

# Firm Profile

## Services:

- Capital asset management
- Infrastructure technology
- Planning for the deaf/blind
- Programming for Special Needs
- Visual space planning
- Building condition assessment
- Facility/campus master planning
- Comprehensive site planning
- Schematic Design
- Design Development
- Construction Documents



*Governor Baxter School for the Deaf,  
Portland, ME*



*Ohio School for the Deaf,  
Columbus, OH*



*Arizona Deaf Senior Housing,  
Phoenix, AZ*



*Water Tower View Deaf Housing,  
Milwaukee, WI*

## **FACILITY PROGRAMMING AND SPECIAL NEEDS DESIGN/CONSULTING SERVICES**

Winter & Company's Special Needs Studio (WCSNS) offers extensive experience in programming and design of educational and housing facilities for the deaf and blind, with the goal of enhancing performance and meeting the needs of owners and users. Although substantial guidelines exist for addressing design needs for persons with mobility impairments, little formal literature exists that describes the special programming requirements for deaf and blind populations. In response to this need, Winter & Company established a special consulting studio in 2001 to provide facilities programming for special needs projects and deaf/blind facilities, as well as programming for mobility-impaired users. WCSNS has consulted on projects across the nation and been recognized as one of the top firms in the country in the area of special needs programming and design. Our clients appreciate our ability to meet schedules, honor budgets and solve problems.

This studio builds on the firm's past record of facility programming for educational facilities, historic properties and high tech learning. In many cases, the team assists local architectural firms in conducting building assessments, program planning and conceptual designs.

### **Special Needs Programming and Deaf/Blind Education Facilities Design**

The profile of designing for today's special needs and deaf/blind education facilities is changing. State governments and school agencies are upgrading and expanding programs, facilities and systems to meet new standards, set forth by the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA) and the Department of Education's "Special Education Facilities 2001" guidelines. In addition, continual advancements in technology and the constant need for adaptive reuse require agencies, architects and planners to be forward-thinking and solution oriented. Plans must provide for new and effective visual and functional communication access for special education, deaf/blind students and their staff.

While many requirements of schools for the deaf and blind are similar to those of main stream educational facilities, other aspects are unique and require special expertise. In a typical educational facility, for example, more than 581 special design conditions related to the deaf and blind are often overlooked or mishandled. The result is that some facilities fail to serve the populations for which they are intended. Lighting criteria, for example, are different for classrooms used by the deaf because bright light typically found in mainstream classrooms interferes with lip reading. Indirect light coming in from windows is also a consideration. Corridor widths also need to be greater to accommodate the use of sign language comfortably.

In addition, new technologies that impact facility programming are being developed for those with special needs. For example, cochlear implants allow some deaf people to hear. While this is a major breakthrough for the deaf community, it is very noise-sensitive, and mechanical equipment on a rooftop or motion-activated lighting can trigger a loud, internal noise, causing extreme discomfort to the user.