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The State of Interveners in the State of California: A 2019 Update

by Maurice Belote, CDBS Project Coordinator

What exactly are interveners?

Interveners are paraeducators who have specialized knowledge and skills specific to deafblindness. Their primary role is to provide access — to the curriculum, to communication, to the environment, to peers, to the world. The term intervener is not new, nor are the roles and responsibilities of interveners. There have been interveners for decades, perhaps even centuries. In fact Anne Sullivan Macy, most famous for being Helen Keller's first teacher, slowly transitioned from being Helen's teacher to being Helen's intervener, as Helen Keller reached adulthood and her service needs changed and grew. And it is important to note that not all children and youth who are deafblind require the services of interveners and the need for intervener services may vary throughout the school day or throughout a student's educational career. This article will focus on educational interveners but interveners are often necessary throughout the lives of individuals who are deafblind in order for deafblind people to be actively engaged in all aspects of life.

Over the past two decades, people throughout every region of the U.S. have been working to launch the profession of interveners. This has included individuals who are deafblind, family members, paraeducators, educators, administrators, policy makers, legislators, and state deafblind project personnel. Working together as a field and in partnership with deafblind consumers, we have made enormous strides in moving the profession of interveners forward. Those of us involved in this effort often say that there are many moving pieces that all have to move forward at the same time to launch the profession: recognition of interveners as a distinct job classification, training programs, certification, outreach, and recruitment. I'll do my best here to explain where all of these efforts are as of 2019 and what the future might hold as we continue these important efforts.



What about recognition of interveners?

In California, educators and administrators have been using the term *interveners* for many years and there are many people throughout the state who serve in the capacity of interveners and who call themselves interveners. Some of these people participated in the weekend intervener training initiative that CDBS sponsored two funding cycles ago, and others participated in the numerous program-specific intervener training cohorts that CDBS has conducted over the years. In California, we don't yet know of any school districts or county offices of education that officially recognize interveners as a separate job category. (If we're wrong and you are with a local education agency that has this job classification, let us know!) As for non-public schools and agencies, we know of at least two in California that formally recognize interveners.

A major step towards recognition of interveners was the adoption of nationally recognized knowledge and skill standards by the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC). These intervener standards are included in the CEC's publication *What Every Special Educator Must Know: Professional Ethics & Standards*, which is commonly called — in the world of special education — the “Red Book” because of its distinctive red cover. For information about the CEC Red Book, go to: <http://pubs.cec.sped.org/p6166/>

Lastly, there has been federal legislation introduced that would recognize interveners and add them to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) as a related service, similar to other federally recognized related services such as speech-language services, OT, PT, audiology, O&M, school nursing, etc. This legislation is titled the Alice Cogswell and Anne Sullivan Macy Act and is comprised of three titles (i.e., sections), one of which specifically addresses the education of children and youth who are deafblind. The Cogswell-Macy Act has been introduced into the last three sessions of Congress and, although it “died” in committee each time, each of these three sessions saw broader bipartisan support in the House and Senate. The Cogswell-Macy Act will likely be reintroduced in the current 116th Congress so that eventual passage is possible, or the language of the Cogswell-Macy Act might be included in the next reauthorization of IDEA. Under either of these scenarios, it is important that

CDBS be prepared for this federal recognition and the increased focus on interveners that is likely to result.

To read the most recent version of the Cogswell-Macy Act, follow Congressional actions, or to get a list of the Act's co-sponsors in the last session of Congress (i.e., 2017-2018), go to:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1120>

What about teachers of the deafblind? Do we have these in California?

It is not possible to discuss interveners without also addressing the issue of teachers of the deafblind. Intervenors are paraeducators who work under the direction and guidance of a teacher who also has knowledge and skills specific to deafblindness. Intervenors provide access to



educational programs developed by credentialed teachers. Does California have teachers of the deafblind? Yes and no. While we no longer have a teaching credential specific to deafblindness, there are three Education Specialist Instruction Credentials issued by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) that specifically include deafblindness in their authorizations: Deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH), visual impairments (VI), and moderate/severe disabilities. (The CTC has changed the name of the moderate/severe disabilities credential to the extensive support needs credential (ESN), but this change is not yet reflected on the CTC website.) The D/HH and VI credentials authorize services from birth to age 22, while the ESN credential authorizes services from Kindergarten to age 22. In addition to these three credentials, the disability categories authorized in the ESN credential are included in the authorizations for the early childhood special education credential, which authorizes services from birth to pre-K programs. Finally, the Orientation and Mobility credential, which in California is a clinical or rehabilitative services credential, also specifically authorizes services to children and adults who are deafblind. To see information on California teaching credentials, check out the CTC website: <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/docs/default-source/leaflets/cl610.pdf?sfvrsn=0>

The California model is dependent on teacher training programs adequately addressing deafblind content in their respective credential programs. The knowledge and skill levels of novice teachers will naturally be commensurate with the level to which deafblindness was covered in their professional training programs. The intervener model is dependent on interveners working under the guidance of knowledgeable, skilled teachers. Intervenors should not be expected to develop curriculum, IEP goals, assessment protocols, communication systems, etc., as these are the responsibilities of teachers and specialists. Of course intervenors can and should, as equal team members, provide input in each of these areas, but they are not to supplant the roles and responsibilities of teachers and related service specialists on educational teams. So the question becomes, “Which comes first? The teacher of the deafblind or the intervener?” Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to that question. For the model to work most effectively, trained intervenors should be working under the guidance of knowledgeable teachers, so teachers of the deafblind and intervenors are needed simultaneously to best meet the needs of many of the students we serve.

Where can we go for intervener training?

CDBS has partnered with our colleague Dr. Chris Brum at San Diego State University and with the state deafblind projects of Idaho and Montana to establish an online intervener training program in California. The program consists of two semesters of coursework (fall and spring) and utilizes eleven (11) prescribed OHOA modules and one elective OHOA module from the Open Hands Open Access program (see the next section for an explanation of Open Hands Open Access). The time commitment is approximately 2½ hours per week during each semester, with a one-month winter break and a one-week spring break. Tuition for the course is currently \$240 per semester, for a total cost of \$480 for the entire program. Upon successful completion of the two semesters, participants will receive an SDSU/CDBS intervener training program certificate of completion. The program is open only to current paraeducators and to individuals who are working toward become intervenors. For information about the program and to register, go to: <https://ces.sdsu.edu/education/deafblind-intervener-training-certificate>



In addition to the CDBS/SDSU intervener training program, there are two other university-based online intervener training programs: Central Michigan University under the direction of Beth Kennedy, and Utah State University under the direction of Linda Alsop. Information about the Michigan program can be found at: <https://lf.globalapp.cmich.edu/degreeConc/UCERT/DBI>

and information about the Utah program can be found at: <https://online.usu.edu/deafblindness-cert/>

What is Open Hands Open Access?

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB), with funding from the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs, coordinated the development of the Open Hands Open Access (OHOA) online intervener training modules. Hundreds of people participated in developing these modules and included NCDB staff, staff from the state deafblind projects, individuals who are deafblind, family members, educators, specialists, and others. The content of the OHOA modules is rigorous and the modules include slideshows, video interviews, videos of effective practices, activities, and readings. The following is a list of the modules.

- Module 1: An Overview of Deaf-Blindness and Instructional Strategies
- Module 2: The Sensory System, the Brain, and Learning
- Module 3: The Role of the Intervener in Educational Settings
- Module 4: Building Trusted Relationships and Positive Self-Image
- Module 5: Availability for Learning
- Module 6: Understanding Communication Principles
- Module 7: Emergent Communication
- Module 8: Progressing from Non-Symbolic to Symbolic Communication and Complex Language
- Module 9: Routines for Participation and Learning
- Module 10: Concept Development and Active Learning
- Module 11: Intervener Strategies
- Module 12: Maximizing Vision and Hearing
- Module 13: Calendars
- Module 14: Introduction to Orientation and Mobility for Interveners
- Module 15: Orientation and Mobility in Everyday Routines
- Module 16: Self-Determination
- Module 17: Social Skills
- Module 18: Collaborative Teaming and Family Partnerships
- Module 19: Accessing the Curriculum and Environment
- Module 20: Values, Ethics and Professionalism
- Module 21: Sexuality
- Module 22: An Introduction to Sign Language and Braille
- Module 23: Behavior and Environmental Supports
- Module 24: Transition to Adulthood and Community Living
- Module 25: Touch for Connecting and Learning
- Module 26: Touch for Connection and Communication
- Module 27: Putting It All Together

The OHOA modules are available in two formats. All of the modules are available on the Moodle learning management system. (iLearn is another product built on the Moodle platform, so if you are familiar with iLearn, then you will likely have a similar familiarity with OHOA in Moodle.) The OHOA Moodle modules are available at no cost to state deafblind project personnel and also to university-based personnel who want to use the modules as part of training programs and initiatives.

All of the OHOA modules are also available in a web-based format. The web-based modules are also provided at no cost and are available to anyone at anytime. They don't have all of the interactive features of the Moodle modules, such as discussion boards and quizzes, but they include all the same great content. The English versions of the web-based modules can be accessed here:

<https://nationaldb.org/modules/ohoa/en/ohoa-deaf-blind-intervener-learning-modules>

and the Spanish-language modules can be accessed at:

<https://nationaldb.org/modules/ohoa/es/los-modulos-de-aprendizaje-para-interventores-de-sordo-ciegos>

Is there certification for interveners?

Yes, there are currently two separate national systems for intervener certification in the U.S. The first system is the National Intervener Certificate E-Portfolio process, known by the acronym NICE. Anyone can apply for the national certificate but note that it requires an electronic portfolio to demonstrate knowledge and skills. NICE doesn't mandate college-level coursework but, from our experience, it would be difficult to compile an e-portfolio without having completed an intervener training program or, at the least, doing self-study with OHOA modules. The NICE intervener certificate is granted by the Paraprofessional Resource and Research Center—commonly called the PAR2A Center—which is a part of the School of Education and Human Development at the University of Colorado Denver. For information about the NICE process, go to:

<https://nationaldb.org/pages/show/national-intervener-certification-e-portfolio-nice/what-is-nice>



The second path to certification is the national intervener credential, which is granted by the National Paraeducator Resource Center in Utah. The credential requires college level coursework and the university-based programs at Central Michigan University and Utah State University are designed to lead to this credential. In addition to the coursework, the credential requires 100 hours of supervised practicum. Upon successful completion of the coursework and practicum, an applicant can submit a hard-copy portfolio to the National Paraeducator Resource Center and, once approved, will earn the national credential. For information on the national credential process, go to:

<http://www.nrcpara.org/intervener>

How do I know if my child or student needs an intervener?

The question of whether or not a child or student needs the services of an intervener is very much specific to that child/student and is addressed as part of the IEP process. In 2016, the National Center on Deaf-Blindness published an excellent resource titled *Are Intervener Services Appropriate for Your Student with Deaf-Blindness: An IEP Team Discussion Guide*. The publication can provide a guide to IEP teams when determining whether or not intervener services are necessary in order for a child to fully access an educational program. The guide can be downloaded at no cost from: <https://nationaldb.org/library/page/2598>

Where can I get more information?

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) has a national initiative titled *Interveners and Qualified Personnel*. You can learn more about this initiative and access many excellent resources at: <https://nationaldb.org/groups/page/9/national-intervener-services-initiative>

You can also contact anyone at CDBS for more information about interveners and all of our intervener activities. The launch of interveners as a professional practice is a dynamic, ongoing process and information will change over time. We're glad to fill you in on the latest news and help determine the best ways to support your program or your child's program.



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Network of Family Support Providers (FSP)

by Myrna Medina, Family Engagement Specialist

Rationale for family-to-family support

Being a parent of any child has its demands. Now imagine being a parent of a special needs child, which can be additionally challenging depending on the diagnosis and age of the child or the cultural background and dynamics of the family. This role can cause a lot of confusion and raise concerns and doubts about educational issues and family issues, as well as simply learning about programs, practices, and resources available to help the child and the family. Some of the issues many families face are feelings of despair after learning of their child's medical diagnosis, uncertainty about the IEP process and meetings, or just the feelings of loneliness while on this journey.

Some of the information needed can be offered by professionals or through training or simply learned through life experiences. However, *other families often have valuable information that can help ease parents' worries and concerns during times of anguish*, and it helps for them to hear this valuable information from other parents who speak the same family-friendly language and can share specific useful tools and strategies. Understanding that every child is unique when it comes to diagnosis, strengths, weaknesses, and educational needs, it helps to provide parents with the support and information they need to learn and develop strong skills in particular target areas in order to support themselves and help their children achieve their full potential.



What is a Family Support Provider?

Keeping in mind this obvious need of our families, in 2004 CDBS started an initiative called the Network of Family Support Providers (FSPs). Our FSP group consists of parent volunteers from around the state who bring different expertise to the group but share the similarity of being parents or siblings of deafblind children. The purpose of this initiative was to create local capacity by utilizing the systems and supports that already existed and were in place instead of re-inventing identical support systems. Each one of the CDBS FSPs contacted and created a relationship with their local Family Resource Center (FRC), Family Empowerment Center (FEC), Parent Training Information Center (PTI) or Community Parent Resource Center (CPRC).

Through this initiative our FSPs have connected with the already established support groups through their local family support agencies and have received necessary trainings on providing family-to-family support by these local family support agencies or by CDBS. The good relationships with these family support agencies provided some of the FSPs with such strong support and guidance that they became empowered leaders in their communities. Some have even created and now facilitate their own parent support groups.

The Network of FSP provides parent-to-parent support by sharing information via face-to-face contacts, telephone or video calls, and through email and social media.

Training and support for our Family Support Providers

This wonderful group of parents have committed to meet four times a year, three times via distance technology using a virtual room and once a year in person. These statewide FSP meetings allow time to learn, share and celebrate successes together and provide support to one another.

As our projects' Family Engagement Specialist, I provide individual support to each of the FSPs and also provide monthly relevant resources they can share with other families. With the purpose of supporting and providing current and relevant information to families, a needs assessment process was created to learn about key topics of interest and provide the FSPs with the information or training they are seeking. In order to be consistent with this today's means of sharing information digitally, we have to keep active and up-to-date on social media platforms and train group members to search and use online resources and participate in online trainings and webinars.

What's in the works with FSPs?

We are updating our Family Support Provider page on our website where you will find information of the current FSPs including their contact information, location and their local FRC, PTI, PEC or CPRC and other relevant information at <http://www.cadbs.org/family-support-providers/>

We also plan to keep and maintain an up-to-date social media presence and use other private social media groups for connecting families.

Want to connect with an FSP?

There are two ways to connect with an FSP. The first is to contact any of the family support agencies in California that include FSPs in their family-to-family support programs. Check out the FSP section of the CDDBS website to find out which agencies include one of our FSPs.

The second way to connect is to contact me and let me know what you need and I will make the connection with an FSP. FSPs are most knowledgeable about their own geographic areas but sometimes a connection is made based on etiology, language spoken, age of child, etc. so it is possible you might be connected to any one of our FSPs throughout the state.

FSP reflections

I love being a family support provider because I know how important it is to have someone to talk with who has been through the same thing. There were people there for our family when we received the diagnosis and have helped us through many life stages. Proving resources and helping families know they aren't alone is just a small way of giving back to others. We are constantly learning from each other and sharing things that work for our children. Together we are strong. — **Victoria Criswell, San Ramon CA**

It gives me great pleasure knowing that all of the experiences with my daughter in the schools and medical field could help another family who feels lost like we did! To offer hope to a hurting mom/family that they are not alone in the struggle! — **Diane Frank, Bakersfield CA**

What it means to me to help other parents: *It is important for me to help another parent not be as confused, overwhelmed, and heartbroken as I was when my journey started.* — **Patricia Barr, Long Beach CA**

Para mi ser un Family Support Provider, es poder tener la habilidad a la conexión con las familias que tengan su hija o hijo especial con habilidades diferente en el desarrollo y poder asistirles con preguntas a sus necesidades ya sea con información personal a la discapacidad y/o servicios que pudieran ayudar a que sigan apoyando a su hijalo a tener una vida lo mas normal Posible. Además moralmente apoyarlos ya que mi hijo tiene 29 anos y la experiencia que he adquirido en el conocimiento en como resolver situaciones basadas en su necesidad Medica a consecuencia de la Parálisis Cerebral. — **Herlinda Rodriguez, Downey CA**



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The Teacher of the Deafblind in the State of California Today: Purpose, Role, Training, and Professional Supports

by Julie Maier, CDBS Educational Specialist

As we focus on qualified personnel in this edition of *reSources*, a particular and very essential role needs to be examined—the role of the teacher of the deafblind. Most people are aware that students who are blind or visually impaired are served by a Teacher of Visually Impaired (TVI) and students who are Deaf are served by a Teacher of the Deaf (TOD). In 2017 there were approximately 954 school age children and youth with deafblindness attending school across our state, yet there is no longer a credential that solely focuses on deafblindness in California. So, who are the teachers serving these students who are deafblind and what professional supports are available for the educators?

The Need for Qualified Teachers

Deafblindness is a unique disability, which significantly impacts learning, communication, and environmental access and requires training specific to the learning outcomes of an individual with dual sensory loss. From early intervention through transition years these children and youth require at least one member of their team holds specialized skills and knowledge in the assessment, planning and instruction of learners with deafblindness (Nelson & Parker, 2016). The majority of these students have some functional vision and/or hearing, however the loss or impairment to both of these important senses requires that at least one educator serving the child has knowledge of effects of dual sensory loss on learning and growth. Yet, due to the low incidence of deafblindness (less than 1% of school-aged children and youth with disabilities) and lack of recognition of the role of the “*teacher of the deafblind*” it has been difficult to establish and sustain a system to ensure all teachers who serve children and youth with deafblindness are fully prepared for this role (Nelson & Parker, 2016).

Often when a learner is identified as deafblind they are served by both a TVI and a TOD and perhaps an additional special education teacher as well. These students are typically served by large teams with many teachers and related service providers with specialized expertise in one or two specific areas. A mantra in our field is “*Deafblindness is not just deaf plus blind, but it’s deaf times blind.*” The uniqueness and variety of complex educational needs of these students requires support not just from a TVI and TOD or special education teacher, but from an educator with specialized knowledge and experience in multiple areas: various methods and tools for assessments; communication instruction and



supports; concept development; access to the core curriculum and the expanded core curriculum; development of social skills and relationships; and promoting positive self-image and self-determination specific to children and youth who are deafblind.

Many newly trained teachers we have met or heard from let us know that even though they feel ready to serve students who are Deaf, visually impaired or blind, or have intellectual and physical challenges, they do not feel adequately prepared to meet the needs of students with deafblindness. Some teachers have shared they did not even realize the credential they hold authorizes them to serve these children. We hope this article sheds some light on who a teacher of the deafblind is, how they are trained, what services they can provide, and what professional supports and resources are available to teachers of the deafblind.

Who are teachers of the deafblind?

A teacher of the deafblind (TDB) is a teacher with specialized knowledge and skills related to the assessment and education of learners with deafblindness. They could be a classroom-based teacher or an itinerant teacher working in multiple schools and classrooms. This teacher will hold another primary teaching credential or certification, typically Visual Impairments, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, or Moderate-Severe Disabilities (recently renamed as Extensive Support Needs). Only two states offer certification or a credential in deafblindness: Utah and Illinois. Some states are currently advocating and seeking legislative action at the state level for adding an additional authorization in deafblindness for teachers who possess a TVI, DHH, and Special Education credential.



Along with other team members and input from the student's family, a teacher of the deafblind collaboratively assesses the needs of the student to ensure an appropriate individualized education program (IEP) is provided. (Parker & Nelson, 2016). A TDB is also essential for training, supervision and support of interveners serving students with deafblindness. An intervener is a one-on-one paraeducator or instructional aide with specialized knowledge and training in deafblindness (see Maurice Belote's article *The State of Interveners in the State of California: A 2019 Update*, in this edition of reSources for more information about interveners). This teacher fills the role of a credentialed teacher who can support, coach and provide evaluative feedback and resources to interveners.

Is there deafblind credential in California?

There is no longer a deafblind credential offered in California. This credential was offered for a brief period of time decades ago. Beginning in the 1970s through the early 1980s, the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) provided partial funding for the development of programs for students with deafblindness and for pre-service teacher training programs to train teachers of the deafblind across the country. In fact, the Deaf-Blind Teacher Training Program at San Francisco State University developed by Dr. Barbara Franklin was considered one of the top exemplary training programs in the nation. This funding was partially provided as a response to the urgent need that arose when a large population of students born with congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) in the early 1960s entered school and it quickly became apparent that these students needed very specialized instruction that addressed their multi-sensory losses and support needs. In the late 1980s the federal government changed course and delegated funding to national and state-level technical assistance and dissemination projects to address the needs of children and youth with deafblindness and their families. As the population of students born with CRS in the 1960s began to exit the special education system, the deafblind credential was eliminated due to the small number of teacher candidates seeking the credential and discontinued personnel preparation funding. Other educational specialist credentials were identified which could authorize a teacher to serve children and youth with deafblindness.



Which California credentials authorize a teacher to serve students who are deafblind?

There are three (3) Education Specialist Instruction Credentials issued by the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) that specifically include deafblindness in their authorizations: 1) Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH); 2) Visual Impairments (VI), and 3) Moderate/Severe Disabilities (M/S), whose title was recently changed by the CTC to the Extensive Support Needs (ESN) beginning in August, 2018. The new title of this credential places emphasis on the level of support, accommodations, and modifications needed for a student to access instruction and curricular materials and participate in school activities rather than the category of a child's primary disability.

The D/HH credential authorizes the holder to teach students who are Deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind. The Visual Impairments credential authorizes the holder to teach students who are blind, visually impaired, and deafblind. The ESN (formerly M/S) credential authorizes the holder to teach students who require extensive supports in the following specified disability categories: autism, deafblind, emotional disturbance, intellectual disability, multiple disabilities, other health impaired, orthopedic impairment, and traumatic brain injury. An ESN (M/S) credential authorizes holder to teach students who are deafblind with additional intellectual and/or physical disabilities or other health impairments. A teacher with an ESN (M/S) credential is **not** authorized to teach students with the following Federal Disability Categories: Visual Impairments (VI), Deaf and Hard of Hearing (D/HH), and Speech or Language Impairments (SLI).

The D/HH and VI credentials authorize services from birth to age 22, while the ESN (M/S) credential authorizes services from Kindergarten to age 22. However, for young children with deafblindness receiving early intervention and preschool services, the designated disability categories authorized in the ESN (M/S) credential are also included in the authorizations for the early childhood special education credential, which authorizes services from birth to pre-K programs. Finally, the Orientation and Mobility credential, a clinical or rehabilitative services credential, also specifically authorizes services to children and adults who are deafblind. Orientation and Mobility services are a necessary related service for many children and youth with deafblindness in order to access information about the about environments they regularly use and to learn safe navigation and travel skills across home, school, and community settings. Many Orientation and Mobility specialists also hold a VI credential.

What deafblind training and information do university students in teacher training programs receive?



There is no straightforward answer for this question. Since the D/HH, VI, and ESN (M/S) credentials authorize the holder to serve a child who is deafblind (with the limitation of ESN credential authorizing only deafblind students with additional disabilities), the CTC and the accredited teacher preparation programs are aware that deafblind content is to be included in their preparation courses and field-based experiences. The California Commission on Teacher Credentialing provides direction to pre-service programs through the development of program standards for the preparation of teacher candidates as well as specific teacher performance expectations, which credential

candidates, must meet. The CTC describes teacher performance expectations (TPEs) as *“Teaching Performance Expectations for credential candidates describe the set of professional knowledge, skills and abilities expected of a beginning level practitioner in order to effectively support the growth, development, and learning of all students and to work collaboratively with families to support all students in meeting the state-adopted academic content standards.”*

These teacher performance expectations for each credential identify the knowledge, skills and abilities the candidates must demonstrate to earn their respective credential. Information related to deafblindness is embedded in the content standards of the three credentials that provide authorization to teach students with deafblindness. However, teacher preparation programs have significant latitude in how they include deafblind content in their coursework and field-based experiences and the provision of information and training specific to learners with deafblindness varies across the teacher preparation programs in our state. We recognize the real challenges our state's pre-service programs face as they attempt to include all required standards and content for their credential programs in the limited courses and fieldwork they are able to offer to keep their programs viable and affordable for pre-service teachers.

There are two reliable sources that clearly define the knowledge and skills a well-trained and experienced teacher serving students who are deafblind should possess. When CDBS staff collaborate in teacher preparation through guest lectures or personnel preparation programs we suggest and share these resources for guidance. The first resource can be found in the Council for Exceptional Children's professional practices guide, [Every Special Educator Must Know: Professional Ethics & Standards](#) under [Initial Specialty Skill Set: Deafblindness](#), which outlines competency standards developed by leading researchers, policy makers, and field-based practitioners in the field of deafblindness.

The second resource is a guide developed by the [Perkins Training and Educational Resources Program](#) called [Deafblindness: Educational Service Guidelines](#), which is designed to provide school districts and local education agencies with a framework to use when developing appropriate programming for students with deafblindness. The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) offers this description: *"These guidelines identify the knowledge and skills educators need to assist their students who are deafblind reach their full potential and become successful, contributing members of our society. Developed by leaders in the field of deafblindness, the guide offers insight on implications of combined vision and hearing loss on learning and the need for specialized assessment, program planning and service delivery."* Individual chapters of the guide can be downloaded from the NCDB library site: <https://nationaldb.org/library/page/542>. Contact the CDBS office if you would like to check a physical copy of the book out of our library.

I've heard there is additional authorization for deafblindness for credentialed teachers. Can any teacher apply for and earn that authorization?

What you heard is true. In California credentialed teachers can apply for and meet the requirements for additional authorizations that address the needs of learners not covered by the teacher's current credential(s). Currently, there are eight (8) added authorizations for Special Education: Adapted Physical Education; Autism Spectrum Disorders; Deafblind; Emotional Disturbance; Orthopedic Impairment; Other Health Impairment; Resource Specialist; and Traumatic Brain Injury. Additionally, when the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing (CTC) recently updated and revised the current credential authorizations they approved an additional authorization in Early Childhood Special Education which should be offered in the near future. The CTC describes these added authorization programs as, *"...a subset of the full preliminary teacher preparation programs, and are designed to allow teachers to earn an additional authorization in a specialty area not covered in the authorization of their existing credential."* While this may sound like a great advanced training opportunity for teachers

serving children and youth who are deafblind, currently the only credentialed teachers eligible to apply for the added authorization in Deafblindness based on existing credentials are those with Mild/Moderate Disabilities, Orthopedic Impairments, and Other Health impairments. The irony of the added authorization for deafblindness in our state is that teachers who would be teaching or serving a student with deafblindness — and based on the limited deafblind-specific content included in their pre-service training — are not eligible to apply for it. Due to the small number of credentialed teachers who could seek the authorization, no California college or university special education department currently offers the authorization. To our knowledge only the San Diego County Office of Education offers this authorization and no teacher has applied for the authorization.

If I have a teacher of deafblind on my team does my child still need an intervener?

A teacher of the deafblind holds a different role than an intervener and for any child or youth who requires the services of an intervener, they will also require the services of a teacher of the deafblind. A teacher of the deafblind has specialized skills and knowledge to identify, appropriately assess and evaluate, and design individualized instructional plans and goals for students with deafblindness. An intervener provides individualized, day-to-day intervention to the student in a myriad of ways and with a consistency that a TBD's role, whether itinerant or classroom-based, does not allow. To perform their role effectively, an intervener needs guidance, support, and feedback from the TDB on an ongoing basis. Through ongoing collaboration, the intervener provides the TDB and other team members with valuable information about the student's skills progress, and support or instructional needs in many areas. Interveners and teachers are a team and neither replaces the other; instead they complement each other's efforts.

How is our state deafblind project supporting the development of the role of teacher of the deafblind?

In our state and across the country, state deafblind projects and many committed families and local educators are working hard to ensure that both TDBs and interveners are prepared for their roles. Maurice Belote shared a lot of useful information about the role of the intervener and intervener training opportunities in his article, *The State of Interveners in the State of California: A 2019 Update*. Many past and current CDBS activities have supported the development of the TDB role in our state. In our previous funding cycle, we once again partnered with the Moderate/Severe Credential program at San Francisco State University to provide a specialization certificate in deafblindness to seven (7) pre-service teacher candidates for four consecutive years. All 28 of these participants completed two semesters of coursework solely focused on deafblind educational practices as well as fieldwork and a CDBS internship. Over the course of two separate four-year personnel preparation programs with SFSU, we have helped to prepare dozens of teachers with the M/S credential with specialized training in deafblindness. In addition to serving students in their classes, they can provide mentoring and support to other teachers serving deafblind students with additional disabilities in their local school districts. These graduates are primarily teaching in the SF Bay Area, but a few have moved to other regions of the state. Please contact CDBS for more information about the graduates of these specialization programs.

Other project activities that support pre-service as well as credentialed teachers include:

- Provide no-cost guest lectures at any California State University program providing pre-service training or personnel preparation to teachers earning a VI, DHH, or ESN (M/S) credential.
- Provide targeted training to local education agencies, school districts and school teams on any topic related to deafblind education and specific to the LEA's, district's professional development needs or the needs specific to a student a school team is serving.
- Co-sponsor the annual Lowenfeld-Akeson Early Years Symposium for families, education, medical and rehabilitation providers serving young children with visual impairments which includes content that is inclusive of young children with deafblindness.
- Provide training and updates to early intervention providers across the state about specific practices, research, and resources related to early intervention practices for babies and young children with deafblindness.
- Hold an annual Symposium in Deafblindness for the SFSU graduates who completed additional specialization coursework in deafblindness.
- Present on a variety of topics specific to deafblindness at annual state educational conferences attended by TVIs, TODs, and ESN (M/S) teachers.

We are also very excited to announce a new Teacher of the Deafblind related activity this cycle — a statewide Community of Practice (CoP) for teachers who self-identify as teachers of the deafblind. A community of practice is “A *community of practice is a group of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.*” (Wenger-Trayner, E., & Wenger-Trayner, B., 2015). CDBS is actively facilitating the development and maintenance of this community of practice of interested educators in our state to develop their practice through a variety of activities, based on the needs and interest of those educators through both online meetings and forums and periodic in-person events.

This spring a small, but growing, group of TVIs, TODs, and ESN (M/S) teachers from across the state have started meeting and connecting through online video conference meetings. The group's initial focus has been to identify the following: 1) their roles as TDBs; 2) areas that they could offer guidance and resources to others; and 3) areas that they would like more training or resources. We plan to develop use an interactive online forum for shared discussion and announcements and as a repository for resources. Our hope is that this group will provide opportunities for TDBs across the state to interact and collaborate with others who serve children and youth who are deafblind. The goals of this initiative are to improve the ability of these educators to serve and teach students who are deafblind, and potentially develop a larger group of teacher leaders or deafblind advisors in our state who are prepared to support educational teams or families in their local districts or regions.



National Efforts to Support Development of the Teacher of the Deafblind Role

There are also some exciting national efforts and activities that are providing essential support for recognition and understanding of the TDB role as this an area of critical importance for states across the country. One of the most important national efforts is coordinated support for the *Alice Cogswell-Anne Sullivan Macy Act*, which is congressional legislation related to the education of children and youth who blind or visually impaired, Deaf, and deafblind. There are three titles (i.e., sections) to the Act and each section is related to one of those sensory losses or impairments.

The Cogswell-Macy Act Section III address deafblindness and includes:

- Emphasis on availability of qualified personnel (TDB & interveners)
- Sufficient number of trained TDBs, early interventionists, and interveners.
- Establishes national precedent for this identified role.

The Cogswell-Macy Act has been introduced into the last three sessions of Congress and, although it has not yet passed out committee for a vote, each of these three sessions saw broader bipartisan support in the House and Senate. The Cogswell-Macy Act will likely be reintroduced in the current 116th Congress so that eventual passage is possible, or the language of the Cogswell-Macy Act might be included in the next reauthorization of IDEA. In either scenario, the role of the teacher of deafblind gains professional recognition and states need to be ready to respond to the need for prepared TDBs to support educational teams and students. (Belote, 2019)

To read the most recent version of the Cogswell-Macy Act, follow Congressional actions, or to get a list of the Act's co-sponsors in the last session of Congress (i.e., 2017-2018), go to:

<https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/1120>

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) Initiatives and Resources

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) also is leading several initiatives and activities to support the preparation of teachers of the deafblind. A key NCDB Initiative is *Interveners and Qualified Personnel* which focuses on the promotion of: 1) the recognition, training, certification, and use of interveners and teachers of the deafblind; and 2) professional development for teachers, related service providers, and others who work with children who are deaf-blind. Initiative activities specifically related to TDB include:

- Resources found on NCDB's webpage [Work to Promote Teachers of the Deaf-Blind](#)
- Access to the [Open Hands, Open Access Training Modules](#) (OHOA) for self-paced professional development on a variety of topics related to deafblindness and effective intervention strategies. The [web-based versions](#) of these modules are provided at no cost and are available to anyone at any time. The content of the modules include slideshows, video interviews, videos of effective practices, activities, and readings. The modules are also available in Spanish: <https://nationaldb.org/modules/ohoa/es/los-modulos-de-aprendizaje-para-interventores-de-sordo-ciegos>
- [NCDB Professional Development Webinar Series: Research in Deaf-Blindness](#): A series of archived webinars presented by leading researchers discussing recent research-based findings in the field of deafblindness.

- [Advanced Learning Series in Deafblindness](#) offered through San Diego State University for teachers and related service providers interested in gaining foundational knowledge and skills about deafblindness and preliminary means to address the needs of students they serve.
- Promotion of an online national Community of Practice for interested educators from any state who identify as teacher of the deafblind.

Collaboration across states and professional organizations

State Deafblind Projects across the country are supporting each other's advocacy efforts for state-level recognition of the roles of "teacher of the deafblind" and "intervener". State projects are also sharing resources and materials for training and supporting TBDs and offer training opportunities in their regions, which are open to teachers from other states.

Teacher leaders, researchers, and deafblind specialists from many states are collaborating with the Council on Exceptional Children's *Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness* (DVIDB) to review and revise existing professional competencies outlining knowledge and skill sets for teachers of the deafblind. Any teacher interested in finding information, connections, and opportunities for professional collaboration will find a welcome home in the CEC's [Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness](#).

Where can I get more information about Teachers of the Deafblind?

You can contact anyone at CDBS if you have questions about the information in this article, our newly formed Community of Practice, or any of our activities supporting the role of Teacher of the Deafblind. If you would like to stay updated on national efforts and activities related to teachers of the deafblind, you're encouraged to visit the [National Center on Deaf-Blindness website](#), create a user profile and join the [Interveners and Qualified Personnel Initiative](#). Another good resource for information is the CEC's Division on Visual Impairments and Deafblindness quarterly journal called [Visual Impairment and Deafblind Quarterly](#) (VIDBQ), which has interesting and relevant information for teachers and researchers.

Finally, these articles written by colleagues in the deafblind network are also recommended resources related to preparation of teachers of the deafblind:

- Parker, A.T. & Nelson, C. (2016). Toward a comprehensive system of personnel development in deafblind education. *American Annals of the Deaf*, 161,(4). pp. 486-501. Retrieved from <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/634845>
- Blaha, R., Cooper, H., Montgomery, C., Irby, P., Parker, A. (2009). Teachers of students with deafblindness: *Professionalizing the field*. *TX SenseAbilities*, Vol. 3,(2). Retrieved from <https://www.tsbvi.edu/outreach/2662-teachers-of-students-with-deafblindness-professionalizing-the-field>

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