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# Delaware Mantém Sua Escola para Deaf Dentro de um Único Distrito Local, e Nenhum Documento Público Diz Quanto Isso Custa

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 deveria ser o caso fácil. Dezenove distritos escolares, vinte e duas agências charter, uma escola para crianças surdas e um estado pequeno o suficiente para que uma família em Selbyville possa ir de carro até a única escola para surdos do estado e voltar em uma tarde. Quando construí o arquivo de Delaware para o National Deaf Education Data Index em agosto, eu esperava um perfil curto. O que o registro produziu, em vez disso, foi o arranjo de governança mais incomum entre os oito estados examinados até agora, um modelo de financiamento que nenhum documento publicado quantifica, e uma reclamação de direitos civis federal ativa cujo número central ninguém, nem mesmo o estado, consegue verificar.

O Index é um projeto de referência de cinquenta e uma jurisdições que documenta, apenas a partir de fontes primárias, onde os alunos surdos e com deficiência auditiva são educados, que dinheiro público os acompanha e qual maquinaria institucional rege a oferta. Todas as quarenta e uma agências educacionais locais de Delaware foram auditadas, cada número abaixo é rastreável a uma fonte pública nomeada, e onde o registro era omisso o arquivo diz isso em vez de preencher a lacuna. Essa disciplina importou mais em Delaware do que em qualquer estado anterior.

## Uma escola estadual que pertence a um 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.

O estatuto em vigor, 14 Del. C. § 1331, lê-se como um quadro de pessoal em vez de um estatuto fundador. Ele estabelece proporções para professores de apoio, tutores de intérpretes, especialistas em alfabetização e conselheiros residenciais, declara todos eles como cargos de unidade estadual e nunca nomeia Christina. Nenhuma disposição do Título 14 que atribua a escola a qualquer distrito pôde ser localizada, de modo que a atribuição parece se basear em prática administrativa em vez de lei expressa. Esse não é um ponto acadêmico. Em 1º de janeiro de 2023, a Assembleia Geral usou linguagem de epílogo orçamentário para transferir o Office of Statewide Autism Programs de Christina para o Department of Education. O mecanismo para desvincular um programa estadual do distrito existe, foi usado nos últimos quatro anos, e os programas para surdos, com deficiência auditiva e surdo-cegos são os únicos que ainda permanecem lá.

### Dinheiro que flui por três canais e não aparece em nenhum

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.

**Quarenta agências, um só nome**

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.

O número no centro de uma reclamação de direitos civis que ninguém consegue 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.

### O que mais o registro corrigiu

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.

### O que o arquivo não conseguiu estabelecer

O custo em dólares da escola em qualquer ano. A taxa de mensalidade cobrada das agências remetentes. Se a equipe de Christina ensina alunos matriculados em outro lugar ou apenas orienta seus professores. O instrumento, se houver, que atribui a escola a Christina. Dados atuais de colocação por categoria de deficiência. O relatório de 2014 do Deaf Education Task Force, o último exame estadual do assunto, que não pôde ser encontrado on-line. Cada um é registrado como uma lacuna em vez de preenchido, e vários poderiam ser resolvidos por uma solicitação de registros.

Delaware é o oitavo estado no Index e o oitavo a mostrar que não existe uma norma nacional para como um estado educa crianças surdas. O que ele acrescenta é uma lição específica sobre visibilidade. Uma escola pode ser pública, estatutária, credenciada e estável em matrículas, e ainda assim ser impossível de encontrar em um orçamento ou em um conjunto de dados de colocação. O Index existe para tornar esse tipo de ausência legível, um estado de cada vez.

> **TIPS**
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> 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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