

Job Description: Special Education Cultural Liaison (Somali Specialization)

Position Overview

Part-Time Position

20 Hours/week

The Special Education Cultural Liaison serves as a critical bridge between Somali-American families, students, and school staff. The primary objective is to ensure our Somali children have every opportunity to succeed. You will be a trusted advocate for our families, ensuring they are empowered and that their children's cultural and religious identity is respected within the school system.

Addressing the unique needs of our community, where recent studies show our children are being identified with Autism at higher rates.

Key Responsibilities

1. Family Engagement & Advocacy

- **Empowerment: Partnership:** Walking alongside parents so they feel confident and heard in school meetings.
- **IEP Participation:** Attend **Individualized Education Program (IEP)** and Evaluation Report (ER) meetings to ensure parents' voices are heard and cultural nuances are integrated into the student's goals.
- **Translation & Interpretation:** Provide or coordinate high-quality Somali language interpretation for meetings and translate vital special education documents (Prior Written Notices, IEPs, etc.) to ensure informed consent.
- **Home-School Connection:** Conduct home visits to build trust and explain the American special education system in a way that respects Somali cultural values regarding disability.
- **Communication:** Act as a cultural bridge to help families navigate the emotional and social complexities of a disability diagnosis, honoring Somali cultural perspectives while opening doors to support.

2. Staff Consultation & Program Development

- **Culturally Appropriate Programming:** Collaborate with Special Education Teachers and Related Service Providers to ensure that the way we teach our students respects our language, faith, and heritage
- **Professional Development:** Lead training for district staff on the prevalence of ASD within the Somali community and the cultural stigmas or barriers that may impact service delivery.
- **Data-Informed Strategy:** Use CDC prevalence data to help the district project service needs and resource allocation for the Somali student population.

3. Student Support

- **Evaluation Support:** Assist school psychologists and speech-language pathologists during the evaluation process to help differentiate between language acquisition and a true disability.
 - **Direct Interaction:** Work with Somali students to provide cultural context for behavioral interventions and social skills training, particularly for those with ASD and Intellectual Disabilities (ID).
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Qualifications

- **Language Proficiency:** Native or near-native fluency in **Somali and English** (written and verbal). Ability to explain complex medical and educational terms in a way that makes sense in the Somali context, moving beyond literal translation.
 - **Knowledge Base:** Deeply rooted in the Somali community with a proven ability to build trust with elders and parents.
 - **Technical Skills:** Familiarity with Minnesota special education laws (Chapter 125A) and the IEP process.
 - **Advocacy Heart:** A passion for ensuring our children are not left behind due to language or cultural barriers.
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Work Environment

- This position requires travel between school sites and family homes within the district.
- Evening hours may be required to accommodate family schedules for IEP meetings and community outreach events.