OCTOBER 2026 California Deafblind Census
Guide to Completing the Form

California Deafblind Services
San Francisco State University
Department of Special Education
1600 Holloway Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94132-4158
cadeafblind.org

Instructions on reviewing/revising a pre-printed census form or completing a new one:

1. Read the Census FAQ Sheet.
2. Revise or fill in the text boxes under each section.
3. Correct or choose **only one** radio button for **every** section.
4. If there are no changes from last year on a pre-printed form you have received: you don't have to do anything, but if you wish, please send the form back with "**no change**" written on it, or check the "no change" boxes on the front and back of the form, or email back a confirmation of no changes.
5. Mail or fax the forms before December 1, 2026 to the Census Coordinator at the address below. Contact the census coordinator by email if digital sharing is preferred or needed.

Census form information

- **The front page captures biographical data, and the back page captures educational data. On the back, please make sure your answers correspond to the current age of the child.**
- **Some numbered radio buttons are intentionally omitted.**
- **Primary Language:** that which is used in the home.
- **Living Setting:** where the individual resides the majority of the year.
- **Guardian 2:** please complete **only** if different from primary Guardian(s).
- **Definition of "documented functional vision loss":** as determined by a Functional Vision Assessment(a non-clinical assessment carried out by a trained vision specialist using commonly accepted assessment tools, checklists and measures for making educated judgments about the functional use of vision.)
- **Definition of "documented functional hearing loss":** as determined by a Functional Hearing Assessment (a non-clinical assessment carried out by a trained hearing specialist using commonly accepted assessment tools, checklists and measures for making educated judgments about the functional use of hearing.)
- **Ethnicity:** Please answer **BOTH** Hispanic origin & Race for each

  Hispanic/Latino: Includes all individuals who identify with one or more nationalities or ethnic groups originating in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, Central and South America, and other Spanish cultures, regardless of race. If a person is **not** of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin, answer "*No, not Hispanic, Latino*".

  Race: The general racial category that most clearly reflects individuals' recognition of their community or with which the individual most identifies

  1. **American Indian or Alaskan Native** - having origins in any of the original peoples of North, South or Central American and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment.
  2. **Asian** - having origins in any of the nationalities or peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent.
  3. **Black/African American** - a person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa.
  4. **White** - origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East or North Africa.
  5. **Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander** - origins in the original peoples of Hawaii, Guam, Samoa, or the Pacific Islands.
  6. **Two or More Ethnicities** - origins in two or more of the categories.

Please return completed form v**ia fax (415) 338-2845** or by **mail:** California Deafblind Services CDBS- San Francisco State University - Department of Special Education 1600 Holloway Avenue - San Francisco, CA 94132-4158
Questions or prefer digital file sharing? Contact Brian Devereux at devereux@sfsu.edu

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2026 California Deafblind Census
Frequently Asked Questions

Who should complete the form? Ideally the census form should be completed by the "best service provider," someone who knows and works closely with the child. However, anyone with access to the child's file can complete the form, including educators, school health personnel, family members, and/or CDBS staff.

Do I need to sign the form? Yes. If you are completing or confirming a form, please sign or print your name on the bottom of page two. This person can be different from the "best service provider contact" but should be someone we could get in touch with if there is a question about the form. E-Signatures are okay.

What if we don't have any deafblind students in our district/county/SELPA at this time? While it is possible that smaller Local Education Agencies may not have any students with combined hearing and vision issues, statistically we know that there should be about 1.56 children who are deafblind for every 1,000 receiving special education services. CDBS field staff are available to assist you in your identification efforts.

What if I don't know all the information requested for a particular student? Please refer to the child's cumulative file if possible and/or the IEP and then please provide as much of the information as possible.

Does reporting a child on this census obligate our school program to provide services such as vision, hearing, orientation and mobility? **No.** Individualized needs and services are determined by the family and educators through the IEP or IFSP process.

Why is the census so important? Funding for specialized services to this population is dependent on having accurate information about how many infants, children and youth in California have both hearing and vision issues. When the state and national legislatures approve funding — and state and federal agencies allocate the funds — census information is used to determine priorities and needs.

What exactly is meant by the term "deafblind"? CDBS recognizes that this is a difficult question for families and educators, and that the federal definition can be confusing. To make it more clear, CDBS uses a functional definition of deafblindness: If an individual (birth through age 21) has combined hearing and vision issues that are significant enough to require considerations (such as specialized adaptations, modifications, and strategies) when presenting information or interacting with the child, then that child is considered eligible to be included on the census and receive services from our project.

What if a child has multiple disabilities that happen to include vision and hearing issues? Most children who are deafblind have additional disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, orthopedic impairments, health impairments, etc. Please complete a census form for all students who have hearing and vision issues, regardless of the presence or absence of additional disabilities.

Why has the date of the census changed? We have changed the time of year that we complete the census in order to be more in-line with our national partners (National Center on Deafblindness, other state deafblind projects). We previously did the census every February and will now start to send them out to confirm information in October so that the annual reports can be generated earlier.

What if the hearing and/or vision issues are cortical in nature? Please **do** include children with sensory impairments that are cortical in nature—such as cerebral (or cortical) visual impairment, central auditory processing disorder, and/or auditory neuropathy—on the census. These students usually require adaptations and modifications to their programs in order for them to succeed. In addition, these hearing and vision issues often need to be considered when developing effective, formal communication systems for these individuals. When in doubt, refer to the functional definition of deafblindness above.

What if deafblindness is not the student's primary disability on her or his IEP? It doesn't matter which primary disability is identified on the IEP. While CDBS would like to see all students who have vision and hearing issues identified as deafblind on the IEP (and there are federal regulations regarding this issue), we know that most students who are deafblind are identified under other federal/state primary disability categories, such as "intellectual disability", "multiple disabilities", "Deafness", "visual impairment", etc.

Does a child have to meet my agency's criteria for vision and/or Deaf I hard-of-hearing services to be reported on this census? No. Eligibility for vision and/or Deaf / hard-of-hearing services varies from district to district, and definitions are interpreted in many different ways. For example, students with only a mild hearing loss and vision loss should be included in the deafblind census count since a combined mild loss of both senses can create an adverse effect on educational success. In addition, students who are deafblind do not have to meet state criteria since this census and the state count are separate entities (the state count being the number of students in California for whom deafblindness is marked on the IEP as their primary disability).

What about progressive hearing or vision loss? If a student has an etiology or diagnosis that typically will lead to impacts on both hearing and vision (e.g., Usher syndrome), please do include them in the census, even if they are not yet receiving services for both vision and hearing.

Why is a child's etiology requested on the census? Knowing a child's etiology is important for a number of reasons. Maintaining this database allows CDBS staff to make important connections between families. For example, parents of a child with CHARGE syndrome or Usher syndrome might contact CDBS to ask if there are other parents of children with the same syndrome in their area. The census allows CDBS to make these family-to-family connections. Another important reason to know etiology is that the California census information is combined with data from around the country to determine which causes of deafblindness are on the increase or decrease, if there are geographic clusters of students with similar etiologies, etc.

What are intervener services and why are they now on the census? In educational environments, intervener services are provided by an individual, typically a paraeducator, who has received specialized training in deafblindness and the process of intervention. An intervener provides consistent one-to-one support to a student who is deafblind (age 3 - 21) throughout the instructional day. This question has been added to the bottom of page 1 of the census so that state and federal governments can examine the need for intervener-specific training and/or regulation initiatives.

Can we send the files back digitally? Because we deal with personal information (before we anonymize it for the national report) we want to use more reliable methods than just email. In the past, this has been via USPS mail and fax. We now have the option of a secure folder to share and receive information. Please email Brian Devereux at devereux@sfsu.edu for more information if this is preferred or required for your LEA.

How can I get extra copies of this FAQ, the census guide, and/or the census form? Extra copies of all census materials can be obtained on our website at: https://cadeafblind.org/census

What if I have a question that hasn't been answered here? Contact Brian Devereux at devereux@sfsu.edu (email is best method for faster reply) or by voicemail at (415) 405-7561