

- Deaf-Blindness impacts a student's ability to access and connect with people and their environments, therefore many students who are Deaf-Blind require one-on-one support to facilitate equal access to the same learning as their sighted peers (Alsop,2002).
- Every educational team should include professionals with specialized knowledge and skills in Deaf-Blindness to provide direct services, support and training to the families, professionals, therapists, and any other care providers who work with the child who is Deaf-Blind.

Deaf-Blindness is federally defined as, "Deaf-Blindness means concomitant hearing and vision impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness." (IDEA,2004).

Deaf-Blindness is a unique disability because it creates limited access to the visual and auditory information about the environment that is necessary for learning, communication, and overall development. Consequently, incidental information, which sighted and hearing students receive automatically without effort, is not readily accessible for students with dual sensory loss.

Children who are Deaf-Blind may exhibit a wide range of behaviors during interactions with family, friends and their teachers, as a result of their sensory losses. Students with seemingly mild losses may be greatly impacted in their environment and learning opportunities. Students must work hard to attend, gather, and interpret information which is often distorted and incomplete. This results in isolation, poor communication, and limited opportunities for understanding their world.

## BEHAVIORS THAT MAY SUGGEST DUAL SENSORY INVOLVEMENT

- Bumps into people or objects
- Touches and brings objects close to view
- Prefers brightly colored or shiny objects
- Turns head to side when reaching for objects
- Poor depth perception
- Visual function varies day to day or hour to hour
- Loses interest or tires easily when performing visual tasks
- Limited visual attention & lacks visual curiosity
- Does not recognize or respond to familiar faces
- Does not track moving objects with their eyes
- May display red, watery eyes and/or eyelids
- Does not startle or respond to loud noises
- Asks for repetition often
- Withdraw from peer interaction/social situations

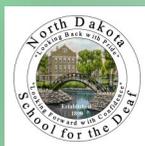
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# NORTH DAKOTA DUAL SENSORY PROJECT

Serving  
infants, children,  
and young adults  
who are  
Deaf-Blind



A division of the North Dakota  
Department of Public Instruction  
Kirsten Baesler  
State Superintendent



## WHAT IS THE NORTH DAKOTA DUAL SENSORY PROJECT?

The North Dakota Dual Sensory Project is funded by the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education. The mission of the Project is to help state educational agencies (SEAs), local education agencies (LEAs), Part C lead agencies, early intervention service providers, teachers, service providers, and families address the educational, related services, transitional, and early intervention needs of children who are Deaf-Blind to ensure that these children will graduate from high school ready for competitive employment, postsecondary education or independent living options.

### WHO QUALIFIES FOR SERVICES?

- Individuals who have a mild to profound hearing loss in addition to low vision and/or legal blindness.
- Individuals who have a diagnosis which places them at risk for developing hearing and vision losses.
- Individuals with multiple disabilities who may demonstrate inconsistent responses to hearing and vision during evaluations in their natural environments which may be consistent with Cortical Vision Impairment (CVI) or Central Auditory Processing (CAP), in which language is not processed through hearing.

## WHAT CAN THE PROJECT DO FOR YOU?

The current goals and activities for the ND Dual Sensory Project include: 1) promote early and appropriate identification of all individuals who are Deaf-Blind through the Outreach and Referral process; 2) establish a quality approach to technical assistance delivery for each student and their family; 3) implement universal, targeted and intensive technical assistance to early interventionist, school staff, or community/medical staff who provide services for children who are Deaf-Blind; and 4) increase productive partnerships between families and service providers to support family advocacy efforts for those families who have a child who is Deaf-

Our model of service delivery for the technical assistance is provided through the Outreach staff from ND School for the Deaf/Resource Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing and the ND Vision Services/School for the Blind in each region of the state. Technical assistance may include:

- On-site observations
- Program consultations
- Workshops/conferences
- Resource library materials
- Newsletter and project mailings
- National Child Count Registry
- Links to other families

*Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light.*

*#Helen Keller*



## WHAT IS DEAF-BLINDNESS?

For most of us, the term Deaf-Blindness brings to mind Helen Keller; someone whose accomplishments and achievements have marked her as one of history's most extraordinary women. Today's population of students who are Deaf-Blind continue to require special programs and professional teachers to meet their educational needs. Deaf-Blindness is more than a combined hearing and vision loss (Dual Sensory loss). In reality, this combination of losses creates a unique and complex disability that requires highly specialized teaching approaches unique to Deaf-Blindness and support from local special education administrators and state systems of Special Education.

Unlike Helen Keller, who had no vision and no hearing, most learners who are Deaf-Blind have some residual use of their hearing and/or vision. Many of these students have additional physical and developmental needs, complex medical conditions, and/or challenging behaviors. Some students will attend college and go on to live and work independently, and others who are Deaf-Blind may need significant lifelong support.

Challenges that are faced among all children who are Deaf-Blind include:

- The effects of combined hearing and vision losses isolate students from people and their environments. Educators must diminish this isolation by building the student's abilities in communication, concept development, and social competencies. Communication provides direct access to the curriculum and all learning.
- Services must be delivered by skilled professionals and paraprofessionals who create consistent communication and learning opportunities with access to the regular education curriculum and learning in the child's natural environment.

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