



# COMMUNICATION:

## What is he trying to tell me?

Some students who are deaf-blind cannot express some or all of what they want to say through speech, sign language, fingerspelling, writing or gestures. When the students cannot express themselves in these traditional ways, they often choose other ways of expression. The students choose the way that is easiest to get their message across. This expression is communication.

The student may communicate through facial expression, body movement, posture, vocalization, crying, tantrums, etc. These reactions are frequently seen by parents and/or professionals as behaviors that need to be eliminated, when in fact the student is trying to communicate and becomes more and more frustrated when their communication is misunderstood. If, instead, the student's attempt to communicate can be acknowledged and expanded, difficult behaviors may begin to decrease.

### *Points to Remember:*

1. Look at all of the student's behavior as an attempt to communicate.
2. Be sure the student has had medical problems eliminated.
3. Attempt to understand the student's communication effort.
4. Teach the student a more acceptable way to communicate what he has to say, after showing you understand the effort.

Fact sheets from California Deaf-Blind Services are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals who are deaf-blind. The information applies to students 0-22 years of age. The purpose of the fact sheet is to give general information on a specific topic. More specific information for an individual student can be provided through individualized technical assistance available from CDDBS. The fact sheet is a starting point for further information.

Order #001

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