



Fact Sheet

Name Cues

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A name cue is a physical touch cue that an individual who is deafblind uses to identify the important people in his or her life. Name cues are used with children who have little or no usable vision and hearing.

Name cues are very important for children who are deafblind (combined vision and hearing loss) for two reasons. First, they teach the child that touch has meaning, and this serves to reinforce other tactile communication systems such as touch cues and object cues. Second, we want to make sure that people are not constantly coming in and out of a child's world throughout the day without identification. For a child with limited vision and hearing, people come and go so quickly that, over time, the child may cease to show interest in those around him because he's not sure who they are or what they want.

Here are some examples of name cues: a distinct ring or bracelet, a distinctive wristwatch, keys worn around the neck, a piece of clothing that is always worn.

Points to remember when choosing a name cue

- ❖ A specific name cue must be consistent over time, so it must be based on something that you always have or always wear. For example, if your name cue is a specific wristwatch, you must always wear that watch on days that you will interact with individuals who know the name cue. If the watch breaks, it would have to be replaced with a similar watch. If you choose a distinctive bodily feature such as a beard, you are making a commitment to keeping that beard for a long time.
- ❖ Think about one or more individuals touching your name cue many times throughout the day. Do you really want your mustache touched by unwashed hands throughout the day, especially during cold and flu season? If your name cue is a pager on your belt, consider a specific child having to feel around your waist area to find the pager. This may not be desirable or even appropriate.
- ❖ Consider how manageable a name cue is if it is to be used many times throughout the day. If you have chosen the buzz-cut of your hair with its distinctive feel, do you want to have to bend over many times throughout the day to allow a young child to touch your head?
- ❖ A name cue can be something artificially created as long as it is consistent (e.g., an adapted physical education teacher may choose to wear a terry cloth tennis-style wristband).

Points to remember when using a name cue

- ❖ Begin by getting the child's attention by gently rubbing the back of the child's hand. This is usually the least intrusive place to initially touch the child. (This is not true for every child. Ask family members or people who know the child well for specific information about touch.)
- ❖ Use the name cue consistently throughout the day.

- ❖ Pair the name cue with speech. For example, have the child touch the name cue while you say, “Hello, Jane, this is Blanche”. Always assume that the child may benefit from the auditory input, especially when you speak close to the child’s ears.
- ❖ The child may not want to, or be able to, touch the name cue with her or his palm. There may be another part of the body where the child prefers to receive tactile information.

Examples of name cues, sometimes paired with name signs

Combination of a name-sign with personal objects that the adult always wears: Juan is a ten-year-old boy who is completely blind and has very little hearing. Vanessa, Juan’s intervener, starts off by identifying herself with her name sign that was given to her by a deaf friend many years ago. Juan then feels a ring that Vanessa always has on her right ring finger; the ring is very unique so it is easily distinguishable from other rings. Juan also identifies her by a bracelet that she also wears on her left wrist that is kind of chunky and has a large star hanging down which is also very easy to find and feel. Juan checks for both of these cues, and Vanessa always starts off interactions with Juan by giving him her name sign.

Combination of a name-sign with a physical characteristic: Gloria combines her name-sign which is the letter “G” in the sign language alphabet moving on her right eyebrow. She introduces herself by bringing her hand with the “G” hand shape under the child’s hand, and then she brings both hands to her right eyebrow and moves her hand on her eyebrow. The person who is deafblind feels the hand shape, the movement following the eyebrow line, and the eyebrow itself.

Combination of a personal object with an affectionate gesture: Nichole is a five-year-old girl who has only light perception in one eye and has little hearing. Debbie, Nichole’s teacher, introduces herself to Nichole by presenting her bracelet and then her ring under Nichole’s hand; afterward Debbie kisses Nichole twice on her head.

Object that a teacher wears only when working with young children who are deafblind: Cathe is an early intervention teacher. Every time she works with her students, she wears a jingle bell hanging from her neck.

Object cue that identifies a time when the child is going to work with a specific person: Michael is a five-year-old boy who has some good functional vision in one eye, and has a moderate to severe hearing loss in his right ear with a profound hearing loss in his left ear. A pair of glasses is used to identify the time Michael spends with his teacher of the visually impaired. Michael’s classroom staff puts the glasses in his calendar box on days when he sees his VI teacher. At the end of his session with this teacher, Michael places the glasses in his “finished bin”.

Combination of a personal object and a physical characteristic: Andy, who is an orientation and mobility instructor, has been using a very specific type of sports watch that he always buys for his name cue. It is very distinctive, especially when paired with his hairy arm. He has used it for several years with at least seven different children who are deafblind as well as students with visual impairments and additional disabilities.

Physical characteristic of a sibling: A child who is deafblind recognizes his brother by touching his brother’s bangs. The moment he recognizes him, his brother does his name-sign.

Physical characteristics of classmates: Sam is in a preschool setting and recognizes his classmates in different ways. Sam identifies his best friend by touching his friend’s little ears that stick out, and Sam identifies the tallest classmate in the classroom by touching the top of his head. His own name sign is the letter “S” of the Sign Language Alphabet tapped under his chin.

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Fact Sheets from the Colorado Services for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals with dual sensory loss. The information applies to children, birth through 21 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 personalized technical assistance available from the Colorado Deafblindness Project. For more information call (303) 866-6681 or (303) 866-6605.

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