



The Beacon

The Newsletter of the Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Project

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A Tool for IEP Teams: Are Intervener Services Appropriate For Your Student with Deafblindness?

The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) (<https://nationaldb.org/>) has developed an important resource for parents of and service providers for children with deafblindness. Currently, there is not a standardized system for determining if intervener services are needed for assisting a student to access and convey information about his/her academic and social environment. To fill that gap, staff at the NCDB have worked with personnel from several state deafblind projects to prepare **“Are Intervener Services Appropriate for Your Student With Deaf-Blindness? An IEP Team Discussion Guide.”**

This discussion guide begins with the preliminary steps IEP Team members should take to ensure that the IEP process functions properly. These steps include:

- making sure that everyone involved has a common understanding of what interveners do in the school setting
- making sure there is a member of the IEP team with expertise in deafblindness
- making sure that the student has been fully evaluated for:
 - how he/she accesses information via vision, hearing and other senses

- how the student uses his/her behavior to communicate with others
- the student’s level of concept development and learning needs
- the student’s needs for learning media and assistive technology
- the student’s daily living skills
- the student’s orientation and mobility needs

The next section of the guide is a fillable form that evaluators use to document the student levels in the above areas. In each area evaluated, IEP Team members are asked to address what supports or accommodations are needed, and who is, or will be, responsible for providing them.

The final sections of the guide includes space for the IEP Team to document the sources of information the team used to reach their conclusions, the group’s conclusions, and the rationale for their decision about whether or not an intervener is needed.

The IEP Team discussion guide can be useful in ensuring that a systematic, thoughtful process is followed in determining whether or not intervener services are appropriate for a student.



It's All
About **ME!**

2016
Annual Conference
November 11-12

Make plans to join us for this years conference in Appleton at the

Radisson Paper Valley Hotel with presenter Linda Alsop

We are very excited to have Linda Alsop joining us to discuss **Intervention for Students with Deafblindness and the role of the Intervener.**

To REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE, go to the **WESP-DHH webpage.** (<http://wesp-dhh.wi.gov/outreach/conferences/>)

WDBTAP OFFERS SCHOLARSHIPS

to enable families of children with deafblindness to attend this conference. Funding for these scholarships is limited, so applications will be taken on a first come, first served basis.

Scholarships are limited to the registration fee and hotel costs. If you are interested in applying for a scholarship, access the **2016**

Conference Scholarship Application here. (<http://www.wdbtap.wi.gov/images/pdfs/2016ConferenceScholarshipApplication.pdf>)



Linda Alsop MEd. is the director of programs at the SKI-HI Institute at Utah State University and has over 20 years of experience directing federal projects in deafblindness. In Utah, she has worked with the State Deafblind Technical Assistance Project and Baby Watch Early Intervention providing services, training and resource materials. She developed and implemented the first online deafblind training program in the country that trains interveners to work with children and youth with deafblindness, and this coursework won the national Blackboard Greenhouse Exemplary Course award. Ms. Alsop was also instrumental in creating a partnership between Utah State University and the Hadley School for the Blind, through which an online program of study in blindness was established.

Linda has worked closely with the Utah State Office of Education and the Utah State Legislature in obtaining state funding for services to children and youth who are deafblind in Utah. For the past ten years, she has led the National Intervener Task Force in advocacy and system's change efforts on behalf of individuals who are deafblind, and most recently, she established a National Intervener Credential through the National Resource Center for Paraprofessionals (NRCPara). She works closely with parents of children who are deafblind throughout the country, providing training, support, and materials related to educational laws and the rights of their children to have access to a free and appropriate public education.

Reprinted from the Center for Persons with Disabilities website

Deafblind Program Assists Wisconsin Schools

This article is reprinted with the permission of the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. It originally appeared in the ConnectEd section of the website: <https://dpi.wi.gov/news/dpi-connected/deafblind-program-assists-wisconsin-schools>

Friday, April 8, 2016

There was a student at a Wisconsin school district who, Heidi Hollenberger remembers, wouldn't let her get close to him.

"When I tried to get in his space, he would self-abuse."

Communication was therefore difficult since he had very little vision, no hearing, and multiple disabilities.

But, as a consultant with the [Wisconsin Deafblind Technical Assistance Program](#) (WDTAP), Hollenberger understood why the behavior was happening and had a strategy to suggest.

"Self-abuse behavior gets people to leave. He was really telling me, 'I don't know who you are, don't know if I can trust you.'"

She advised the school on helpful strategies – most importantly, providing an intervener.

Crucial for many children with deafblindness, an intervener is the child's "eyes and ears" (similar to Annie Sullivan for Helen Keller). This is someone with whom the student can build a one-on-one relationship and develop trust.

The child can then build on that success by transferring this trust to others who come into their lives.

Three years later, Hollenberger visited the same student when he was up for reevaluation.

He "not only let me into his space" but interacted playfully, grinning at Hollenberger's friendly pokes and eventually grabbing her hand to poke himself.

"To watch him in three years be willing to break down these walls that he had built for so long," Hollenberger says, is exactly what her job is about.

Hollenberger specializes in helping schools help kids with both hearing and vision loss. Most of these children have multiple disabilities as well.

The program, like others in the field, spells "deafblind" as a single, unhyphenated word to reflect that particular challenge when you can't use vision to compensate for hearing loss, nor hearing to compensate for lack of vision.

Since the vast majority of information tends to be communicated through either sight or sound, children who are deafblind often have no explanation for what's happening to them.

"Most ... people who come in and out of their lives are either doing something to them, like a doctor or a nurse, or they take things away without explanation. 'People hurt me and people are thieves' – that's what we learn," Hollenberger says.

So, that relationship piece – important for all kids – is especially fundamental for students with deafblindness.

Society is still learning how best to serve students who are deafblind. WDBTAP was brought under DPI auspices in 2008 – specifically, under the [Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing](#) (WESP-DHH) to better help schools with systemic improvements.

WDBTAP offers both resources and expertise.

If there is even a hunch a child might have a combined vision and hearing loss, a WDBTAP expert can visit to verify.

Once identified, deafblindness should be included on a child's individualized education program (IEP), though it takes some creativity. While deafblindness is recognized by [IDEA](#), it is not included in Wisconsin state law as a disability category at this time - a situation that WDBTAP hopes to address.

Similarly, although intervener services are not yet an established category of "related services" for students under IDEA, schools can see positive results by helping people learn the skills of an intervener, and WDBTAP will reimburse Wisconsin paraprofessionals, sign language interpreters, and others for the costs of intervener training.

After identification, a child can be added to WDBTAP's deafblind registry, opening up resources and support.

WDBTAP will facilitate schools' and families' collaborative development of strategies for helping kids succeed.

And, it provides access to the [Deaf Mentor Program](#), one of the specialized services offered by the [WESP-DHH Outreach Program](#), on-site and online coaching and



WDBTAP Deafblind Consultant Heidi Hollenberger

trainings, a parent-to-parent matching program, and a lending library of products that can be helpful for kids with deafblindness (so families and schools don't have to buy them until they verify that they're right for a given child).

Funding continuity for WDBTAP seems a good bet, since the program is on its second 5-year, federal grant and has been held up as a model for other states.



Marla Walsh joins WDBTAP

Marla Walsh is the newly appointed Center Director of the Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, which consists of two sister programs designed to support the education of all deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind students in the state of Wisconsin- the Wisconsin School for the Deaf and the Statewide Outreach Program. Marla is originally from Port Washington, WI and graduated from the University of Wisconsin- Milwaukee with two Bachelor's Degrees in Deaf Education and Speech Pathology/Audiology. She spent the first three years of her career as a resource teacher for deaf and hard of hearing students in South Carolina. She returned to Wisconsin and worked as an itinerant teacher for deaf and hard of hearing students through CESA 11. She began her tenure at the Wisconsin School for the Deaf as a high school English teacher in 1987, and continued in that role for twelve years, during which time she earned her Master's Degree in Secondary English Education from the University of Wisconsin- Whitewater. She continued her education in Administrative Leadership at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and became the high school Principal at WSD in 1999. As roles shifted, Marla became the Principal and Director of Student Services for the entire educational program. During the summer of 2015, Marla was appointed as the Interim WESP-DHH Center Director for the 2015-16 school year. She then began serving in a permanent capacity as the Director of WESP-DHH in July of 2016. Her extensive experience in the field has fostered her dedication to the deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind students of the state, their families, and the professionals that serve them. She is devoted to her husband David, her two children Bethany and Jonathan, and spends as much time with her grandchildren as possible. In her spare time, she enjoys beekeeping.

Marla is replacing Marcy Dicker as the project director for WDBTAP. Marcy is retiring with over 13 years in outreach. Enjoy your retirement Marcy!



It is the start of a new school year and we would like to feature your student's first day of school photographs on our website. If you would like to share, please email jpeg photographs to wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov and we will send you a photo release.



Check it out!

The WESP-DHH website got a makeover. The website has been updated featuring new resources and easier navigation. Check it out today at:

<http://www.wesp-dhh.wi.gov/outreach/>

A Visit to Our Lending Library

Visit www.wdbtap.wi.gov/library to see these or any WDBTAP materials. Send us a message at wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov to make a borrowing request.

New Light Show Toys Available



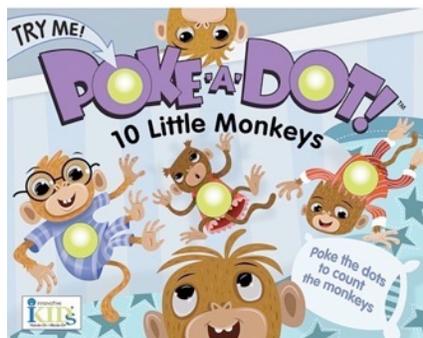
These new light show devices offer dazzling lights and exciting music. The toys will help your child develop visual perceptual skills including tracking, scanning and improve visual attention and active engagement. See all of the new items that are available for check out at www.wdbtap.wi.gov/library

Ring Around Bells



Ring Around Bells are a favorite and can be used in four different ways. The Bells are excellent for musical therapy and encourages listening and grasping skills while increasing eye-hand coordination.

Tactile Books make Learning Fun



New fun tactile books have been added to our library. Every page features raised buttons that pop and make clicking sounds that will engage your child. Check out website for a complete list of the new titles.



A New Face in Baraboo

Jennifer Hudson-Stanek is the new part-time office associate at WDBTAP. Jenny and her family live near Baraboo and enjoy spending their time together outdoors. Jenny will be working in the Baraboo Office updating the database and websites, maintaining the lending library, preparing newsletters and assisting with the annual Child Count. If you would like to contribute to the WDBTAP newsletter, website or have any other questions or concerns Jenny can be reached by email at wdbtap@wesp-dhh.wi.gov or by phone at 608-356-2023.

What Types of Technical Assistance does WDBTAP Provide?

- Parent/Family trainings and assistance in connecting families with one another
- Statewide and regional workshops for service providers and families
- Observation, support and coaching in programming for children
- Intensive deafblind training series for paraprofessionals who work one on one with children and youth who are deaf blind
- Assistance in identifying children and youth who are deaf blind
- Referral to relevant local, regional and national agencies
- Lending library with materials, equipment and toys to benefit deaf blind children/youth on the Registry

WDBTAP STAFF

Marla Walsh, Project Director
Jolene Gruber, Grant Coordinator
Heidi Hollenberger, Deafblind Consultant
Jodie Anderson, Family Engagement Coordinator
Jennifer Hudson-Stanek, Office Associate

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