



# a Family Guide to Special Education Services

## DEAF AND BLIND

VOLUME 2

# Family Guides for Special Education Services

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## Other MDE Resources

### Parent Engagement and Support

📌 [mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families](https://mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families)

☎ 601.359.3498

### General Resources for Parents:

📌 [www.mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families/Resources](https://www.mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families/Resources)

### Procedural Safeguards: Your Family's Special Education Rights

📌 [mdek12.org/OSE/Dispute-Resolution](https://mdek12.org/OSE/Dispute-Resolution)

# DEAF-BLIND (DB)

## DB Definition

**Deaf-Blindness** (DB) means concomitant hearing and visual impairments that adversely affect a child's educational performance, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

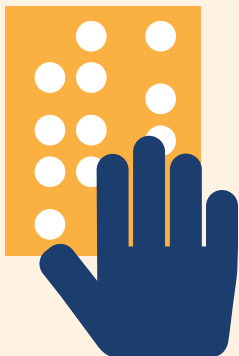


## Evaluation Requirements

When the evaluation team is considering eligibility under the Deaf-Blind category:

- A. A statement that the child cannot properly function in a special education program designed solely for children with hearing impairments or visual impairments must be included in the comprehensive evaluation and/or eligibility determination report.
- B. Procedures for assessing both Hearing Impairment and Visual Impairment must be followed.

## Deaf-Blindness



is the **smallest disability group** and also the **most heterogeneous**. Children and young adults differ by type and level of hearing and vision loss, age of onset of vision and hearing loss, physical and health issues, cognitive functioning, expressive and receptive communication forms, and educational histories. Like all learners, children who are Deaf-Blind are also diverse by race, ethnicity, culture, family (including the language of the family), community characteristics, and socioeconomic status.





## Helpful Vocabulary

**Accommodation**—Tool that enables a student with a disability to better access the general curriculum. Some accommodations are applicable to instruction only (for example, an assignment that is shortened but still addresses the state standard); others are permitted for both instruction and assessment (for example, change in formatting or timing).

**Adventitious**—The term used for individuals who were born without hearing and/or vision being impacted but later experienced the dual impairments.

**American Sign Language (ASL)**—A visual language with its own grammar and syntax used by Deaf people primarily in the United States. Meaning is conveyed through signs that are comprised of specific movements and shapes of the hand and arms, eyes, face, head, and body posture.

**Braille**—A tactile system of raised dots representing letters or a combination of letters of the alphabet that is felt with the fingertips.

**Congenitally Deaf-Blind**—The term used for children are born Deaf-Blind.

**Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)**—Foundational requirement of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) stipulating that special education and related services must be provided at public expense (that is, without charge to parents), meet state requirements, include an appropriate education that leads to outcomes such as employment or higher education, and conform to the Individualized Education Program (IEP) prepared for the student.

**Inclusion**—The practice of educating children with disabilities in the general education classroom. Inclusion in special education programs is an important part of the continuum of special education placements required by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). In an inclusion classroom, a student with disabilities feels included, accepted, and makes friends, and the student's peers learn to better understand their classmate's disabilities.

**Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)**—A law that makes available a free public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children.

**Individualized Education Program (IEP)**—A document written for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in accordance with state and federal policies.

**Low-incidence**—Deaf-Blind is the lowest of the low-incidence populations, meaning that this occurs less than any other impairments. Low-incidence populations include the following: deaf or hard of hearing, blind or having low vision (has usable vision), Deaf-Blind, significant developmental delay, significant physical disability, multiple disability, and Autism Spectrum Disorder.

**Modification**—Adjustment to an assignment, test, or activity in a way that significantly simplifies or lowers the standard or alters the original measurement. Modifications change what a student is taught or expected to learn, and most are applicable to students with significant cognitive disabilities.

**Related services**—Additional support services that a child with disabilities requires, such as transportation, occupational, physical, speech pathology services, interpreters, medical services, etc.

**Significant cognitive disability (SCD)**—In order for a student to be classified as having a significant cognitive disability, **all** of the following criteria must be true:

- The student demonstrates significant cognitive deficits and poor adaptive skill levels (as determined by that student’s comprehensive evaluation) that prevent participation in the standard academic curriculum or achievement of the academic content standards, even with accommodations and modifications.
- The student requires extensive direct instruction in both academic and functional skills in multiple settings to accomplish the application and transfer of those skills.
- The student’s inability to complete the standard academic curriculum is neither the result of excessive or extended absences nor is primarily the result of visual, auditory, or physical disabilities, emotional behavioral disabilities, specific learning disabilities, or social, cultural, or economic differences.

**Specially designed instruction (SDI)**—Universally required component that defines special education and stipulates that students with disabilities receive instruction that includes changes in content, methodology, and/or delivery. It is not dependent on setting and is a primary responsibility of special education professionals.

**Speech-language pathologist (SLP)**—A speech-language pathologist works to prevent, assess, diagnose, and treat speech, language, social communication, cognitive communication, and swallowing disorders in children and adults.

**Tactile communication**—A method of using touch to converse. The communication most often uses American Sign Language and/or Fingerspelling in the hand or hands of the person who is Deaf-Blind. Through maintaining touch, the person who is Deaf-Blind follows the movement of the communicator of the signed communication. This system of communication must be taught.



# Ways to Help at Home

## How Can You Help Your Child?

Adapted from Communication at Home and in the Community: Helpful Strategies and Suggestions From Parents & Families With a Child Who is Deaf-Blind | 1999 National Parent Workshop sponsored by The National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Young Adults Who Are Deaf-Blind—[documents.nationaldb.org/products/parent99.pdf](https://documents.nationaldb.org/products/parent99.pdf)

- Every family member should take responsibility for including and communicating with your child.
- Your child increases skills and motivation through communication with many varied partners.
- Participate in resources that help you better understand communication and Deaf-Blindness.
- Devise a personalized communication system sensitive to your family's needs.
- Incorporate natural opportunities to learn and to provide information and training.
- Use written notes to communicate when appropriate.
- Allow plenty of time for your child to respond or to make a request.
- Establish regular routines for different activities to create common experiences to discuss with your child (e.g., a regular grocery shopping trip).
- Sign when talking to hearing persons in the presence of your child with Deaf-Blindness, remember to sign if the child uses sign language.
- Sign stories to siblings if your child uses sign language.
- Use closed-captioned TV when appropriate.
- Model interactions with your child while in the community.



**Large print helps people who have low vision. Large print materials should be prepared with a font (print) size that is 16 to 20 points or larger.**



- Develop a small communication dictionary of the words and concepts your child uses and share it with teachers, service providers, and others so they can understand your child's communication system.
- Find local programs that offer sensory activities (e.g., a museum, an arboretum, a petting zoo, etc.).
- Request braille/picture menus in restaurants and provide community agencies with a list of restaurants that use them.
- Make sure your conversations including a beginning, middle, and end.
- Follow through with school instruction at home.
- Provide your family and caregivers with sign language classes—use an Internet website to learn ASL ([handspeak.com](https://handspeak.com)).
- Share resources such as websites, CDs, and books with family members and friends.

## Effects of Deaf-Blindness

Adapted from [RaisingChildren.net](http://RaisingChildren.net)

A child with hearing and vision loss has difficulty or delays in understanding what's going on around them. This means that Deaf-Blindness can affect other areas of your child's development:

- **Communicating**—for example, your child might not see someone waving and smiling at them or be able to make eye contact.
- **Talking**—for example, your child might not point to objects, so the people around him will not name these objects.
- **Telling the difference between day and night**—this might make it hard for your child to settle into a regular sleeping routine.
- **Sitting, crawling, and walking**—for example, your child might not want to move toward objects because he or she can't see or hear them.
- **Learning to read and write**—your child might be delayed in learning the motor and listening skills needed for reading and writing.
- **Playing**—for example, your child might be afraid to touch certain textures or explore areas he or she can't see.
- **Responding quickly to situations**—your child might not be able to learn through seeing, so he or she might not know how to respond to a situation or experience and will take time in responding.



## Tips for Parenting a Child With Deaf-Blindness

- Develop a close, trusting relationship with your child.
- Use consistent, daily routines in which your child is fully involved.
- Provide your child with cues so he or she can learn to anticipate what is going to happen.
- Give your child opportunities to have some control over his or her environment.
- Establish predictable routines, each having a clear beginning and end.
- Invent your own games.
- Involve your child in the entire activity.
- Encourage the use of all sensory information.
- Adapt the environment.
- Provide opportunities to make choices.
- Remember to offer pauses.
- Watch for cues.
- Monitor levels of stimulation.
- Help your child interact with others.



**You can encourage your child to explore his or her environment using whatever sight and hearing he or she has and all other senses. This will spark your child's curiosity about the world around them.**

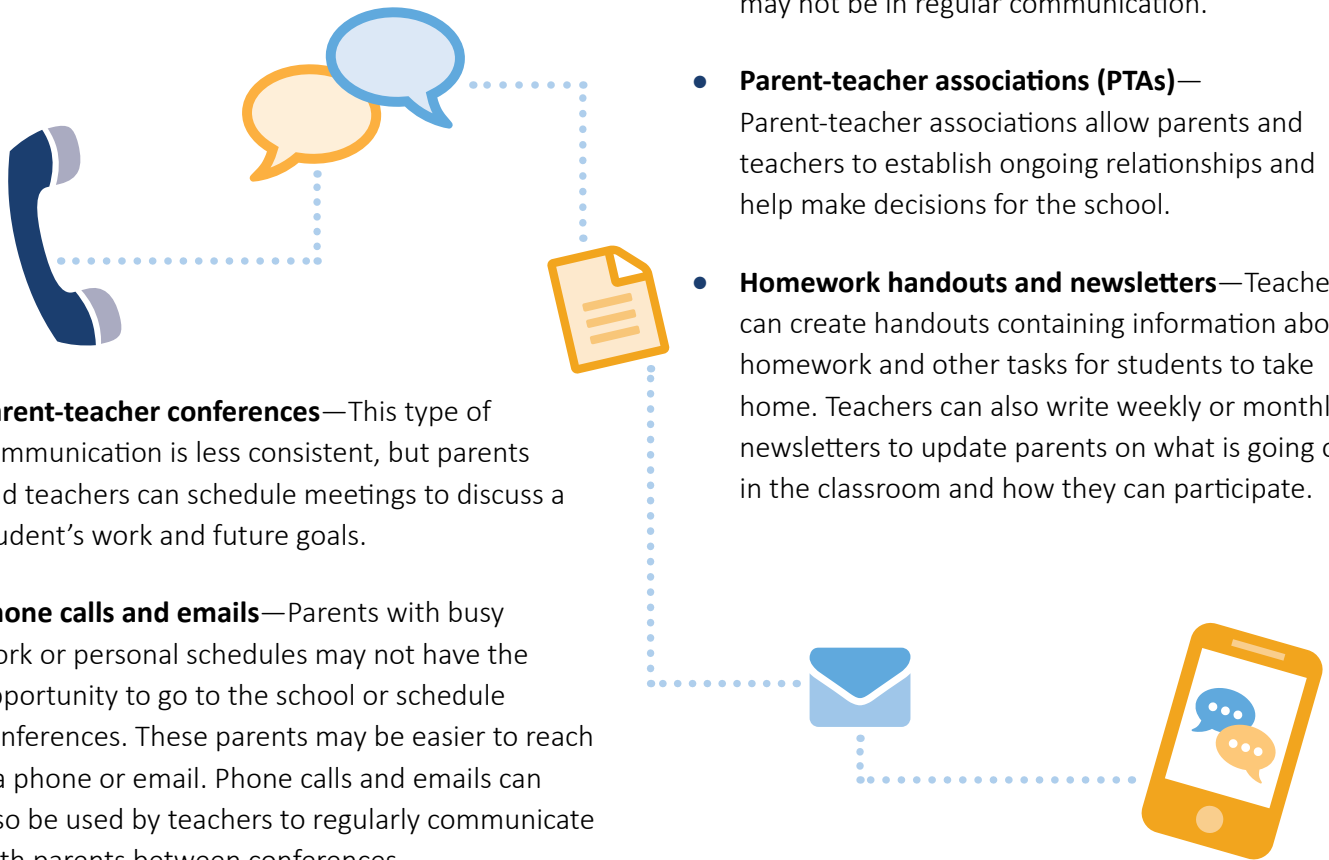


# Successful Parent-Teacher Communication

Adapted from American University "Parent-teacher communication: strategies for effective parent inclusion & engagement"—  
[soeonline.american.edu/blog/parent-teacher-communication](http://soeonline.american.edu/blog/parent-teacher-communication)

Communication is key to a successful inclusion classroom. Parents, general education teachers, and special educators can try the following tactics for successful parent-teacher communication:

- Regular in-person communication**—This type of communication works great for parents who typically drop off and pick up their children from school.
- Open houses**—Most schools host annual open houses where parents can visit their children's classrooms. This allows teachers to meet parents for the first time or meet a second parent who may not be in regular communication.
- Parent-teacher associations (PTAs)**—Parent-teacher associations allow parents and teachers to establish ongoing relationships and help make decisions for the school.
- Homework handouts and newsletters**—Teachers can create handouts containing information about homework and other tasks for students to take home. Teachers can also write weekly or monthly newsletters to update parents on what is going on in the classroom and how they can participate.
- Parent-teacher conferences**—This type of communication is less consistent, but parents and teachers can schedule meetings to discuss a student's work and future goals.
- Phone calls and emails**—Parents with busy work or personal schedules may not have the opportunity to go to the school or schedule conferences. These parents may be easier to reach via phone or email. Phone calls and emails can also be used by teachers to regularly communicate with parents between conferences.
- Text messages**—Some teachers use mass text messages or special messaging apps to communicate with parents. Several text services, such as Remind, cater specifically to teachers.
- Class websites**—Teachers can create classroom websites to post announcements, homework, and reminders to help ensure they don't get lost in communication between the classroom and home. Similar methods of communication include social media sites or learning management platforms such as ClassDojo.







# Resources

- American Association of the Deaf-Blind**—The American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) is a nonprofit national consumer group of, by, and for DB persons and their supporters. Membership consists of DB people from diverse backgrounds, as well as family members, professionals, interpreters, and other interested supporters.

📍 [aadb.org](http://aadb.org)  
📞 301.495.4403
- The Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) Office of Special Education**—A service-oriented office that seeks to improve the education experience for children with disabilities

📍 [mdek12.org/OSE](http://mdek12.org/OSE)
- Mississippi Hearing-Vision Project**—A federally funded project led by the University of Southern Mississippi College of Education and Human Sciences that provides technical assistance and training for individuals living in Mississippi between the ages of birth and 21 years with varying degrees of hearing and vision loss.. Any parent, family member, or service/care provider of an individual, birth through 21 years of age with both vision and hearing loss, may request services.

📍 [usm.edu/education-human-sciences/mississippi-hearing-vision-project](http://usm.edu/education-human-sciences/mississippi-hearing-vision-project)
- National Center on Deaf-Blindness**—A national technical assistance center that works with state DB projects and other partners to improve educational results and quality of life for DB children and their families.

📍 [nationaldb.org](http://nationaldb.org)
- National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB)**—A national network of families who focus on issues surrounding deaf-blindness. NFADB advocates for all DB persons, supports national policy to benefit people who are DB, and encourages the founding and strengthening of family organizations in each state.

📍 [nfadb.org](http://nfadb.org)
- National Library Service for the Blind and Print Disabled (Library of Congress)**—Their mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

📍 [loc.gov/nls/resources/deaf-blindness](http://loc.gov/nls/resources/deaf-blindness)
- SKI-HI Institute (Utah State University)**—A unit of the Utah State University College of Education’s Department of Communicative Disorders and Deaf Education that focuses on outreach programs to Utah citizens and families and professionals in nearly all 50 states and Canada. The institute’s primary purpose is to identify and respond to the real needs of young children who are deaf/hard of hearing, blind/visually impaired, deaf-blind, multi-disabled, or have any special needs.

📍 [ski-hi.mystrikingly.com](http://ski-hi.mystrikingly.com)
- U.S. Department of Education**—Their mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

📍 [ed.gov](http://ed.gov)
- U.S. Department of Education-Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services**—The mission of the Office of Special Education Programs is to lead the nation's efforts to improve outcomes for children with disabilities, birth through 21, and their families, ensuring access to fair, equitable, and high-quality education and services.

📍 [ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers](http://ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers)

## MDE-specific resources include:

- General resources for parents:**

📍 [mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families/Resources](http://mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families/Resources)
- Parent Engagement and Support**

📍 [mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families](http://mdek12.org/OSE/Information-for-Families)  
📞 601.359.3498
- Procedural Safeguards: Your Family’s Special Education Rights**

📍 [mdek12.org/OSE/Dispute-Resolution](http://mdek12.org/OSE/Dispute-Resolution)



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# Acknowledgments

