



## FACT SHEET

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### **The Intervener's Motto: Do With, Not For**

*By Gloria Rodriguez-Gil*

There is a phrase that describes the way interveners should strive to work with individuals who are deafblind. This phrase has come to be called the intervener's motto—"do with, not for." The basic idea behind "do with, not for" is when supporting an individual who is deafblind, the intervener should allow and encourage the individual to be in charge of their activities, interactions, explorations, etc. In other words, the individual should be in control of the things they do, even if they need great amounts of support from their intervener.

"Do with, not for" does not mean that the intervener needs to do everything with the individual who is deafblind. There are things the individual who is deafblind does (or will do) independently as their skills increase, and these new skills are often smaller steps within larger activities.

This fact sheet describes how "do with, not for" might look in actual practice. These strategies should be adapted to fit specific individuals and/or situations.

#### **Provide clear information so that the individual who is deafblind understands what is happening:**

- **Anticipate.** Before asking the individual to move from one activity to another and/or travel to the location of the next activity, tell the person what is going to happen by using the individual's mode of communication, including a calendar system if applicable.
- **Introduce.** When introducing yourself, another person, an object, or a particular area in the environment, consider the following:
  - Bring what you are introducing to the individual or, if this is not possible, bring the individual to what you are introducing.
  - Help the individual to use information from all available sensory systems.
  - If the individual uses their sense of touch to access the environment, use the hand-under-hand approach (i.e., bring the object or your hand to the individual's hand by bringing it under or next to his hand).
  - If you must move the individual's hand to what you are introducing, bring your hand under theirs and move both hands together to what you are introducing.
  - Allow the individual adequate time to perceive and interpret what you have just introduced.

- Inform student about changes. There may be times when unexpected changes happen within a routine, (e.g., a person arrives who wants to interact with the individual who is deafblind, the activity is about end, etc.). Inform the individual who is deafblind by gently and respectfully interrupting what they are doing. This kind of interruption may only be appropriate for specific individuals or situations.

**Provide just the enough support so the individual who is deafblind learns that they are the person who is in charge:**

- The hand-under-hand approach. Avoid hand-over-hand support; try to first use the hand-under-hand approach. If this isn't possible, try holding the individual's wrist or supporting the individual by the elbow when you need to help the individual to do something.
- Where to sit or stand. When interacting with an individual who is deafblind, sit by their side or in front of them. Sitting from behind gives too much control to the intervener and should be done mainly with very young children or in very special circumstances.
- Modeling. Show the individual what they need to do by modeling the activity or relevant steps of the activity.
- Whole activities. Provide opportunities for the individual to participate in whole activities as much as possible. For example, think of ways you can include the student in all steps of an activity—gathering the materials, arranging them, using them, putting them away, and cleaning up after the activity.
- Avoid the “magic fairy syndrome” (i.e., moving things around for the individual without the individual's awareness). For example, if the individual places an object in a certain place on a table, do not move it for them to a different place. If it needs to be moved, move it with them.
- Accessibility. Provide accessibility by having the individual's materials and personal belongings in a place where they can reach for them when they need them.
- Observation. Observe the individual and the context and act accordingly. Although you may know the individual very well and understand the context of the activities, it is important to observe what is happening so you can support the individual when and how they need the support.
- Time for reflection. Stop and reflect on what you are doing with the individual to identify better ways to support this person. Reflecting may help avoid automatic and repetitive ways of support and/or manipulation of the individual and what they are doing.
- Modifications in levels of support. As the individual progresses or the situation changes, modify the level of support you provide. The approach of one-on-one support for an individual who is deafblind may change throughout the day or week, or over longer periods

of time. There are inevitable changes in the individual's interests and needs, health status, physical abilities, and moods. In other words, the individual is changing and so will the things you do with the individual.

**Provide enough time so that it is possible for the individual who is deafblind to respond accordingly:**

- Slow down. When vision and hearing are limited or unavailable, the speed at which the individual can perceive, understand, and process information will be slower. One of the ways you can “do with, not for,” is to slow down your support.
- Pause. When you slow down, you also need to pause so that the individual has time to participate in his experience.
- Wait for a response. You can also extend your pause by waiting for the individual to respond to you or the situation. The type of response will vary depending on the way the individual expresses himself. These responses may be very subtle, and, for this reason, the intervener needs to have good observation skills.
- Change the planned schedule in the classroom. Sometimes an activity will take longer than expected while, at other times, the individual may complete an activity before the rest of their classmates. Know that this can happen, and when possible, try to adapt the schedule to the amount of time the individual needs to participate in and finish an activity. In some situations, you may want to stay within the time frame of the planned scheduled so the individual can be part of the group to which they belong.

**Provide a partnership so that the relationship with the individual who is deafblind is not only about the support you provide, but also about the things you do together.**

- When appropriate, communicate to the individual information about what you are doing together (e.g., naming actions, objects, and people involved in activities; touching the side of their hands to tell them that you see what they are doing or are commenting on what they are doing).
- When appropriate, join the individual during an activity by doing the same kind of activity but with slightly different materials. During snack time for example, this can be accomplished by having a snack together and talking about what you are doing together, by naming the objects, the differences (e.g., different snacks), what is the same (e.g., both eating a snack), and what is theirs and what is yours (e.g., their snack, your snack).