

Federation Européenne



**de Parents d'Enfants
Déficient Auditifs**

**European Charter
of Parents' Rights**

F E P E D A

Fédération Européenne des Parents d'Enfants Déficients Auditifs
European Federation of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children
Europäischer Verband der Eltern hörgeschädigter Kinder
Federación Europea de Padres de Niños con Discapacidad Auditiva

European Charter of Parents' Rights

THE CHARTER

Basic principles

Deaf and hard of hearing children have the right to none discrimination and equal opportunities.

Parents have the right and the responsibility to make all the decisions concerning their children.

Parents have the right to and responsibility for choosing their child's mode of communication and education and their choices must be respected and acted upon.

Early diagnosis of deafness and prompt intervention are essential for an effective education for deaf and hard of hearing children.

Authorities must take into account individual needs of each deaf and hard-of-hearing child and act upon it.

Deaf and hard of hearing children should have equal access to high quality education, to maximise their abilities and enable them to reach their full potential.

Deaf and hard of hearing children should be encouraged to express their own opinions about their future and their views should be valued.

Parents Associations of deaf and hard-of-hearing children on local, regional, national and European levels, have direct experience and expertise and should be consulted in the development of policies affecting deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

The right to full information

Full and objective information should be available and given to all parents about their rights and possibilities and how they can be involved in decisions about their child's future.

Balanced information about the range of communication options open to deaf and hard of hearing children should be given to parents, including positive examples and parents should be encouraged to make fully informed choices.

Clear and balanced information about the range of support available at a local, regional, national and European level should be given to parents automatically.

Those working with deaf and hard of hearing children and their families should give impartial advice and information which is clear and provided via an appropriate language and means.

Parents should be provided with information about all relevant organisations that can provide them with support.

The right to high quality support

Support for parents and deaf and hard of hearing children should be given by qualified, experienced, responsive and skilled hearing or deaf professionals. These should include specialised teachers, audiologists, speech and language therapists and educational psychologists.

Parents should have access to support from an informed individual or organisation, which is independent of the education provider.

Opportunities to meet with other parents and deaf and hard of hearing adults should be offered on a regular basis in order to share experiences.

The importance of input and assistance from associations of parents of deaf and hard of hearing children must be recognised by the authorities.

The right to quality education for all children

The educational needs of deaf and hard-of-hearing children should be assessed regularly and at the least annually. This should be undertaken by an assessing body which must include the child's parents or guardians, along with appropriately skilled professionals. All assessments must be in the best interest of the child.

Education providers must cover all individual needs of each deaf and hard-of-hearing child.

The right to contribute to decision making

Meetings with professionals should be honest and open with a genuine commitment to resolve conflict when necessary.

Parents should be given clear information about any outcomes from meetings - about what will happen, by when and who will be responsible.

Parents should be fully consulted about any proposals for provision, which could affect them and their children. They should be invited to be involved in local arrangements for policy making.

Background

This Charter has been drawn up by the European Federation of Parents of Hearing Impaired Children (FEPEDA). Its purpose is to inform those responsible for proposing legislation and making decisions at European level and in the respective countries of FEPEDA, when considering legislation that affects the education of deaf and hard of hearing children. It is based on current models of good practice published by voluntary organisations in the member states and its aims are supported by the following conclusions of European and international organisations.

UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child proclaimed by General Assembly resolution no 1386 (XIV) of 20 November 1959:

Principle 7

The best interest of the child shall be the guiding principle of those responsible for his education and guidance; that responsibility lies in the first place with his parents.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989:

Article 5

States Parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents (...)

Article 14.2

States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

Article 18

(...) Parents or, as the case may be, legal guardians, have the primary responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child. The best interest of the child will be their basic concern.

2. For the purpose of guaranteeing and promoting the rights set forth in the present Convention, States Parties shall render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities and shall ensure the development of institutions, facilities and services for the care of children.

Salmanca Statement, UNESCO, 1994:

Parents, and in particular groups of parents, should play an increasing role in affecting both the planning and the quality of services. This includes the idea that professionals need training in learning to listen to parents and giving them time and space to communicate and participate in their own way.

United Nations Standard Rules for the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, Rule 18:

States should recognise the right of organisations of person with disabilities to, represent persons with disabilities at national, regional and local levels. States should also recognise the advisory role of organisations of persons with disabilities in decision-making on disability matters.

European Commission HELIOS II Principles of Good Practice in Educational Integration 1996:

Parents and advocates of learners with special educational needs must be informed, involved and empowered as partners in the decision-making process concerning the learner - there should be a sharing of responsibility.

There should be a continual flow of information between parents, educators and the disabled learners, enabling each group to be educated about the changing needs, aspirations and abilities of the others.

Parents must be considered as equal partners and work together with all those responsible for their child's education.

Some parents will need to, be empowered so that they can participate in an equal way, while others will need advocates.

Decisions about the child's inclusion in mainstream schooling should always involve parents and parental views should be given the highest authority.

European Commission HELIOS II Report of Thematic Group 9, 1997:

All information concerning the rights of people with disabilities and their families must be made available to families as early as possible in a clear and accessible language.

EPA, Rights and Duties of Parents in Europe, 1996:

Parents have the right of access to all information at educational institutions, which concerns their children.

Parents have the right of full access to the formal education system for their children on the basis of their needs, talents and merits

Madrid Declaration, March 2002:

The family of disabled people, in particular disabled children and people with complex dependency needs, unable to represent themselves, plays a vital role in their education and social inclusion.

In view of this, adequate measures for families need to be established by public authorities, in order to allow families to organise their support for the disabled person in the most inclusive way.

“European Charter of Parents' Rights” adopted by FEPEDA General Assembly July 2004

References

1. UN declaration on the Rights of the Child 1959
2. UN convention on the Rights of the child 1989
3. Salamanca Statement, UNESCO 1994, 07-SP
4. United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalisation of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, Rule 18
5. European Commission HELIOS II Principles of Good Practice in Educational Integration, 1996
6. European Commission HELIOS II Report of Thematic Group 9 - Support for Families: Information, Training Roles and Responsibilities, Involvement, Services available
7. Rights and Duties of Parents in Europe - Charter of the Rights and Responsibilities of Parents in Europe, EPA
8. The Madrid-declaration of “Non-Discrimination” March 2002

Other relevant documentation

(To be provided as required when the Charter is used at national level)