



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**

TONY THURMOND
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

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February 1, 2023

Dear County Offices of Education Special Education Administrators, Special Education Local Plan Area Directors, District/Local Educational Agency Special Education Directors, Agencies Serving Children Who Are Deafblind:

2023 DEAFBLIND CENSUS

California Deafblind Services (CDBS), the federally funded technical assistance and training project serving children who are deafblind, conducts an annual census of children and youth (birth through age 21) who are deafblind, or at risk for deafblindness, within the state of California. An accurate census is critical, as the child/student count generates funding to serve these students, including the funds used to support CDBS educational specialists and family specialists who provide valuable services to individuals who are deafblind, as well as to their families and service providers. CDBS operates statewide, providing local and regional on-site training, consultation for school/agency staff and families, print/video/electronic resources, and family-to-family support. We encourage you to learn more about their services by visiting their website at www.cadbs.org or contacting them by phone at 415-405-7558.

Who Should be Included on the Deafblind Census?

Many people who are deafblind have some usable vision and/or usable hearing. It is important to understand that persons who are completely deaf and totally blind, like Helen Keller was, make up only about six percent of the total group that is considered to be "deafblind." CDBS uses a functional definition of deafblindness:

If an individual (birth through age 21) has combined hearing and vision problems that are significant enough to require considerations (such as specialized adaptations, modifications, and strategies) when presenting information or interacting with the child, then that individual is considered eligible to receive CDBS services and should be included on the deafblind census.

For purposes of the annual census, a person is considered to be deafblind if they have **both** a documented vision and hearing impairment, ranging from mild to severe, or they function as if they have both a hearing and vision loss based on inconsistent responses to the environment or inconclusive responses during hearing and vision exams. A conclusion that a child is functionally deafblind may be based on an educational evaluation for purposes of initially reporting that child on the deafblind census. Please

remember that regardless of the presence or absence of additional disabilities, children with combined hearing and vision problems should be included on the deafblind census. Students do not have to meet state or local criteria since this census is separate from the state count, and most children in California with both hearing and vision problems are, in fact, identified on their individualized educational program (Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act child count) in categories such as multiple disabilities, intellectual disabilities, visual impairment, or deafness.

In addition, students with a mild hearing loss and mild vision loss should be included since a combined mild loss of both senses can create an adverse effect on educational success.

The 2023 Census Forms and Deadline

The enclosed forms have been printed for each child showing the most up-to-date information in the database. If you received no printed forms with individual student data, then no information exists on your students in the CDBS database. **A blank census form is enclosed (photocopy as necessary) for reporting new and/or additional students on the deafblind census.** Local educational agencies that report no children or an unusually low incidence of children with deafblindness (as compared to the nationwide incidence) may be contacted by CDBS staff to assist with identification and child find activities.

**Note: All information on these forms is to be treated as confidential.
Please return census forms by March 15, 2023, to:**

Census Coordinator
California Deafblind Services
San Francisco State University Department of Special Education
1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132-4158

A pre-printed return address label is enclosed for your convenience. You may also fax completed forms to 415-338-2845.

Thank you for taking the time to complete census forms for your local educational agency. You are helping to support students who are deafblind and their families, and furthering our endeavors to meet their needs. Review the enclosed "2023 California Deafblind Census: Guide to Completing the Form" and the "Answers to Frequently Asked Questions" which explain the census form and terminology used.

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If you have questions not addressed in these documents, please contact Brian Devereux, Census Coordinator, California Deafblind Services by phone at 415-405-7561, or by e-mail at devereux@sfsu.edu.

Sincerely,

Heather
Calomese

Digitally signed by Heather
Calomese
Date: 2023.01.10 09:54:34 -08'00'

Heather Calomese, Director
Special Education Division

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Nancy Hlibok Amann, Director
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Julie Maier

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HC/NHA/JM:lw
Enclosure