

**Intervener Initiative Update**

**June 22, 2015**

***A brief history for new project personnel:***

**Intervener Services Recommendations:**

In 2011, the U.S. Department of Education requested that the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness, now the National Center on Deaf-Blindness, to develop recommendations for improving intervener services for students who are deaf-blind (NCDB, 2012). The recommendations, which were published in 2012, were based upon a series of surveys, interviews, focus groups, and reviews of documents from stakeholders who had knowledge of, and experiences with, interveners in the United States.

Here is a link to this comprehensive, multi-media report, which includes data summaries and video interviews (<http://interveners.nationaldb.org/index.php>). Some project partners have used elements within this report to describe the needs of students, families, service providers and the field.

The Recommendations provide a foundation for the work of the initiative. We have learned a great deal through our network’s implementation of the strategies over the past 3 years. Some new implementation strategies have emerged based on what we have been learning with our network partners since 2012.

**Outline of Current Recommendations Which Are Being Addressed By NCDB and the Network**

(All Four Goals are Being Currently Addressed By the Network; *Specific* Recommendations within those Goals have been addressed or are being addressed in the 2014-2015 implementation cycle)

**GOAL 1: Recognition: Increase recognition and appropriate use of intervener services for children and youth who are deaf-blind.**

**Recommendation 1: Develop a coordinated and expanded national approach to provide state and local early intervention and education agencies with information and tools needed to understand and use intervener services.**

**Implementation strategy**: Develop and disseminate a consistently applied national definition of intervener services, including clarification of the occupational role of the intervener. The definition below was based upon a synthesis of materials. See full technical report for a description of the synthesis process: <http://documents.nationaldb.org/Intervener%20Services%20Definition%20Technical%20Report.pdf>

“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 deaf-blind. In educational environments, intervener services are provided by an individual, typically a paraeducator, who has received specialized training in deaf-blindness and the process of intervention. An intervener provides consistent one-to-one support to a student who is deaf-blind (age 3 through 21) throughout the instructional day” (NCDB, 2013).

**Implementation strategy**: Organize workgroups to implement the recommendations in Goals 1 through 3 and identify additional needs and recommendations to improve intervener services.

One such intervener group has been focused on interveners in home and community settings. Two important products which were published or presented from this group include:

* Hosting a national webinar entitled: the Role of the Intervener in the Home and Community Across the Life Span: <https://nationaldb.org/library/page/2495>
* The publication of a white paper: Interveners in the Home and Community: An Under-Recognized Imperative: <https://nationaldb.org/library/page/2458>

**Recommendation 2: Coordinate and expand efforts to inform national, state, and local policies and practices so that they reflect and support the provision of intervener services for a child or youth who is deaf-blind when needed.**

**Implementation Strategy:** Produce and disseminate guidelines that IFSP/IEP teams can use to make informed decisions about the need for initial or continued use of intervener services for an individual child or youth.

Please see this update on the progress of this work group: <https://nationaldb.org/materials/page/1701/92>

**GOAL 2: Establish a strong national foundation for intervener training and workplace supports.**

**Recommendation 3: Develop a national open-access intervener-training curriculum that aligns with the Council for Exceptional Children’s Specialization Knowledge and Skill Set for Paraeducators Who Are Interveners for Individuals with Deaf-blindness.**

**Implementation Strategy:** Design a participatory network approach to co-create Open, Hands, Open Access (OHOA) Deaf-Blind Intervener Learning Modules

<https://nationaldb.org/ohoa>

Description of Field Tested Modules

<https://nationaldb.org/ohoa/modules>

**Implementation Strategy:** Customized an accessible web-based platform, Moodle, to provide free access to OHOA.

Please see this page to sign-up to access OHOA Modules: <https://nationaldb.org/ohoaregister>

Network presentations in 2014 related to the design of OHOA with partners in a national community:

Parker, A.T., Chopra, R. & Kennedy, B. (2014, July). Collaborative and Participatory Approach to Quality Preparation for Interveners: Development, Delivery and Sustainability of Training Modules. 2014 Annual Project Directors’ Meeting, Office of Special Education Programs, Washington, D.C. <https://nationaldb.org/materials/page/1700/92>

**Implementation Strategy (this strategy emerged from our expert advisory group, as a part of the OHOA design process):** Encourage states to use OHOA modules to develop Moodle skills and to further refine OHOA materials for adult learning. Promote conversations about hosting strategies that work.

Updates and publications related to early adoption and use of modules in states for supporting distance technical assistance and training:

Black, M., Hertzog, T., McGowan, P. (2014). Pennsylvania school teams “kickoff” Open Hands Access (OHOA) intervener module training. *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly, 59*(5), 41-46. <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/422067-vidbe-quarterly-volume-59-5>

Clyne, M. (2014). Going the distance: state snapshots of virtual technical assistance to professionals and teams serving students who are deafblind: Project Reach: Illinois Deaf-blind Services. *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly, 59*(5), 55-56. <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/422067-vidbe-quarterly-volume-59-5>

Durando, J., & Lojkovic, D.A. (2014). Going the distance: state snapshots of virtual technical assistance to professionals and teams serving students who are deafblind: Virginia Project for Children and Young Adults who are Deaf-Blind. *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly, 59*(5), 53-54. <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/422067-vidbe-quarterly-volume-59-5>

Humes, K., Belote, M., & Parker, A. (2015). Open Hands-Open Access modules: stories of adoption for state-specific purposes. *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly, 60*(2), 60-66. <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/514014-vidbe-quarterly-volume-60-2>

**Recommendation 4: Develop strategies to ensure that interveners have knowledgeable supervisors and access to experts in deaf-blindness who can provide consultation and coaching.**

Much of this effort is emerging around the network’s recognition and efforts to develop teacher competencies and skills.

**Implementation strategy**: Partner with the Council for Exceptional Children, State Deaf-Blind Projects, National Parent Organizations, and Personnel Preparation Programs to promote awareness and partnerships around teachers of the deaf-blind and interveners.

Updates and publications around teachers of the deaf-blind and intervener partnerships:

Montgomery, C. (2014). Teacher of the deafblind pilot program in Texas: part 1. *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly, 59*(5), 34-40. <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/422067-vidbe-quarterly-volume-59-5>

Montgomery, C. (2015). Teacher of the deafblind pilot program in Texas: part 2. *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly, 60*(1), 15-32. <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/466408-vidbe-quarterly-volume-60-1>

Nelson, C., & Sanders, D. (2014). Collaboration to ensure effective education of student who are deafblind. *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly, 59*(5) 26-32. <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/422067-vidbe-quarterly-volume-59-5>

Parker, A.T. (2015, May, 11) Council for Exceptional Children's Convention, Participating in a Larger Dialogue [web log post] - <https://nationaldb.org/blog/post/42>

Parker, A. T. (2015, Spring). CHARGE Syndrome Foundation Partners with CEC's DVIDB. <http://www.chargesyndrome.org/documents/charge_accounts_newsletter_spring_2015.pdf?tr=y&auid=15589705>

**Recommendation 5: Expand opportunities for interveners to obtain a state or national certificate or credential.**

**Implementation Strategy**: In partnership with stakeholders and the NRCP, review the current criteria and process involved for credentialing.

Marilyn Likins from the National Paraprofessional Resource Center will be speaking to the network at Summit on the current credentialing process through her center.

**Implementation Strategy (this strategy emerged through a network-based work group)**: Using a participatory approach, NCDB will design an eportfolio process and product for interveners to demonstrate all of CEC’s knowledge and skills competencies.

Currently NCDB is partnering with 4 State Deaf-Blind Project Partners (AZ, MN, TX & UT); 8 practicing interveners who are supported by these states partners; and two university faculty members to design a process for interveners to demonstrate nationally recognized competencies using an eportfolio system. Initial outcomes from this project will be presented by partners during the Summit.

Publication related to certificate creation:

Gense, D.J. (2015, February 15) National Center on Deaf-Blindness - NCDB Update on the Ongoing Development of a New National Intervener Certificate [web log post]-<https://nationaldb.org/blog/post/40>

**GOAL 3: Build the capacity of families to participate in decisions about intervener services for their children and in efforts to improve these services.**

**Recommendation 8: Develop information resources and tools and disseminate them to family members to increase their knowledge of intervener services and enhance their ability to communicate effectively with educators, administrators, and others about those services.**

**Implementation Strategy:** Collaborate with family organizations to distribute information to families who have limited knowledge of interveners. This will include efforts to reach out to groups who are typically underrepresented (e.g., racial and ethnic minorities, families who live in rural areas, and families who are socioeconomically disadvantaged).

**The National Family Association on Deaf**-Blindness has partnered with NCDB to lead 5 cohorts of parents through OHOA’s Module 3- The Role of the Intervener in Educational Settings. <https://nationaldb.org/events/detail/10/236>

McGowan, P., & Malloy, P. (2014). Online parent training: the role of interveners in educational settings. *Visual Impairment and Deafblind Education Quarterly, 59*(5), 48-51. <http://dvi.uberflip.com/i/422067-vidbe-quarterly-volume-59-5>

**GOAL 4: Sustain high-quality intervener services across the nation through the inclusion of intervener services in national special education policy.**

**Recommendation 10: Congress should ensure the long-term sustainability of intervener services for children and youth who are deaf-blind by including them under the definition of "related service" and as an early intervention service in the next reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).**

The Cogswell-Macy Act

The Executive Committee of the National Coalition on Deafblindness has partnered with Mark Richert, Esq. from the American Foundation for the Blind and Barbara Raimondo, Esq. from the Council for Educators of the Deaf to craft language that addresses the educational needs of children and youth who are deafblind. During the Fall of 2014, the Committee gathered input from the field and worked with Barbara and Mark to draft what is now known as Title III of the Cogswell-Macy Act. Among other language, Title III includes wording which:

* designates intervener services in the “related services” listing
* reflects the need for the recognition of and training for teachers of the deafblind
* adapts the federal definition of deafblindness
* requires each state to specifically address deafblind issues in the development of its state plan

(update provided by Linda Alsop on behalf of the Executive Committee of the National Coalition on Deafblindness on June 15, 2015)

Link to current version of the Cogswell-Macy Act: <https://nationaldb.org/materials/page/1702/92>

Link to interview with Mark Richert, American Foundation for the Blind

Parker, A.T. (Producer) (2014, November, 14) The Cogswell-Macy Act and Students Who are Deaf-Blind: An Interview with Mark Richert for the Council for Exceptional Children (Audio podcast): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UQahlnEvMCs>

Related Materials: <http://community.cec.sped.org/dvi/dbportal/richert-interview>

Linda Alsop (Executive Committee of the National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness); Mark Richert & Rebecca Sheffield (American Foundation for the Blind); Barbara Raimondo (Council for Educators for the Deaf); and Howard Rosenblum (National Association of the Deaf) will be special guest speakers at the Summit Policy and Implementation Social on Tuesday, July 21st, 2015.