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Every February, Idaho's Districts Report Their Deaf Children to the State. The Numbers Have Never Been Published.

Heather Grizzle · November 19, 2026

Idaho law makes every district report its deaf pupils each year. No result is published, and federal data shows no Idaho school interpreter fully certified.

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In February, the clerk of a small school district in the Idaho panhandle sits down with a stack of state paperwork. Somewhere in that stack, if the law is being followed, is a one-line report: how many deaf and blind pupils attend the district's schools. Idaho

Code section 33-3410 requires every district clerk, and every charter school that is its own district, to send that number to the state's Bureau of Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind "on or before the first day of February, in each year."

The clerk is a composite. The law is not, and neither is what happened to its results. The National Deaf Education Data Index looked for the output of that annual report in two separate reads of Idaho's public record, in August and again in November 2026. It found no published result anywhere. Idaho has a statute that would tell the public where its deaf children are, district by district, every year. The numbers go in. Nothing comes out.

Version 2.0 of the Index read all 192 of Idaho's public education units to see what the rest of the record says. It is a short record, and it is shaped by an unusual decision Idaho made in 2009 about what its school for the deaf should be.

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- In 2009 Idaho turned its school for the deaf into a "provider of supplemental services," a governmental entity that by law is "not a state agency," with a campus in Gooding and seven regional centers across the state.
- Every district must report its deaf and blind pupils to that body each February. No result of that report has been published.
- Idaho requires classroom interpreters to score 3.5 or higher on the EIPA. The federal file for 2023-24 counts 19.54 full-time interpreters in Idaho schools, and reports every one of them as not fully certified.
- Of 192 units read, one district, Coeur d'Alene, describes its own department for deaf and hard of hearing students. 140 publish nothing. One of 191 names the statewide provider.
- The state appropriated $15.6 million for deaf and blind services in fiscal 2025, about $9.5 million for the campus and $6.1 million for outreach.

HOW THIS WAS MEASURED

The National Deaf Education Data Index reads what a state and its schools publish about deaf and hard of hearing students. It does not visit classrooms, survey families or rate services. For Idaho, version 2.0 of the state file read 192 units on 11 and 12 November 2026: 115 school districts, 71 charter schools that are their own local education agency under Idaho law, the Bureau of Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind, four state agencies and consortia, and one tribal school district. The statute, the 2024 appropriations acts and the state's child count were read as original documents.

Each unit receives one code. PROGRAM means the unit publishes something specific to deaf and hard of hearing students: a named program, a department, or a named post. A PROGRAM row resting on a single form or staff line carries a weak-evidence flag, and four of Idaho's six do. MENTION means hearing appears only in a general way. NONE FOUND means the pages were read and nothing specific was published. Five units could not be read.

The codes measure publication, not service. In Idaho, the Bureau's outreach specialists may serve a district's deaf students without the district's website saying so. The Index never estimates a missing figure. Before release, the bodies the file names receive notice and ten business days to correct it.

A school that became a service

Most states have a school for the deaf with a campus, a superintendent and a line in the budget. Idaho has that, but in 2009 its Legislature rebuilt the institution around a different idea. Title 33, chapter 34 of the Idaho Code is the "Idaho Bureau of Educational Services for the Deaf and the Blind Act of 2009." Section 33-3403 establishes the Bureau as "a provider of supplemental services for students who are deaf or hard of hearing and/or blind or visually impaired."

The school comes second. The Bureau "may operate a school for the deaf and the blind at which it shall provide residential and day campus programs." It "may also operate an outreach program intended to provide services to students outside the campus area, as well as early intervention and family consultation." Its goal is to help districts and state agencies "through a continuum of service and placement options."

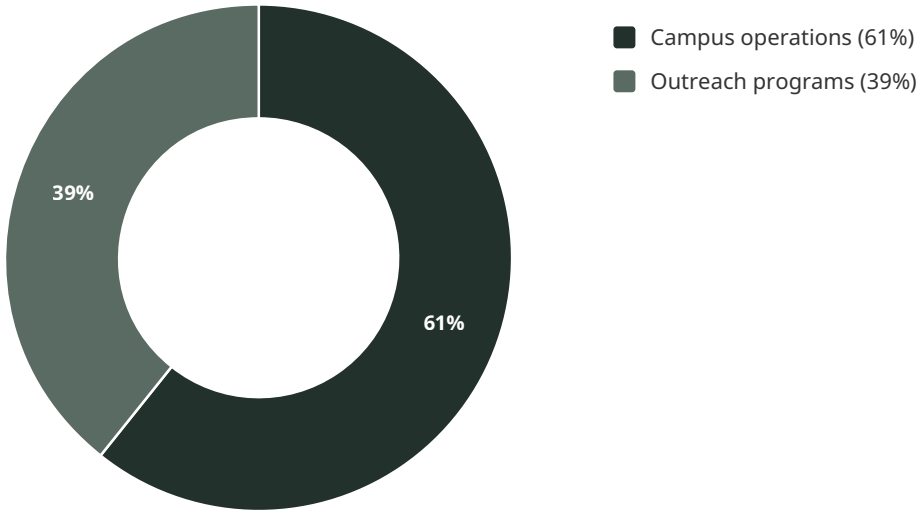
The governance is unusual too. An eight-member board runs the Bureau, seven appointed by the governor, and the state Superintendent of Public Instruction chairs it. Section 33-3407 states the Legislature's intent that the Bureau "operate and be recognized not as a state agency or department, but as a governmental entity whose creation has been authorized by the state, much in the manner as other single purpose districts." The State Board of Education still owns the Gooding campus.

The statute defines the children it serves by need, not by measurement. "Deaf or hard of hearing" means "impacted by a loss of hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a child's educational performance." There is no decibel threshold.

Gooding, and seven centers

The campus is the Idaho School for the Deaf and the Blind in Gooding, in the Magic Valley. The Bureau's site places it "at one end of this continuum" and says the Bureau "will serve all qualifying residents of Idaho from birth to age 21."

The other end of the continuum is outreach. The Bureau works "from seven regional Education Centers," at Post Falls, Lewiston, Caldwell, Meridian, Gooding, Pocatello and Idaho Falls. Its "Outreach Educational Specialists are certified teachers" who support families and districts. Its outreach program "provides early intervention services at no cost to the families of birth to three with a permanent hearing and/or vision loss." An audiologist tests children at the Gooding campus clinic.



Idaho deaf and blind services appropriation, FY2025, by function

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Hom (Category)	Dollars
Campus operations	9484400
Outreach programs	6130400

That is the design: a statewide provider whose outreach staff go to children, not a school children must go to. The appropriation reflects it. The 2024 Legislative Fiscal Report divides the fiscal 2025 money into $9,484,400 for campus operations and $6,130,400 for outreach. Two acts, House Bill 460 and House Bill 719, together appropriate $15,614,800, up from $15,269,400 the year before. The additions paid for career ladder equivalence, four replacement vehicles and a 2 percent pay change.

What the Bureau does not publish is how many children it serves. No enrollment appears on the pages read, and the fiscal report prints none. The federal file for fall 2024 places 20 school-age Idaho pupils with hearing impairment in a residential facility and 20 in a separate school. The Index does not assume those are all at Gooding. No caseload for the outreach program appears either, so the obvious

question, whether the money follows the children, cannot be answered from public records.

The report that disappears

That brings the story back to the clerks. Section 33-3410 is a simple, practical instrument. Each February, every district and every charter school that is its own district reports "the number of deaf and blind pupils, as defined in section 33-3402, Idaho Code, attending the school or schools of the district" to the Bureau.

If published, it would be the only instrument in Idaho that places deaf children in districts. The state's own child count is statewide. The federal file is statewide. Idaho publishes no count of deaf students by district in any form the Index found. So the Index's publication measure, the share of identified deaf students in a district that publishes a program, cannot be computed for Idaho. A state law already collects the denominator. It is simply not released.

IDAHO IN FOUR NUMBERS

325
children with hearing impairment, fall 2024

0
published district reports under Idaho Code 33-3410

19.54
full-time school interpreters, 2023-24

0

of them reported as fully certified

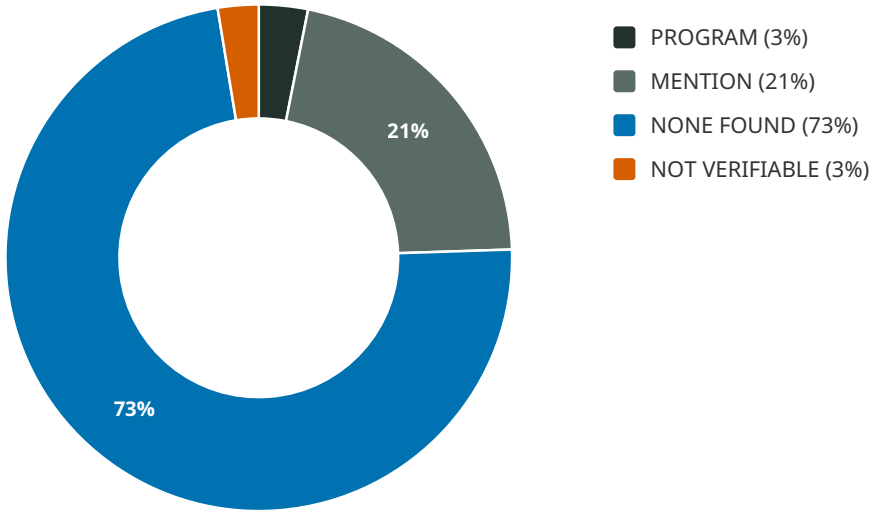
Source: NDEDI Idaho file 12, v2.0; Idaho Department of Education 2024-25 child count; IDEA Section 618 personnel file 2023-24

The statute also requires the Bureau's administrator to "make an annual report of the bureau's activities to the state board of education." The Index did not find that report either.

One district with a department

The Index read every district and charter school. One describes a department of its own. Coeur d'Alene's page gives the mission of "the Department of Students Who Are Deaf and Hard of Hearing," which is "to serve students who are deaf and hard of hearing in our District," and lists sign language interpreting, captioning and other services. It does not name the Bureau.

Four more show thinner evidence. Minidoka County posts a form titled "Sign Language Interpreter Request." Madison and Shelley each say their staff includes "paraprofessionals, ASL and language interpreters, and intervention specialists," in the same words. Idaho Falls rests on a district document read in August. Forty-one units mention hearing in a general way, up from 26 in version 1.0. One hundred forty publish nothing. Five could not be read: Lapwai, Ririe, Culdesac, Three Creek and Rolling Hills Public Charter School.



Idaho's 192 public education units, by what they publish

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Hom (Category)	Cov chav
KEV PAB CUAM	6
HAIS TXOG	41
TSIS POM	140
NOT VERIFIABLE	5

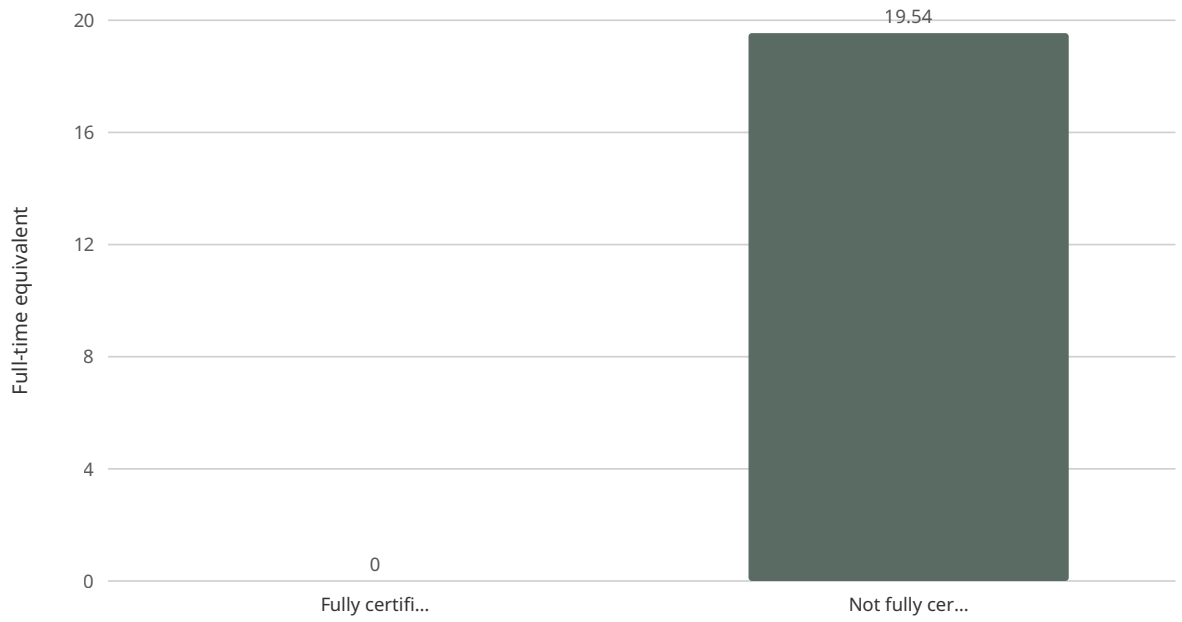
That silence matters more in Idaho than in most states, because of how the system is built. Idaho chose a statewide provider that sends specialists into local schools. That model only works for families if they know it exists. One of the 191 other units in the state names the Bureau on its website. The Bureau, in turn, publishes its seven regional centers and no list of the districts and charter schools it serves. A family in Salmon or Bonners Ferry or Burley has no way to learn from either side that a Bureau specialist may already be assigned to their child's school.

A standard the workforce does not meet

Idaho does something many states do not. It sets a legal floor for classroom interpreters. Section 33-1304 says "no person shall act as an educational interpreter in an Idaho public school unless the person has been qualified to do so," and a person is qualified who "Has achieved a score of 3.5 or higher on the educational interpreter performance assessment" or a comparable test the Bureau accepts, or holds a named national certificate. The Bureau may grant emergency authorization.

Then there is the federal personnel file for 2023-24. It counts 19.54 full-time equivalent interpreters working in Idaho schools. It reports every one of them as not fully certified. It also counts 2 audiologists. No count of teachers of the deaf is published.

The Index does not interpret the gap beyond the record. "Fully certified" in the federal file is defined by what the state reports, and an emergency authorization would explain part of it. But on the face of the two published instruments, Idaho has a law requiring interpreters to be qualified and a federal report saying none of its school interpreters are fully certified. The Bureau's emergency authorizations, if they explain the gap, are not published either.



Idaho school interpreters, 2023-24, federal personnel file

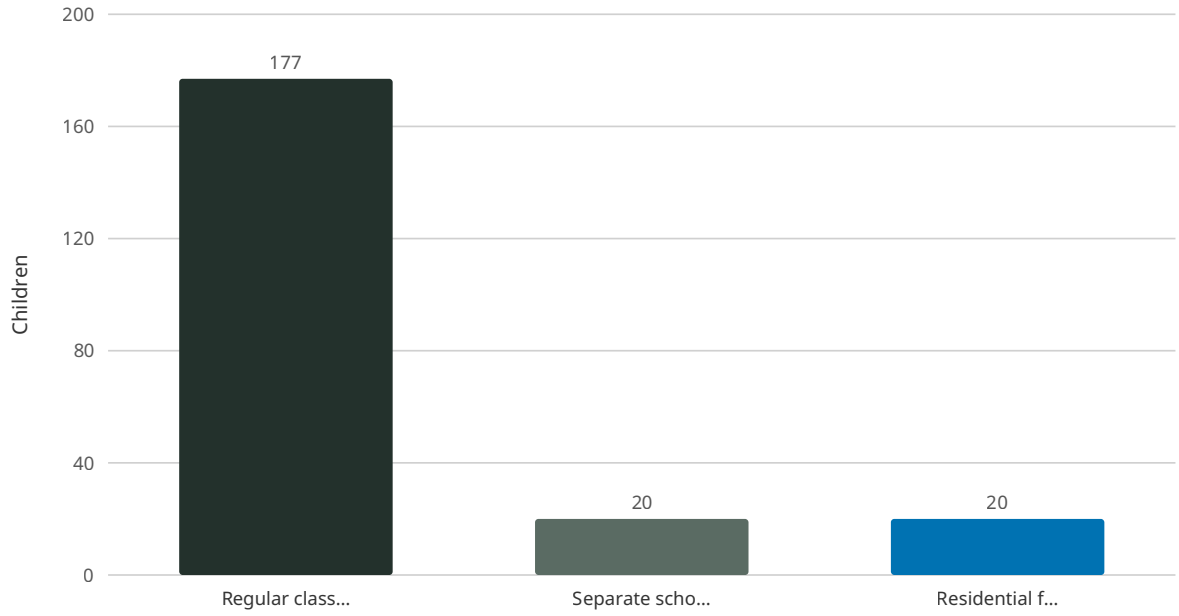
Saib Cov Ntaub Ntawv

Hom (Category)	Full-time equivalent
Fully certified	0
Not fully certified	19.54

What the counts show

The state's own child count for 2024-25, re-read in November 2026, prints 325 children with hearing impairment, 31 in early childhood and 294 of school age, out of 40,914 children with disabilities. It prints 9 school-age children with deaf-blindness. The federal file agrees.

The federal environments file shows where the 294 are taught. Most, 177, spent 80 percent or more of the day in a regular class. Twenty were in a separate school and 20 in a residential facility. Version 1.0 of the Index carried a school-age figure of 246 from a state environments file; version 2.0 found that 246 is the number of pupils of all disabilities in separate schools, not deaf pupils, and closed the conflict.



Idaho school-age children with hearing impairment, selected settings, fall 2024

Saib Cov Ntaub Ntawv

Hom (Category)	Menyuam Yaus
Regular class 80 percent or more	177
Separate school	20
Residential facility	20

The deafblind numbers show the familiar spread. The federal category counts 9 Idaho children. The National Deafblind Child Count, which includes every child with combined vision and hearing loss whatever the primary label, counts 75. The Idaho Project for Children and Youth with Deaf-Blindness, run through the University of Idaho's Center on Disabilities and Human Development with an office in Boise, serves them.

Around the edges

The Idaho State Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, created at section 67-7303, is "the interdepartmental and interagency planning and advisory body" for state programs affecting deaf people. Early intervention under Part C sits with the Department of Health and Welfare's Infant Toddler Program. The Bureau's outreach provides deaf-specific early intervention beside it. How the two relate is not stated on any page read.

The Bureau publishes no statement of a classroom language policy. Its pages describe a continuum of services and name no language of instruction, ASL, English or both. That is unusual for a state school for the deaf, and it fits a body the Legislature defined as a provider of services rather than a school with a philosophy.

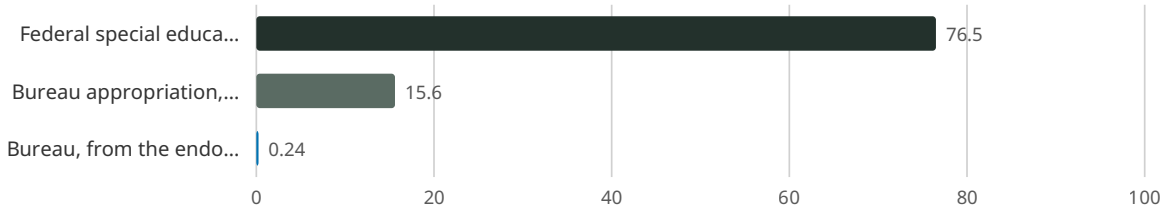
No private school or program for deaf children in Idaho was established from the pages read. No scholarship or voucher was in force in fiscal 2025.

An endowment and a fund that does not lapse

Most of the Bureau's money comes from the Public School Income Fund, but two smaller sources say something about how Idaho thinks of it. House Bill 460 drew 233,600 dollars for fiscal 2025 from the School for the Deaf and the Blind Endowment Fund, and House Bill 719 added 3,600 more. Section 33-3408 creates a separate trust fund for the Bureau that is "continuously appropriated," meaning it does not wait for the Legislature each year. And the campus property at Gooding "shall remain with the Idaho state board of education," not with the Bureau that runs it.

The design fits the statute's description of the Bureau as "not ... a state agency or department, but ... a governmental entity ... much in the manner as other single purpose districts." It has its own board, its own endowment income and its own standing fund, but not its own land. The Legislative Fiscal Report divides the fiscal 2025 appropriation into campus operations and outreach. The acts themselves do not.

Federal special education grants to Idaho for the same year were 76,513,505 dollars: 71,082,417 under Part B, 2,415,909 for preschool and 3,015,179 for infants and families. None of it is tied to deafness.



Idaho money touching deaf children, fiscal 2025 (millions of dollars)

Saib Cov Ntaub Ntawv

Hom (Category)	Millions
Federal special education grants	76.5
Bureau appropriation, all sources	15.6
Bureau, from the endowment fund	0.24

One unit in 191

The Bureau publishes seven regional centers and no list of the districts and charter schools it serves. Of the 191 other public education units in Idaho, 1 names the Bureau on the pages the Index read.

That matters more in Idaho than in many states because of its charter sector. Each authorized charter school is its own local education agency unless the charter holder and authorizer agree otherwise, which is why 71 of the 192 units in the frame are charter schools. A deaf child at a small rural charter school is that school's responsibility under federal law. The school has, on paper, two ways to meet it: hire or contract its own specialists, or call the Bureau's outreach specialist from the nearest regional center. No charter school's pages say which it does.

The Index's interpretation, marked as such. The Bureau was built to be a statewide provider of "supplemental services," and it is. But a provider that no unit names in public is invisible to a family choosing a school. A parent in Idaho Falls comparing two charter schools cannot tell from either one's website that the Bureau's regional center a few miles away is the place deaf children get their teacher of the deaf.

What changed after the reference year

Version 1.0 of the Idaho file recorded two changes to the state's school choice landscape in 2025: a Parental Choice Tax Credit enacted that year, and the end of the Empowering Parents grants. Both fall after the reference year and were not re-read for version 2.0. They are carried as the earlier version printed them. Neither is known to publish anything by disability category. If either reaches deaf children in meaningful numbers, the state's clerks' report under section 33-3410, the one instrument that would count deaf pupils school by school, becomes even more important, and it is still not published.

A small thing the file keeps open

Version 1.0 found two different names for the Bureau's administrator on the Bureau's own pages. Version 2.0 did not transcribe the names or re-test the conflict, so it stays open. It is a small item, but it is the kind of thing a state agency can settle in one line on its own website, and the kind of thing a family trying to reach the person in charge would notice first.

Questions Idaho is positioned to answer

1. What did the district clerks report under section 33-3410 in February 2025 and February 2026, and will the Bureau publish the totals by district?
2. How many students attended the Gooding campus in 2024-25, and how many children did the outreach program serve?
3. Where is the administrator's annual report to the State Board of Education?
4. How many of Idaho's school interpreters met the 3.5 EIPA standard, how many worked under emergency authorization, and in which districts?
5. Which districts and charter schools does each of the seven regional centers serve?
6. What language or languages does the Gooding campus use for instruction?

Go back to the clerk in the panhandle. Each February, she does her part. She counts the deaf and blind children in her district and sends the number to the Bureau, as the law has required since 2009. The Bureau is the one body in Idaho that holds a statewide, district-by-district map of where its deaf children are. Idaho built its

system on the idea that services should go to children instead of children going to a school. That idea depends on families and districts knowing where the services are. The map exists. Idaho could publish it.

The full Idaho file covers all 192 units, each row with its source link, retrieval date and method, and is available under the Index′s licensing terms. Corrections are welcome and are published with the next version.

Heather Grizzle-Odland is the founder of Novara Consulting Group and principal investigator of the National Deaf Education Data Index. She is DeafBlind and lives in Minnesota.

TIPS

Know something about a sign language AI system that the public should know? Send it to tips@novaracg.com. Every tip is read by me and kept confidential. If you work in the UK, writing to us is not by itself a protected disclosure under the Public Interest Disclosure Act 1998, so before you share employer information, check your options with Protect (protect-advice.org.uk), the free whistleblowing advice line.

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Grizzle, H. M. (2026, November 19). Every February, Idaho’s Districts Report Their Deaf Children to the State. The Numbers Have Never Been Published.. Novara Consulting Group. https://www.novaracg.com/hmn/2026/11/19/every-february-idahos-districts-report-their-deaf-children-to-the-state-the-numbers-have-never-been-published/