

THE UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Internal Audit Department

**Iowa School for the Deaf
Risk Assessment**

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Distribution List

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INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

Iowa School for the Deaf – Risk Assessment

BACKGROUND

The mission of the Iowa School for the Deaf (ISD) is to provide educational and support services to deaf and hard of hearing children and youth of the State of Iowa and to serve a leadership and resource role in statewide efforts to meet the needs of these students. The total students served by the school for the FY 2003-04 school year is 105, consisting of 78 on-campus, boarding students and 27 “day” students. Included in the total are 13 Nebraska students. The ISD FY 2004 annual budget totaled \$8.7 million.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This report summarizes the results of our recently completed risk assessment of the Iowa School for the Deaf in Council Bluffs, Iowa. A risk assessment consists of a limited review of major operational areas to identify potential issues that could expose ISD to future risks. This review was conducted at a relatively high level over a broad scope in order to determine where the potential for future issues was most likely. We will use the information that we have gathered and presented in this review to plan for detailed audit reviews over the next few years.

We interviewed department directors and supervisors in the following operational areas.

- Facilities
- Business Office
- Residence Programs
- Health Center
- Busing
- Food Service
- Information Technology
- Human Resources

Based on our interviews and observations, we consider management of the Information Technology function as the most immediate concern; specifically, increasing supervision, communication, and expertise within the IT function. The other areas delineated in the body of this report represent longer-term, strategic issues to be addressed by Management at the Institutional level, and then implemented at the unit level.

Specific areas of risk identified were:

- Information Technology
- Physical Security
- Institutional Mission
- Teacher Retirements

Discussion

1. Information Technology

Discussion ISD's information technology function suffers from a lack of a strategic planning process. As ISD's technology needs have expanded and become more complex, proper planning within the IT function to address the needs has been ineffective. We believe the primary causes of these problems are the lack of a comprehensive strategic plan, coordination of IT staff, supervision within the function, and expertise of support staff.

- Strategic Plan – A strategic plan requires an organization to look beyond today's needs and provide a mechanism to address an evolving environment and future challenges. We found that the IT function is not adequately addressing these issues. The focus has been on maintaining the current environment. Consequently, the growth of ISD's systems has left the current systems outdated and prone to significant downtime.
- Supervision – The current IT function consists of two individuals. We found that these individuals largely work independently and do not readily share information or coordinate their efforts effectively. The lack of interaction within the function has become counterproductive. We believe the cause is that the assigned supervisor is not comfortable with their supervisory responsibilities and has avoided carrying them out.
- Training – The staff has not had routine continuing education or training to keep up with technology advances. Consequently, unfamiliar network problems are sometimes fixed by trial and error. This approach is time-consuming and dramatically increases the risk of exacerbating the problem if the wrong approach is used. Additionally, our review found several instances where the use of standardization and best practices could be deployed. Additional, ongoing training in these areas would benefit ISD.

Recommendations

We believe the most pressing issue to address is the supervision of the IT function. Although the Superintendent is currently supervising the function, we do not believe this is the most effective solution in the long-term. We identified some options available to ISD:

- Add basic supervision of the IT function to an existing director within ISD. This would require removing these responsibilities from the current assigned supervisor.
- Upgrade the job description for the IT supervisor to require a certified IT professional.
- Subcontract network operation and desktop support to a third party. Perhaps coordinate with another Regent institution to address strategic planning and training.

2. Enrollment

Discussion Enrollment has been steadily decreasing at ISD. The decrease in students has prompted ISD to consider expanding its mission to include serving additional

students where hearing impairment is not their primary disability. This could include students with profound disabilities requiring extensive medical care. Currently, most students are largely independent and only require the specialized education ISD offers. Based on our interviews, we developed the following list of challenges ISD faces:

- Staff – Currently staff focus on the educational needs of students. Students with additional disabilities would require additional support staff to administer to their daily medical needs.
- Education – For profoundly disabled students, education would not be the primary focus. This has the potential to interfere with the standard educational programs.
- Teachers – The uniqueness of ISD is a draw to many of the staff who currently work there. Adding the demands of these other disabled students could dramatically change their responsibilities. Consequently, there is an increased risk that retaining the current mix of teachers and staff would be difficult.
- Access – Handicap access at ISD is adequate for their current student population. However, significant upgrades will likely be necessary if profoundly disabled students attend.

Student recruitment is another challenge for ISD. Current law restricts ISD from directly promoting the school to potential students. Students must be referred to them by the Area Education Association (AEA).

Recommendations

We encourage management to carefully study the impact on ISD's mission. The admission of multiple and profoundly disabled students would require dramatic changes in ISD's operation.

The Superintendent stated she has recently begun efforts to provide more information to the AEA and is studying the possibilities of advocating changes to recruitment restriction laws.

3. Security

Discussion An increase in traffic on campus is making campus security a more important issue for ISD. The additions of the nature trail, new recreation center, and leasing space to third parties have all contributed to the increase in traffic. Currently, ISD does not have security personnel on staff. However, now may be a good time to consider increasing security measures for the over 70 students living on campus.

Some options to consider:

- Subcontract for a security guard to do periodic rounds and monitor surveillance cameras during high risk hours.
- Provide recorders for the surveillance cameras.
- Update the campus Crisis/Emergency Plan.

Recommendations

Management has plans in place to install alarms throughout the campus. The alarms will be installed in a phased approach. Plans are also being made to update the Crisis/Emergency Plan.

4. Teacher Recruitment

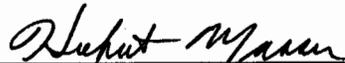
Discussion Replacing most of the elementary teachers in the future due to retirement will be a challenge. Factors such as the small size of the school, the uniqueness of the skills needed, lack of teacher training programs in Iowa, and its relatively small deaf community contribute to the difficulty in recruiting teachers to ISD.

Recommendations

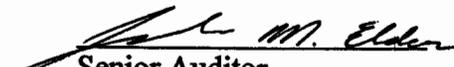
Management regards the current ISD teaching staff highly. Maintaining a high quality staff in the long-term despite constraints should be a critical strategic goal.

SUMMARY

We discussed these issues, and other secondary issues, with the Superintendent during our visit to the ISD campus. The Superintendent was receptive to the issues and ideas we presented and has begun formulating plans to mitigate the identified risks. Internal Audit plans to schedule an annual visit to ISD to follow up on prior concerns and assess ongoing operations. We will also remain available to provide assistance to ISD management as the need arises throughout the year.


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