

Because each student who is deaf-blind has unique educational needs, providing access to in an educational setting varies from student to student. An intervener, paraprofessional, or educational interpreter can play a critical role in meeting the educational access needs of a student who is deaf-blind. Below, each role is described.

Definition of Roles:

Paraprofessional: A person with some training for specific job duties; provides student support in a small group or 1:1; may be assigned to one or several students or a whole classroom.

Intervener: Interveners, through the provision of intervener services, provide access to information and communication and facilitate the development of social and emotional well-being for children who are deafblind. Intervener services are provided by an individual, typically a paraeducator, who has received specialized training in deafblindness and the process of intervention. An intervener provides consistent one-to-one support to a student who is deafblind (ages 3 through 21 or as mandated by state regulations) throughout the instructional day.

Educational Interpreter: A person who is trained to interpret spoken English to American Sign Language (or Signed English) and vice versa. May or may not have additional training to accommodate for vision loss/deaf-blindness; may serve as a language model regarding sign vocabulary specific to a field of study, but not appropriate as the only source of language acquisition.

Services for DeafBlind Adults in Community Settings (Non-Educational)

Sign Language Interpreter: A skilled interpreter who has attended an Interpreter Training Program and/or is certified by RID or NAD. Some interpreters have received additional training to be able to meet a variety of communication modes of youth and adults who are deafblind. Adheres to code of ethics for interpreters.

Service Support Provider (SSP): A sighted guide who provides visual and environmental information for a deafblind adult to make informed decisions and “be a part of the wider community.” SSP’s are encouraged to receive training in areas of deaf-blindness, sighted guide techniques, communication modes, and deaf-blind culture.

Example: An SSP assists an adult with deaf-blindness navigate a grocery store, describing the items on the shelves as the individual selects items to purchase.

	Para-Professional	Deaf-Blind Intervener	Educational Sign Language Interpreter
Training	Passing grade on education testing service paraeducator assessment. May have additional training for special certifications.	Specialized training in deaf-blindness and national certification (when recognized by state). Training includes understanding the diversity of children who are deaf-blind, understanding effective strategies, effective communication, working on a team.	Ideally, received professional training in an interpreter-training program and has passed the state educational interpreter test.
Serves Who	Students ages in school settings. Students may be receiving Special Education services.	Students in school settings who are 3-21 years, old and have a combined hearing and vision loss (deaf-blind) identified by IEP team including medical records.	Students who are deaf, hard or hearing, or deaf-blind who require translation of information from one language to another in a school setting.
Serves Where	Classroom	Classroom	Classroom
Role	Assists classroom teacher with adaptations of classroom materials; prompts/supports student(s) to participate in tasks and interactions in the classroom. <u>Example:</u> A para-educator assists a classroom teacher in passing out materials for a class activity, checking in with students that may need extra support for understanding the directions or prompts for how to get started.	Works one-on-one with a student who is deaf-blind. Provides a bridge for the student to the world of information around them that is typically gathered through sight and hearing. Supports the student in cultivating concepts and skills that lead to independence. <u>Example:</u> An intervener uses Hand-Under-Hand (HUH) and tactile signing to review an individualized calendar system for the day’s schedule, fostering the concept of time, expressive and receptive communication, and joint attention.	Acts as a conduit of the content/information being communicated. <u>Example:</u> An educational interpreter sits at the front of a general education math class in front of the desk of a student with deaf-blindness. The interpreter translates the content of the math lesson from the spoken language of the math teacher to the signed language utilized by the student. When the student raises their hand to answer a question, the interpreter interprets the student’s answer into spoken English.
Skills	Able to work with small groups of students and/or one-on-one. Collaborates with classroom teachers.	Able to build a trusting relationship with a student, regardless of child’s physical, cognitive or medical status. Facilitates student’s access to information about the environment; focuses on concept, skill, and communication development; fosters self-determination and child/youth’s independence. Depending on the student, may also have a level of skill/knowledge of Braille, sign language, object symbols, tactile signing. Able to collaborate with teacher and IEP team.	Proficiency in a visual language or code (ASL, SEE, PSE). May have skill in accommodations for visual access (e.g. restricted visual field, tracking or tactile).

Adapted by Sarah Godwin and Katie Humes of the Washington State DeafBlind Program, from a previous document by Susanne Morrow and Beth Kennedy.

References:

“Comparison of Possible Supports for Students Who Are DeafBlind”. Beth Kennedy, DB Central: Michigan’s Training and Resource Project, 2016 [PDF]

“What is My Role?” A Comparison of the Responsibilities of Interpreters, Interveners, and Support Service Providers (Susanne Morgan, MA, CI, CT).

Alsop, L., Robinson, C., Goehl, K., Lace, J., Belote, M., & Rodriguez-Gil, G. (2007). Interveners in the classroom: Guidelines for teams working with students who are deafblind. Logan, UT: SKI-HI Institute.