

7-702. STATE POLICY.

(A) SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION.

IT IS THE POLICY OF THE STATE TO ENCOURAGE AND ENABLE BLIND, VISUALLY IMPAIRED, DEAF, AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS TO PARTICIPATE FULLY IN THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC LIFE OF THE STATE AND TO BE EMPLOYED.

(B) EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTED BY PUBLIC FUNDS.

IT IS THE POLICY OF THE STATE THAT BLIND, VISUALLY IMPAIRED, DEAF, AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS SHALL BE EMPLOYED BY THE STATE, POLITICAL SUBDIVISIONS OF THE STATE, PUBLIC SCHOOLS, AND OTHER EMPLOYERS SUPPORTED WHOLLY OR PARTLY BY PUBLIC FUNDS ON THE SAME TERMS AND CONDITIONS AS INDIVIDUALS WITHOUT THOSE DISABILITIES, UNLESS AN INDIVIDUAL'S DISABILITY PREVENTS DOING THE WORK REQUIRED.

(C) DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING RECOGNIZED AS CULTURAL MINORITY.

DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS IN THE STATE ARE RECOGNIZED AS A CULTURAL MINORITY WITH SPECIALIZED COMMUNICATION NEEDS.

(D) AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE.

(1) IN THIS SUBSECTION, "AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE" MEANS A VISUAL-SPATIAL METHOD OF COMMUNICATION THAT IS A DISTINCT LANGUAGE INVOLVING THE HANDS, ARMS, FACIAL MARKERS, AND BODY MOVEMENTS TO COMMUNICATE WITH OTHERS, INCLUDING THE CONVEYANCE OF THOUGHTS, WORDS, EMOTIONS, AND GRAMMATICAL INFORMATION.

(2) AMERICAN SIGN LANGUAGE IS RECOGNIZED AS A LANGUAGE SYSTEM DESIGNED TO MEET THE SPECIALIZED COMMUNICATION NEEDS OF DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING INDIVIDUALS.

REVISOR'S NOTE: This section is new language derived without substantive change from former Art. 30, §§ 34 and 33(a) and (b).

As to the substitution of the references to "hard of hearing" and "visually impaired" individuals for the former references to "hearing impaired" and "visually handicapped" individuals in subsections (a) and (b) of this section, *see* General Revisor's Note to subtitle.

In subsection (a) of this section, the reference to "be[ing] employed" is substituted for the former reference to "engag[ing] in remunerative employment" for brevity.

In subsection (b) of this section, the references to "disabilities" and a "disability" are substituted for the former obsolete references to "handicapped" and a "handicap".

Also in subsection (b) of this section, the reference to being employed "by the State [or] political subdivisions of the State" is substituted for the