

Appendix D

Competencies for Training
Interveners to Work with
Children / Students
with Deafblindness

SKI-HI Institute
Linda Alsop

An intervener is defined as an individual who has training and specialized skills related to deafblindness and works consistently one-on-one with a child/student who is deafblind. The following are the recommended competencies necessary for interveners who work one-on-one with children and students who are deafblind. They are the result of numerous consultations with practitioners, specialists and researchers in the field of deafblindness. Each competency has been assigned to a level of mastery that reflects either knowledge or the application of skills. The competency levels of mastery are defined as follows:

- **KNOWLEDGE** - The intervener demonstrates knowledge about the content. For those competencies that are not skill based, Knowledge is the desired mastery level.
- **IMPLEMENTATION** - The intervener demonstrates the ability to successfully and independently apply the skill in a variety of settings.

These competencies are organized under eight Standards. They are grouped as either Core Competencies or Child-Specific Competencies. Core Competencies represent the recommended knowledge base in deafblindness, while the Child-Specific Competencies are those that reflect the application of skills that are specific to a child/student who is deafblind.

Standard 1: Demonstrate knowledge of deafblindness and its impact on learning and development

Core Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

- 1.1 The definition of deafblindness
- 1.2 The impact of combined vision and hearing loss on learning (including incidental learning), interaction, and overall development
- 1.3 The difference between congenital and acquired deafblindness
- 1.4 The difference between concept development and skill development, and the impact of deafblindness on each
- 1.5 The implications related to: the age of onset of vision and hearing loss, the types and degrees of loss, and the presence of additional disabilities

Child-Specific Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

Appendix D

- 1.6 The child's/student's specific etiology and related characteristics
- 1.7 The child's/student's strengths and needs
- 1.8 The child's/student's likes and dislikes
- 1.9 The impact of combined vision and hearing loss on the child's/student's learning style, abilities, and communication
- 1.10 How to facilitate the child's/student's understanding and development of concepts

Standard 2: Demonstrate knowledge of the process of intervention and the role of the intervener, and have the ability to facilitate that process

Core Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

- 2.1 The process of intervention for children/students who are deafblind
- 2.2 The role of the intervener in the process of intervention
- 2.3 The differences between interveners, paraprofessional, interpreters, aides, caregivers, special education assistants, etc.

Child-Specific Competencies

Interveners should have the ability to:

- 2.4 Provide one-on-one intervention, which facilitates consistent access to visual, auditory, and tactile information
- 2.5 Use routines and functional activities as learning opportunities for the child/student
- 2.6 Facilitate direct learning experiences for the child/student
- 2.7 Use techniques to increase anticipation, motivation, communication, and confirmation
- 2.8 Facilitate the child's/student's interactions with people and the environment
- 2.9 Facilitate interdependence for the child/student, rather than dependence (do with - not for)

- 2.10 Vary the level and intensity of input and the pacing of activities to meet the child's/student's needs
- 2.11 Adapt materials and activities to the child's/student's needs, as directed by the IFSP/IEP team
- 2.12 Use strategies that provide the child/student with opportunities to solve problems and to make decisions and choices
- 2.13 Implement intervention strategies appropriate for the child/student (e.g., daily care, self-help, transition, community, job training) as directed by the IFSP/IEP team

Standard 3: Demonstrate knowledge of communication including methods, adaptations, and the use of assistive technology, and have the ability to facilitate the development and use of communication skills

Core Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

- 3.1 Basic communication development
- 3.2 The impact of deafblindness on communication and interaction
- 3.3 The role of the intervener in facilitating the development and use of receptive and expressive communication
- 3.4 Modes/forms of communication and devices used by children/students who are Deafblind (e.g., cues, sign language, tactile communication, object symbols, etc.)
- 3.5 The use of calendar systems to support the development of time concepts, enhance communication, and promote emotional well-being
- 3.6 How to facilitate language and literacy development

Child-Specific Competencies

Interveners should have the ability to:

- 3.7 Observe and identify the communicative behaviors of the child/student
- 3.8 Interpret the communicative intents of the child/student

Appendix D

- 3.9 Implement methods and strategies for conveying information that is understandable to the child/student
- 3.10 Respond appropriately to the child's/student's attempts at communication
- 3.11 Use communication techniques appropriate for the child/student who is deafblind (e.g., environmental cues, touch cues, object cues, calendar systems, adaptive sign language, tactile signing, alternative and augmentative communication systems, braille) as designed by the IFSP/IEP team
- 3.12 Incorporate/embed language and communication into all routines and activities
- 3.13 Use strategies for eliciting expressive communication from the child/student
- 3.14 Use strategies to promote turn-taking with the child/student
- 3.15 Use strategies to enhance and expand communication (e.g., increase vocabulary, topics for conversations, and communicative skills)
- 3.16 Facilitate the child's/student's interactions with others
- 3.17 Share observations of the child's/student's communication skills with other team members

Standard 4: Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of deafblindness on psychological, social, and emotional development and have the ability to facilitate social and emotional well-being

Core Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

- 4.1 The impact of deafblindness on bonding, attachment, and social interaction
- 4.2 The role of the intervener in facilitating social and emotional development
- 4.3 The impact of deafblindness on psychological development and on the development of self-identity
- 4.4 The effects of deafblindness related to isolation, stress, vulnerability, grieving, and interdependence

- 4.5 The impact of deafblindness on aspects of sexuality (e.g., gender identity, modesty, appropriate touch, wellness checks)

Child-Specific Competencies

Interveners should have the ability to:

- 4.6 Establish a trusting relationship with the child/student who is deafblind
- 4.7 Provide an atmosphere of acceptance, safety, and security that is reliable and consistent for the child/student
- 4.8 Promote positive self-esteem and well-being in the child/student
- 4.9 Respond appropriately to the child's/student's behavior
- 4.10 Provide the child/student with opportunities for self-determination (e.g., independent thinking, choices, problem solving, decision making) as directed by the IFSP/IEP team
- 4.11 Promote social interactions and the development of meaningful relationships with an ever-expanding number of people

Standard 5: Demonstrate knowledge of sensory systems and issues, covering all five senses and the ability to facilitate the effective use of the senses

Core Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

- 5.1 The role of touch in learning and interaction
- 5.2 Basic anatomy and functions of the eyes and ears
- 5.3 Strategies that promote visual and auditory development
- 5.4 The impact of deafblindness on sensory integration
- 5.5 The role of the other senses (taste, smell, proprioception, etc.)

Child-Specific Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

Appendix D

5.6 The student's audiological (hearing) and ophthalmological (vision) abilities

5.7 The child's/student's eye and ear conditions and disorders

Interveners should have the ability to:

5.8 Use and maintain amplification, cochlear implants, and assistive listening devices as appropriate

5.9 Use and maintain glasses, low vision devices, and prostheses as appropriate

5.10 Maximize the use of residual vision and hearing

5.11 Make adaptations for auditory needs (noise, positioning, etc.) as directed by the IFSP/IEP team

5.12 Make adaptations for visual needs (contrast, lighting, positioning, etc.) as directed by the IFSP/IEP team

5.13 Use touch to supplement auditory and visual input and to convey information to the child/student

5.14 Facilitate the child's/student's use of touch for learning and interaction

5.15 Facilitate the use of the child's/student's other senses to supplement auditory, visual, and tactile information (e.g., smell, taste, movement) as directed by the IFSP/IEP team

5.16 Utilize strategies to promote sensory integration as directed by the IFSP/IEP team

Standard 6: Demonstrate knowledge of motor, movement, and orientation and mobility (O&M) strategies that are appropriate for children/students who are deafblind, and have the ability to facilitate orientation and mobility skills

Core Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

6.1 The impact of deafblindness on motor development, independent movement, positioning in space, and exploration of the environment

- 6.2 The impact of deafblindness on body awareness and on the sense of how the body relates to the environment

Child-Specific Competencies

Interveners should have the ability to:

- 6.3 Utilize strategies that promote independent and safe movement and active exploration of the environment
- 6.4 Implement positioning and handling to promote learning, independent movement, and physical well-being as directed by the OT/PT/O&M specialists
- 6.5 Promote the use of sighted guide, trailing, and protective techniques as directed by the O&M specialist
- 6.6 Implement strategies to promote travel routes, and the utilizing of environmental cues and landmarks as appropriate to the child/student and as directed by an O&M specialist
- 6.7 Implement the use of appropriate mobility devices as directed by the O&M specialist
- 6.8 Utilize strategies that support the development of body awareness, spatial relationships and related concepts as directed by the IFSP/IEP team

Standard 7: Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of additional disabilities on the child/student who is deafblind and have the ability to provide appropriate support

Core Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

- 7.1 The impact of additional disabilities (including medical factors) on children/students with deafblindness
- 7.2 Brain development and the neurological implications of combined vision and hearing loss (e.g., brain plasticity, physiological and emotional stress, biobehavioral states)

Child-Specific Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

- 7.3 The student's additional disabilities, if present

Appendix D

- 7.4 The complex effects of additional disabilities on the child's/student's learning and interaction

Interveners should have the ability to:

- 7.5 Make adaptations appropriate for cognitive and physical needs of the child/student as directed by the IFSP/IEP team
- 7.6 Make adaptations appropriate for the medical needs of the child/student as directed by the IFSP/IEP team
- 7.7 Utilize appropriate health and safety practices

Standard 8: Demonstrate professionalism and ethical practices

Core Competencies

Interveners should have knowledge of:

- 8.1 The roles and responsibilities of interveners working in classrooms and other settings
- 8.2 The roles and supervisory responsibilities of each team member and classroom consultant
Interveners should have the ability to:
- 8.3 Adhere to the identified code of ethics including confidentiality
- 8.4 Utilize appropriate teaming skills in working with the IFSP/IEP team
- 8.5 Communicate and problem-solve with the IFSP/IEP team about the child's/student's needs as appropriate
- 8.6 Collect data and track child progress as directed by the IFSP/IEP team
- 8.7 Pursue information and resources as needed and appropriate
- 8.8 Interact appropriately with families as needed
- 8.9 Pursue ongoing professional development activities

References

Competencies for Paraprofessionals Working With Learners Who are Deafblind in Early Intervention and Educational Settings, Marianne Riggio and Barbara A.B. McLetchie. Hilton/Perkins Program, 2001.

Intervener Competencies in Utah (Draft).

Intervener Self Evaluation Guide (Draft #2). Provincial Outreach Program for Students with Deafblindness, June, 1995.

Primary Competencies for Interveners in Texas. Texas Deaf-Blind Outreach, August, 2001.

For more information contact:

Linda Alsop
Director Deafblind Programs
SKI-HI Institute
Utah State University
6500 Old Main Hill
Logan, UT 84322-6500
(435) 797-5598
lalsop@cc.usu.edu