

HB 481 -- ASSESSMENTS FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

SPONSOR: Fitzwater (49)

This bill establishes a language assessment program for children who are deaf or hard of hearing from birth through the age of eight. The program will be coordinated by the Missouri Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Starting on July 1, 2019, the bill requires annual language assessments to be given to children who are under nine years of age and who are deaf or hard of hearing. The assessments must be provided either through early intervention services administered by the commission or through the child's school district provided the child is three years of age or older.

The bill establishes an advisory committee on the language assessment program under the commission, specifies the structure of the committee, and requires the executive director to call an organizational meeting of the committee no later than September 1, 2017.

On or before January 31, 2019, the advisory committee must develop specific action plans and make recommendations to fully implement the assessment program. The bill requires the committee to collaborate with specified offices, solicit input from professionals trained in the language development and education of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, review, recommend and monitor the use of existing and available language assessments, identify and recommend qualifications of language professionals and language assessment evaluators, and identify procedures and methods for communicating information on language acquisition, assessment results, milestones, and assessment tools used. The bill specifies what must be included in the committee's specific action plans and recommendations.

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, the Department of Health and Senior Services, and the State School for the Deaf must enter into interagency agreements with the Commission to share statewide aggregate data.

On or before January 31, 2019, and each January 31 thereafter, the bill requires the Commission to publish a report specific to developmental milestones of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The advisory committee expires on July 1, 2019.

This bill is the same as SB 51 (2017).