Looking to the Future of Deaf-Blind Services and the Role of Interveners: A National Webinar Co-Sponsored by NCDB and NFADB

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Looking to the Future of Deaf-Blind Services and the Role of Interveners

A National Webinar Co-Sponsored by NCDB & NFADB
February 12, 2014

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National Center on Deaf-Blindness

- Funded by U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Special Education Programs
- Works closely with state deaf-blind technical assistance projects to build capacity of early intervention and educational providers to serve children with deaf-blindness
- 5-year project (October 2013 – September 2018)
Prior National Projects

• National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness
• National Technical Assistance Consortium (NTAC)
• DB-LINK
What Are Intervener Services?  
Definition in Educational Settings (3-21)

• Provided by an individual, typically a paraeducator, who has received specialized training in deaf-blindness and the process of intervention.

• Consistent one-to-one support to a student throughout the instructional day.
Definition in Educational Settings (cont.)

- Work under the guidance and direction of classroom teacher or other individual responsible for ensuring IEP implementation.
- Member of educational team.
Primary Roles

• Provide access to instruction and environmental information.

• Provide access to and/or assist in the development and use of receptive and expressive communication skills.

Alsop, Blaha, & Kloos, 2000
Primary Roles (cont.)

• Promote social and emotional well-being through a trusting relationship.
• Provide support to form relationships, increase social connections, and participate in activities.

Alsop, Blaha, & Kloos, 2000
Recommendations for Improving Intervener Services

OSEP asked NCDB to conduct an initiative to:

1) collect information about current intervener services across the country, and

2) develop recommendations for improving national, state, and local intervener services based on an analysis of the information collected.
Development Process

- Gathered information
  - Surveys
  - Interviews
  - Panels
  - Publications
- Synthesized and evaluated what we learned
- Created recommendations
What We Learned (Current Strengths)

• Great progress has been made over the past two decades.
• Many people—families and professionals—have worked very hard to make intervener services available in the U.S.
Strengths (cont.)

• Two online training programs offered by universities (Utah State U and East Carolina U)
• Efforts by state deaf-blind projects in individual states (e.g., training and classroom support)
• Competencies adopted by the CEC
• Great resources
What We Learned: Challenges

- Fragmented infrastructure—availability of services unevenly distributed across the country and within states.
- Estimate that only about 5% of the 10,000 children identified as deaf-blind have intervener services.
What We Learned: Challenges

- Lack of recognition and understanding.
- Lack of trained interveners.
- Insufficient support for families.
- No federal policy that specifically recognizes intervener services.
Parent Comments

I don't believe our school knows what our son's needs really are as a deaf-blind student, so they just scrape by day after day.

They offer him a person who knows sign language but he is not with her all the time. She does not know anything about his visual impairment and doesn't care to be trained.
Parent Comments (cont.)

We have identified a person who has expressed an interest/commitment to becoming our son's intervener. She does not currently have intervener training, but wants to begin the training as soon as she can. In our state, interveners are practically unheard of, so educating the school district has been the biggest hurdle.
Interveners at Work

Read the "Overview and Welcome"

- Recognition 1: Increase recognition and appropriate use of interveners for children and youth who are deaf-blind.
- Training & Support 2: Establish a strong national foundation for interveners training and workplace supports.
- Families 3: Build the capacity of families to participate in decisions about interveners services for their children and in efforts to improve these services.
- Sustainability 4: Sustain high-quality interveners services across the nation through the inclusion of interveners services in national special education policy.

interveners.nationaldb.org
GOAL 1 – RECOGNITION: Increase recognition and appropriate use of intervener services for children and youth who are deaf-blind.

Recommendation 1

Develop a coordinated and expanded national approach to provide state and local early intervention and education agencies with information and tools needed to understand and use intervener services.

Recommendation 2

Coordinate and expand efforts to inform and influence national, state, and local policies and practices so that they reflect and support the provision of intervener services for a child or youth who is deaf-blind when needed.
GOAL 2 – TRAINING & SUPPORT: Establish a strong national foundation for intervener training and workplace supports.

RECOMMENDATION 1
Develop a national open-access intervener training curriculum that aligns with the Council for Exceptional Children’s Specialization Knowledge and Skill Set for Paraprofessionals Who Are Interveners for Individuals with Deaf-Blindness.

RECOMMENDATION 4
Develop strategies to ensure that intervener supervisors have knowledgeable experts in deaf-blindness who can provide consultation and coaching.

RECOMMENDATION 5
Expand opportunities for interveners to obtain a state or national certificate or credential.

RECOMMENDATION 6
Establish a national intervener jobs clearinghouse to assist in intervener recruitment and job placement.

RECOMMENDATION 7
Provide resources (e.g., technology applications, technical assistance) that help interveners establish organized online and face-to-face communities where they can improve their knowledge and skills by sharing ideas and experiences with each other.
Goal 3 – Families: Build the capacity of families to participate in decisions about intervener services for their children and in efforts to improve these services.

**Recommendation 8**
Develop information resources and tools and disseminate them to family members to increase their knowledge of intervener services and enhance their ability to communicate effectively with educators, administrators, and others about those services.

**Recommendation 9**
Develop and implement strategies that create opportunities for families to share ideas and experiences and work together to address intervener services at local, state, and national levels.
Goal 4 – Sustainability: Sustain high-quality intervener services across the nation through the inclusion of intervener services in national special education policy.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Congress should ensure the long-term sustainability of intervener services for children and youth who are deaf-blind by including them under the definition of "related service" and as an early intervention service in the next reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
**Recommendation Format**

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**Recommendation**

Develop information resources and tools and disseminate them to family members to increase their knowledge of intervener services and enhance their ability to communicate effectively with educators, administrators, and others about those services.

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**Why This Is Important**

Although parents who participated in the family panel were very knowledgeable about intervener services, many said that it had been difficult for them to obtain that knowledge and wished they had learned about interveners sooner. They expressed

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**Implementation Strategies**

Click "Read More" to see the 3 implementation strategies for this recommendation.

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**Anticipated Outcomes**

- An increase in the number of family members who are knowledgeable about intervener services.
- An increase in the number of family members who can effectively advocate for intervener services for their children when appropriate.
- An increase in the number of family members who participate in initiatives to improve intervener services.
Recommendation 8

Develop information resources and tools and disseminate them to family members to increase their knowledge of intervener services and enhance their ability to communicate effectively with educators, administrators, and others about those services.
Recommendation 8 Implementation Strategies

• Produce/identify products that families can use to:
  • promote communication about intervener services
  • inform decisions related to intervener services for their child, and
  • inform and influence state and local policies to encourage and promote high-quality intervener services.

• Collaborate with family organizations to distribute information to families.
Family’s Guide to Interveners for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss

• SKI-HI, Utah State University, 2012

• NDBII Parent Group

Available at intervener.org
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Members</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jody Wolfe, Lead (IL)</td>
<td>Family Member/CHARGE Syndrome Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michele Baldeshwiler (NY)</td>
<td>Family Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clara Berg (NY)</td>
<td>NY Deaf-Blind Collaborative/NFADB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jamey McVicker (MO)</td>
<td>Family Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Djenne Morris (NC)</td>
<td>Beginnings for Parents of Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing</td>
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<td>Cyndie Pfohler (NY)</td>
<td>Family Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Sahl (NY)</td>
<td>Family Member</td>
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Facebook: “Intervener Deaf-Blind Family Group”
Moving Forward to Implement the Recommendations

• Definition and description of the role of the intervener (completed).

• Guidelines for IEP teams can use to make informed decisions about IEP teams (under-development).

• OHOA Deaf-Blind Intervener Learning Modules.
Questions About the Recommendations?
Rationale from National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness Recommendations for Improving Intervener Services:

Goal 2- Training & Support
• Establish a strong national foundation for intervener training and workplace supports.
• Recommendation 3- Develop a national open-access training resource that aligns with the CEC's Knowledge and Skills Competencies
OHOA Participatory Method of Creation:

- Advisory Committee
- Module Leads
- Module Contributors
- Field Participants
- Field Reviewers
- Expert External Advisor/Reviewers
Participatory Approach to Module Development

Rooted in respect for the community's knowledge

Modules that "give voice" in creation and evaluation of the resource

A respected method in international curriculum development (Taylor, 2004; Reyes, 2011)

*By design, can incorporate the perspectives and knowledge of different experts who have "walked the path"- families, teachers, interveners, faculty, administrators, consumers & researchers*

*A synthesis and action based model*
Advisory Group Role:

- Identify, Consolidate, & Prioritize Module Themes
- Review and offer feedback on initial content
- Assist in recruiting field participants
- Respond with "best thinking" related to field test data
- Assess progress and refine path after initial cycle of creation
External Expert Advisors' advice

PARA2 Center - University of CO Denver
Design for adult learners

IRIS Center
Incorporate case based teaching - practical examples

Vanderbilt University
Sequence the learning path

Perkins
Offer reflection opportunities
(with input from other experts - Dr. Charity Rowland)
Build for "scalability" - adoption

Build for a portfolio, credits or CEU process for adult learners
Partnerships resulted in:

- A more accessible JW Media player
- Captioned and described video clips
- Modules beginning to be translated into Spanish
- Accessible text for all module materials

**Accessibility Considerations**

Use of a Moodle 2.23 Management System

Consultation with the Carroll Center for the Blind

Consultation with DiCapta

Consultation with Described Captioned Media Program

Consultation with JKP Interpreting
Field Testing and Revision of Modules 1-4

From February-April, 2013, the first four modules were open for field testing

There were 33 field participants representing 11 states including: AK, AL, CA, GA, IN, NE, OH, PA, KY, TN, WV

Field participants included: parents of children who are deaf-blind, paraeducators, teachers, related service providers, and administrators

Field reviewers included 18 experts from 15 states and a variety of settings: IHEs, state DB projects, interveners, and teachers
Elements in Each Module:

*Introduction* - an opener to the main module themes

*Inquiry Challenge* - a practical problem

*Learning Activities* - Content and Assignments - sequenced learning path

*Self-Assessments* - could serve as a rubric for grading

*Resources and References*
Module 1: An Overview of Deaf-Blindness and Instructional Strategies

Summary of Learning Outcomes:

• Identify important facts that can be learned from the National Child Count
• Understand the importance of gathering information about a student's etiology
• Recognize that deaf-blindness is a disability of access to information that results in significant challenges in interactions and learning
• Describe key instructional principles and strategies that are effective
• Provide examples of the array of supports and resources on deaf-blindness
Module 2: The Sensory System, The Brain and Learning

Summary of Learning Outcomes:

• Understand the importance of each of the seven senses.

• Understand the brain-senses connection and its impact on learning.

• Understand some general strategies for supporting a student's learning.

• Understand basic information about all seven senses.

• Know how to identify additional resources to learn more.
Module 3: The Role of Interveners in the Educational Setting

Summary of Learning Outcomes

• Be able to explain the role of an intervenner.

• Understand the *Principles of Intervention*.

• Be able to describe intervention as team process.

• Be aware of basic team dynamics.
Module 4: Building Trusted Relationships and Positive Self-Image

Summary of Learning Outcomes

• Understand trusted relationships and positive self-image.
• Describe key strategies to create reciprocal interactions with students from a deaf-blind perspective.
• Apply patterns in turn-exchanges to start, maintain and end an interaction.
• Apply affirmation of the students' initiatives or responses.
• Analyze indicators of students’ processing time.
• Synthesize observations and strategies to share emotions with the student.
• Describe specific strategies for establishing joint attention.
Modules in Process

Module 5: Availability for Learning

Module 6: Understanding Communication Principles with Students who are Deaf-Blind

Module 7: Emergent Communication

Module 8: Progressing from Concrete to Abstract Communication and Complex Language

Module 9: Routines and Calendar Systems
Embedding Modules into Formal Coursework
CEU Systems- Scalability

• The modules were written in a way that makes it possible for them to be embedded in typical undergraduate classes.

• The time needed to complete each module varies, but is typically 6 to 8 hours.

• The content of the modules is aligned with the CEC's Specialization Knowledge and Skill Set for Paraeducators Who Are Interveners for Individuals With Deaf-Blindness."

• The current four modules cover a subset of these standards.
Supporting module use and practice development nationally:

Build collectively based on multiple perspectives and national best practice.

How may they be embedded meaningfully to build awareness, knowledge and skills in systems?

How may they support formal inservice and preservice approaches in states?

How may they be tailored to meet the unique needs of rural and remote locations?

How may they support parent and family leadership activities?
Many People are Needed to Achieve the Recommendations

• National Center on Deaf-Blindness
• families
• state deaf-blind projects
• university faculty
• interveners
• administrators
• teachers and other service providers
• researchers
Parent Online Training Opportunity

Sponsored by NFADB and NCDB is for parents interested in learning about:

• The role of interveners.
• The principles of intervention.
• How interveners function as members of students’ educational team.
Parent Online Training Opportunity

• Participants will complete Module 3 of the 
  OHOA Deaf-Blind Intervener Learning 
  Modules.

• March 17 – April 13, 2014

• Time commitment: 2 hours per week for 4 
  weeks.

• Participants will receive online feedback and 
  support.
Parent Online Training Opportunity

For information:

• Download flyer
• Contact nfadb@aol.com
Intervener Services Initiative

For many children who are deaf-blind, intervener services in educational settings can provide access to learning, the general curriculum, educational environments, and teachers and peers. The purpose of NCDB’s Intervener Services Initiative is to improve and expand intervener services throughout the U.S.

Goals

Products

nationaldb.org