



## NATIONAL FAMILY ASSOCIATION FOR DEAF-BLIND

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**Our Mission:** NFADB exists to empower the voices of families with individuals who are Deaf-Blind and advocate for their unique needs.

**What we believe:** NFADB believes individuals who are Deaf-Blind are valued members of their communities and should have the same opportunities and choices as others in the community.

**Our Position:** To have qualified personnel, specifically a Teacher of Students who are Deaf-Blind (TDB), trained to support our children and their educational teams to ensure a free and appropriate education to help them to reach their full potential.

**Definition of Deaf-Blind:** Deaf-Blindness involves combined vision and hearing loss to the extent that neither of these senses can compensate for lack of the other. Deaf-Blindness creates an inability to access both visual and auditory information about people and things in the environment necessary for learning, communication, and overall development. It is a very isolating condition.

**A Journey of Reaching a Model for Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind:** Here is some historical information - [Click here](#)

**Where are we now:** In special education, our children represent the lowest incidence population. Yet they have high needs and are chronically underserved throughout their lifetimes. Our children struggle in the current educational system. Many are assigned a teacher of students with visual impairments (TVI) and a teacher of students who are deaf/hard of hearing (TODHH) in addition to their General Education Teacher because people assume that Deaf-Blind means Deaf PLUS Blind. However, our children who are Deaf-Blind have unique needs due to dual sensory loss. For our children it's not Deaf

PLUS Blind, it's Deaf TIMES Blind, as the dual sensory loss has an exponential impact. They have very unique needs and need teachers certified in Deaf-Blindness to help them navigate the educational system. Our children's unique needs are not addressed in the training of teachers of students with visual impairments (TVI) or teachers of students who are deaf/hard of hearing (TODHH). Currently, our children sit and wait for their educational team to research and learn various techniques used to educate children who are Deaf-Blind. They lose precious years due to the lack of qualified personnel.

There is a severe shortage of Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind (TDB) to serve on educational teams. Fortunately, the U.S. Department of Education through Part D of IDEA provides funds to (1) universities to train educational personnel to work with children who have low-incidence disabilities and (2) state Deaf-Blind technical assistance projects to support local schools and agencies serving children who are Deaf-Blind and their families. We are asking that states recognize Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind so that existing funds are used effectively in serving our children and families at the local level.

If Helen Keller had been alive today and placed in any one of the majority of classrooms across our country, we would not know of her! Would she be able to communicate, dress, or explore the world around her?

“Low incidence does not mean low priority!” ~ Larry Wexler, OSEP

### **Common Consequences of Not Having Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind:**

- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will not live their life to their fullest potential without an appropriate education.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will be sitting in a classroom in a wet diaper, watching television.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind do not learn incidentally and will not learn without an appropriate education.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind do not have access to their environment and will not learn from their environment without an appropriate education.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind do not have access to communication within a hearing and seeing society and will not learn to communicate without an appropriate education.

- Our children who are Deaf-Blind do not have access to social and emotional development and will not develop socially acceptable behaviors unless they are included in their educational program.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will live a life without a future, goals, or purpose without an appropriate education.
- Our children will lose precious time year after year waiting for appropriate education.
- Our children do not have a champion within the educational team, i.e., Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind, with the ability to educate the team on the unique needs of a child with dual sensory loss rather than us parents carrying that burden.

### **Where we should be:**

Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind (TDB) will provide the appropriate education. Our children who are Deaf-Blind should have the ability to attend school with competent teachers trained to provide them with an appropriate education. They should not have to wait for the teachers to figure out, and often to assume, the best techniques for teaching a child with a dual sensory loss. That is time lost to them forever. It creates tremendous gaps in their education as they get passed from class to class in hopes that someone knows how to teach them without the training of specialized and efficient instructional strategies.

Why are our children forced to fit into a system that is not prepared to educate them? If our child was just deaf OR blind, they would have a teacher trained and ready to educate them. However, because our children are Deaf-Blind, they do not have teachers trained and ready to educate them based on the existing, yet rarely recognized, credentials to serve the wide spectrum of what dual sensory loss may result in for each school-aged child who is Deaf-Blind.

Our children and our families across the nation need to have qualified Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind (TDB) recognized and trained to educate them.

### **Benefits of having Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind:**

- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will live their life to the fullest potential with an appropriate education.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will NOT be sitting in a classroom in a wet diaper, watching television.

- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will have someone to access and teach them about their environment.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will have someone to teach communication within a hearing and seeing society.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will have someone to teach social and emotional development.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will live a life with a future, goals, and purpose.
- Our children will no longer lose precious time year after year waiting for appropriate education.
- Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind will have the ability to educate our child's team about the unique needs of a child with dual sensory loss rather than us parents carrying that burden.

**What you can do:**

- Promote efforts in your state to recognize Teachers of Students who are Deaf-Blind
- Co-Sponsor the Cogswell-Macy Act

**Resources:**

[Teachers of Students who are Deafblind in Texas](#)

[Cogswell-Macy Act](#)

[NFADB Advocacy](#)

[Advocating for Qualified Personnel](#)

[Council for Exceptional Children Teacher Competencies: Deafblindness](#)

Parker, A. T., & Nelson, C. (2016). Toward a comprehensive system of personnel development in deafblind education. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 161(4), 486–501.