students, asking districts whether their assessment teams understand hearing loss and whether they have "the time and training" to evaluate their own deaf education staff.

That last question presumes districts have deaf education staff to evaluate. Of forty-one local education agencies, exactly one names the Delaware School for the Deaf, Statewide Programs, or Christina anywhere on its public website, and that one is Christina. Two agencies met the threshold for a coded programme: Christina, the operator, and Appoquinimink, the state's largest district, whose entire published hearing provision is one bullet in a related services list reading "itinerant services for the hard of hearing, partially deaf (HHPD)." Fourteen agencies mention hearing only in passing. Twenty-four publish nothing at all. One, a Dover charter whose every web domain has failed, could not be read by any method. No Delaware agency outside Chris-

tina publishes the title of a teacher of the deaf, an educational interpreter or an educational audiologist. Publication is not the same as service, and the Index says so in every workbook. But a service designed to build district capacity is operating in a state where no district discloses any.

El número en el centro de una denuncia de derechos civiles que nadie puede verificar

In December 2023 the ACLU of Delaware filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights alleging systemic discrimination against deaf and hard of hearing youth. Its headline claim was quantitative: nationally about nine per cent of deaf and hard of hearing children attend a school for the deaf, and in Delaware the figure is over forty. The director of Statewide Programs said she was "not sure where they got the 40% number." Members of the deaf community objected to the complaint as well, the ACLU filed a narrowed version in June 2024 with an apology, and no public outcome has been located.

Here is what the state's own record can contribute. The Department of Education's last child count broken out by disability category is for 2017-18. It recorded 201 students aged six to twenty-one in the hearing impairment category, of whom 113 spent most of the school day in a regular class and 56 were in a separate school, a share of 27.9 per cent. Nothing comparable has been published since. Current educational environment files disaggregate by age and by race and never by disability category, and the state's otherwise excellent open data portal carries a single binary disability flag. As of 2024-25 there is no published Delaware source from which anyone can determine where the state's deaf and hard of hearing students are educated.

The 27.9 per cent figure and the forty per cent figure are not the same measure, and the file does not pretend they are. The complaint appears to describe all deaf and hard of hearing children, including those under five, where the school's share would be much higher. But the point holds whichever number is closer to right. A state facing a federal complaint about placement rates stopped publishing placement rates by disability category several years before the complaint was filed. I found no evidence the two facts are connected, and the second is almost certainly a reporting simplification. The effect is identical either way: the central factual question in the dispute cannot be resolved from Delaware's published data by the complainant, the respondent, or anyone else.

Qué más corrigió el registro

Two smaller findings are worth carrying forward. Delaware was believed to have passed a LEAD-K style language milestones law between 2017 and 2019. It did not. The nearest instrument is the 2010 Deaf Children's Bill of Rights, which guarantees that no child is denied instruction in a communication mode solely because another is used, but creates no assessment tool and no advisory body. This is the third consecutive state in the series whose believed LEAD-K provision dissolved on inspection. And Delaware's educational interpreter standard is unusually strict, requiring an EIPA score of 4.0 with no provisional tier where many states accept 3.5, yet the state has no general interpreter licensure at all, and a 2022 bill to create one died in committee.

Lo que el archivo no pudo establecer

El costo en dólares de la escuela en cualquier año. La tarifa de matrícula cobrada a las agencias remitentes. Si el personal de Christina enseña a estudiantes matriculados en otro lugar o solo asesora a sus maestros. El instrumento, si existe, que asigna la escuela a Christina. Los datos actuales de colocación por categoría de discapacidad. El informe de 2014 del Deaf Education Task Force, el último examen estatal sobre el tema, que no se pudo encontrar en línea. Cada uno queda registrado como una laguna en lugar de ser rellenado, y varios podrían cerrarse mediante una solicitud de registros.

Delaware es el octavo estado del Index y el octavo en mostrar que no existe una norma nacional sobre cómo un estado educa a los niños sordos. Lo que añade es una lección específica sobre visibilidad. Una escuela puede ser pública, estatutaria, acreditada y estable en su matrícula, y aun así resultar imposible de encontrar en un presupuesto o en un conjunto de datos de colocación. El Index existe para hacer legible ese tipo de ausencia, un estado a la vez.

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