

PED Intervener Training 2023

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This training is brought to you by the UNM Center for Development and Disability. My name is Airth McCourt, I am the education consultant for the project for New Mexico Children and Youth Who Are Deaf-Blind.

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Here is a message from New Mexico Public Education Department:

“Evidence-based interventions for individuals with deafblindness are not universal. Although these are evidence-based interventions, they should be individualized for a particular student. In the education setting, the IEP team will develop the plan for that student. The IEP team shall review an IEP at least on an annual basis.”

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Project for New Mexico Children and Youth Who Are Deafblind is funded by the Office of Special Education Programs and the New Mexico Public Education Department. Information in this presentation was provided by the deafblind network.

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This definition refers to students in early childhood special education ages 3-5 and school aged children ages 6-21.

For infants and toddlers receiving Early Intervention services ages 0-2, deafblindness is defined as combined hearing and vision impairments or delays, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and intervention needs that specialized early intervention services are needed.

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Deafblindness refers to individuals with varying degrees of vision and hearing impairments. Someone who is deafblind may have mild to moderate hearing loss and be legally blind. Another person may have progressive vision loss and be profoundly deaf. Yet another person may have cortical visual Impairment, commonly known as CVI, and a moderate hearing impairment. All of these individuals fit the definition of deafblind. In fact, most children and youth who are deafblind have some vision and some hearing.

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When hearing and vision is not a reliable source of information, the child must be provided with experiences in a manner that is specific to their strengths and abilities. 80-90% of children who are deaf-blind have one or more additional disabilities or health problems. Typically, students who are deafblind qualify for special education services under the “multiple disabilities” category. It is important for teams supporting the student to recognize the need for both vision and hearing to be addressed. Deafblindness is also considered a disability of access. Access to information, access to people, and access to the environment. Information must be presented to the child in a meaningful way. Families and educational teams can identify how to give the child access to their environment, their peers and curriculum through a system that is individualized to the child.

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Deafblindness impacts individuals in many different ways. Typical learners gather information primarily through senses of hearing and vision. It is estimated that more than 80% of learning happens through vision. Individuals with a visual impairment or blindness can use hearing to help compensate for loss of vision. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing can use sight to help compensate for their hearing impairment. Children and youth with deafblindness have a unique disability separate from only hearing impairment or only vision impairment and need specialized instruction.

Deafblindness is a major disruption to incidental learning. Incidental Learning is learning that occurs by observing our environment, people and activities repeatedly. When supporting individuals with deafblindness, it is important that teaching moments are deliberate to ensure that they have meaningful opportunities to learn. There are specific evidence-based interventions that are used to provide access for a child or student with deafblindness to learn during routines, activities, and lessons. These strategies ensure that the individual gets direct learning opportunities.

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When a student is deafblind, there are many obstacles that could impact their ability to fully participate in the classroom. Students may lack access to materials that have not been modified or individualized to the student's strengths and abilities. Students may miss information that is provided verbally or visually. Communication by the student may be missed or overlooked. Many students with deafblindness do not use speech to communicate. Communication often starts with body movements and gestures before it progresses to the use of tangible symbols, sign language or spoken word. Individuals with deafblindness may need significantly more time to process and respond to stimuli. People interacting with the child may not know to give the child more time to respond. Students may experience isolation from activities in the classroom when the student does not have a person to engage them. Educators may not have training/experience with students who are deafblind and may not know which evidence-based approaches they can use.

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Now that you know what deafblindness is and how it impacts learning, it's time to answer the big question. How do we give students who are deafblind consistent access to their environment and their peers?

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You guessed it, an intervener! In this section, you will learn what an intervener is and how interveners can positively impact learning for individuals who are deaf-blind.

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An intervener is a person who works consistently one-to-one with an individual who is deafblind to help them gather information, develop and use communication skills, and establish relationships. Intervenors are trained in evidence-based practice for individuals who are deafblind. They support young children and students until they graduate from school. This one-to-one support can occur in a classroom or at home. Intervenors give the student ACCESS to information.

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Let's go more detail about the role of the intervener. Intervenors provide consistent access to instruction and environmental information that is usually gained by typical students through vision and hearing, but that is unavailable or incomplete to an individual who is deaf-blind. They provide access to or assist in the development and use of receptive and expressive communication skills. Because many students may use non-conventional modes of communicating, their expressive communication may be missed or misinterpreted. When others are communicating with the student, an intervener can support the process to ensure

relationships, interveners provide support to help a student form relationship with others and increase social connections and participation in activities. They can ensure that when the students peers attempt to interact in ways that the student cannot access through vision and hearing, that the peers can be encouraged to use others ways of interacting that are more appropriate to the student.

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Interveners do not work by themselves with the student, they are part of the educational team. Everyone working with the student should be communicating to each other and the intervener. As a team member, the intervener participates in IEP meetings. It is important that the intervener fully understands and supports IEP goals, gives input on their knowledge and experience with the student, and is given information on any testing that the student receives.

The intervener also participates in all therapies and activities that the child is receiving in the school setting. The intervener is a team member and works closely with the teachers and therapists to identify the best ways the student can have access. This supports consistency across settings for the student. The intervener takes direction from the teacher to ensure the student has access to the classroom activities, curriculum and peers.

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Each child with deafblindness is unique and communicates differently. An intervener may need to be knowledgeable in different communication methods that are specific to that student. Here is a list of possible communication forms an intervener may use when working with a student with deafblindness: American Sign Language (ASL), Tactile Sign Language, Haptics, Tactile Fingerspelling, braille, Protactile Language, Vocal Language, Gestures, Touch Cues, Objects and Pictures. This is not a full list of communication modes. Communication is complex and unique to the individual. You may not recognize some of the methods of communication on this list.

Let's go over a few. One mode of communication for individuals with deafblindness is touch cues. Touch cues give information to the individual with deafblindness through specific touches to share information. For example, a teacher might pat a student on the shoulder to tell the student it is time to sit down for the activity. A father may kiss his son on the forehead to greet him and let him know it is dad who is interacting with him. Touch cues will likely be individual to the child and family, and then carried through to the classroom. Tangible objects are also a common mode of communication. Objects can be used to share information about upcoming activities or be used for an individual to request an activity. For example, a spoon or cup can represent an upcoming mealtime. Another way of communication for people who are deafblind is Protactile communication. It is a new language created by the deafblind community and separate from American Sign Language. This language gives information through touch that might otherwise be missed when using other modes of communication. It is used more commonly in cities with a large deaf-blind community.

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“Do with me, not for me.” This is the intervener motto. The intervener provides access by doing activities with a student and taking advantage of learning opportunities. So, what does it look like in a classroom when a student has an intervener providing access?

A student with deafblindness may interact with playdough for the first time, an intervener uses an evidence-based intervention such as hand under hand to explore playdough with student. Touching a new texture may be uncomfortable initially, the intervener can explore the playdough while the student uses their hands to feel what the intervener is doing before they decided to touch and play with the playdough. Let’s talk about a student who is completely deaf with limited vision: An intervener can sit with the student and use sign within the student’s field of vision to ensure they get the teachers instructions for an upcoming assignment. Some students may not use traditional communication, but use subtle gestures and behaviors to communicate their needs. An intervener is in close proximity of the student and responds to communication of the student consistently. When a student’s unique communication is understood and reinforced, a strong foundation is built and can be used to expand and increase different modes of communication.

A student with deafblindness may miss the opportunity to interact with a peer who asks them if they want to play. An intervener can encourage the peer to use touch to communicate and student now has the chance to interact, share and communicate to make a friend.

An intervener can take advantage of a routine such as supporting a student to put on their jacket and use this opportunity to sign “jacket.” When they go outside, the intervener can sign “cold” to teach the concept of why we put our jackets on. Interveners are important to an educational team and as a direct support to someone with deafblindness.

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YouTube Video: ASL Intervener

<https://www.you>

language, Protactile communication, or any other mode that the individual communicates through or receives information. Interveners are a unique service provided to students in the classroom or at home. When a student graduates, they will no longer need the services of the intervener. If they continue to need support to receive access to their environment, they may use

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What impacts students who are deafblind from being provided with an intervener? In 2021, 9,809 children and youth were identified with deafblindness (ages 3-21). it is very low incidence disability. Because it is low incidence, schools and educational teams may not even know about interveners and deafblind training options. There is no national requirement for interveners to support students with deafblindness in an educational setting. In addition, parents and caregivers

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Now that you know where to get information on intervener training, let's talk about how each p