

POLICY  
RHODE ISLAND SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

ADMISSIONS

**Purpose**

Rhode Island School for the Deaf is a State supported public school that was established in 1876 to proudly serve deaf and hard of hearing students and their particular learning needs. This school environment is the least restrictive environment for its students, providing a language rich and linguistically accessible curriculum where all can easily communicate and peer relationships are easily developed. Both English and American Sign Language are honored as separate and distinct languages used by the larger community.

The School is a place where true belonging and achievement are possible among children and youth with widely diverse hearing levels who might tend to “get by” or “fake it” in a large public school where all other students are able to hear each other more easily.

**Policy**

Unlike most public schools, Rhode Island School for the Deaf has an eligibility criterion for admission. Minimum requirements for potential enrollment are as follows:

- Has a residence in Rhode Island  
(Other students from nearby states may tuition in if accepted.)
- Is between the ages of 3 and 22 years old
- Has an updated immunization record and recent medical exam
- Has a current audiogram that documents hearing loss and/or a written medical diagnosis
- Benefits from American Sign Language or from a specialized, auditory/aural classroom for best access to the general curriculum
- Referred by his/her school district

Because Rhode Island School for the Deaf primarily serves students who are deaf and hard of hearing or severely speech challenged, completed referrals must include documentation of a hearing loss, if there is one, identified by a physician or audiologist and include a complete special education evaluation by a sending school district or agency. Students who enroll may have one or more additional disabilities in addition to the following:.

- **Deafness** – A hearing level that is significant and that the student is prevented from processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, and that adversely affects a student’s educational performance and ability to access the full and general curriculum.
- **Hard of Hearing** – A level of hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects a student’s educational performance in any way but that is not included under the definition of deafness.

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- **Deaf-blind** – Deaf-blindness refers to concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with deafness or students with blindness.
- **Language Deprivation Syndrome** -- Language deprivation occurs due to a chronic lack of full access to a natural language during the critical period of language acquisition (when there is an elevated neurological sensitivity for language development), approximately the first five years of a child's life. Language deprivation during the critical period appears to have permanent consequences for long-term neurological development and poses a serious challenge to learning.
- **Speech or Language Disorder** --Speech and language disorders can refer to problems in communication and related areas such as oral motor function. These delays and disorders range from sound substitutions to the inability to understand or use language or use the oral-motor mechanism for functional speech and feeding. Language disorders, which can be spoken or written, make it difficult for a person to comprehend things or fully share his or her thoughts, ideas and feelings. Sign language has been found to be a strong support in addressing learning challenges in these areas.

As with any public school, the student body at Rhode Island School for the Deaf is diverse, however this school is not intended to serve students whose needs are most appropriately addressed in a healthcare home or hospital setting or in a residential treatment facility. We do not accept children or youth with a history of fire starting nor juveniles who have committed sex offenses or violence upon others.

### **Referral Process**

Students are referred to this school from the school district where they live. The district will hold a meeting for an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan. At this meeting, parents have the right to review the choices for educational placement, including potential placement at a school such as ours, where fluent instruction in sign language and small classes taught by certified Teachers of the Deaf are available in a fully acoustically treated building that was designed and constructed specifically for educating deaf and hard of hearing students.

As a public entity, tours are always available to curious or interested families and guardians. Students who are already age 6 and older are welcome to come and meet our students while they sit in and observe a class.

### **Initial Intake**

All students who enter do so initially for an 8-9 week diagnostic period.

During this diagnostic period, RISDeaf may conduct a full intake evaluation with the permission of the parent/guardian. This may consist of, but is not limited to:

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- Social history
  - Psychological evaluation
  - Educational evaluation
  - Medical evaluation
  - Audiological evaluation
  - Speech & Language assessments; APE, OT or PT screenings.
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- If your child is in Preschool or Kindergarten
    - Play-based assessments/observations will be conducted
    - A language sample will be videotaped and language testing will occur.
    - Brigance Developmental Testing will be conducted.
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- If your child is in grades 3-12, your child will:
    - Brigance testing or
    - STAR Reading and Math tests
    - Demonstrate competency in reading a grade level vocabulary list
    - Produce a language sample to be videotaped and analyzed

### **Enrollment**

Once these assessments are complete, we will determine if we have an appropriate peer class for your child. If we do, we will hold a meeting with you and your District representative to review and update your child's IEP.

Once enrolled, students attend the school at no cost, with educational costs for the Core Program paid for by the State of Rhode Island and any supportive needs detailed in the child's IEP (that are in addition to the Core Program offered by the school) paid for by the sending school district. The School's hours are 8:05am-2:55pm.

### **Transportation**

Parents may choose to drive their child to school daily, however, transportation is available door-to-door at no charge to the family, under special education provision.

### **References**

R.I. G.L §16-26-7. Admission of Students

R.I.G.L. §16-26-7. Persons admissible.