



FACT SHEET

The Role of the Intervener with Children Who Are Deafblind

To children with a dual sensory impairment, or deafblindness, the world may not exist beyond their fingertips. Although a child may have some hearing or vision, neither sense may be strong enough to compensate for the lack of the other. Without this sensory information, the child may become isolated and unable to make a connection with the world. In order to be able to understand the world that is out there, the world must be brought to them. The child with deafblindness needs to be provided with strategies to interpret, understand, explore, communicate with, and given access to the world around them. All of these things will allow the child to have access to the world and eventually become more independent.

An intervener is a paraeducator that has been specifically assigned to the person with deafblindness in the home, school, or community environment. The intervener should be able to facilitate the process that creates access to visual and auditory information. The intervener should have specific and intense training in deafblindness, acquire a variety of specialized techniques for communication and intervention and promote independence of deafblind individuals. The intervener should also be exempt from other duties of the school such as, cafeteria duty, bus duty, and such.

The intervener has a specific role as the 'eyes' and 'ears' of the child who is deafblind. A key role is to provide support, to enable effective communication and the receipt of clear information for the child with deafblindness. The role of the intervener is also to help the child be as independent as possible. Interveners make it easier for individuals who have combined vision and hearing loss to get information and to interact within the environment. Another component is that of the social emotional piece. The role of the intervener is to develop and maintain a trusting, interactive relationship that promotes social and emotional well-being.

The intervener:

1. Provides a bridge between the child and the world.
2. Interprets the world for the child in a form he can understand.
3. Provides constant non-distorted information to the child.
4. Provides information so that the child can know what is going to happen before it happens, what is happening, when it is over and what is going to happen next.
5. Provides motivation so that the child can reach out beyond himself and explore.
6. Provides enough support to the child that can be successful in a reasonable length of time.
Also provides appropriate pacing to the activity.
7. Facilitates communication between the child and others.

8. Facilitates the child's participation in all of the routines of the class and / or home environment.
9. Helps the child see the results of his actions.
10. Provides emotional bonding that can expand to other people.

When planning a program for a child with deafblindness who will be using the services of an intervener, there are some things to consider.

1. Does the child have access to ongoing sensory information, which is needed for teaming and interaction with the environment and which is equal to that of the other learners?
2. Does the child have access to natural and least restrictive environments, the general curriculum and appropriate activities?
3. Does the current IFSP or IEP programming include the accommodations and modifications that are necessary for concept and skill development, individualized learning, appropriate activity pacing, and positive reinforcement?
4. Does the child have a communication system that allows for interaction – both receptive and expressive – with parents, siblings, peers, teachers, service providers, and others? Do the people know how to interact with the individual?
5. Does the child use assistive listening devices and vision aides? Do environmental and instructional accommodations need to be made to maximize the use of residual vision and/or hearing?
6. Does the programming include strategies to support social and emotional well-being, and does the child have trusting relationships with others?
7. Does the programming ensure that the process of intervention will be in place for the child?

The definition of the intervener fully supports the definition of inclusion. The intervener provides the information needed so that the individual with deafblindness has full access to the general education curriculum, as well as to his non-disabled peers.

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Fact Sheets from the Colorado Services to Children with Deafblindness are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals with vision and hearing 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.

Information for this Fact Sheet taken from a lecture by Linda Alsop, 2001 Colorado Summer Institute on Deafblindness