How does someone become an intervener?

The Indiana Deaf-Blind Services Project provides on-line training using training modules developed by the National Center on Deaf-Blindness and based upon the Council for Exceptional Children's standards to train interveners. Individuals or teams can sign up to take the modules through the project and will receive certificates of completion for use toward professional growth plans and/or future certification, at either a state or national level.

For more information on interveners or the Intervener Training Program contact Lisa Poff at Lisa.Poff @indstate.edu or visit www.INDBServices.org.

Indiana Deaf-Blind Services

INDIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

Interveners: What you need to know

Imagine that you are in an unfamiliar place and you cannot see or hear; or what you can manage to see and hear is highly distorted. You like to sit and stare into the light that you can make out; providing input for your sensory deprived eyes. Without warning, unfamiliar people are pulling you from one place to another. They take you to different activities that you cannot make sense of with your limited information.

In addition, you may have few communication skills and can only express yourself through your behaviors. Your response may be one of panic and lashing out… and this is the experience that many children who qualify as deaf-blind go through every day.

An Intervener may be able to help!

Why does a child who is deaf-blind need extra help beyond conventional special education?

Deaf-blindness creates a “disability of access” to visual and auditory information about the environment that is necessary for learning, communication and development (Alsop et al., 2007, p.1). The less a child interacts with the environment, the fewer opportunities he has to learn. Most people learn with little effort, by using their vision and hearing, through both direct instruction and incidental learning. For individuals with deaf-blindness, visual and auditory information is either not available or is incomplete, distorted and unreliable. Even seemingly mild simultaneous vision and hearing losses can have a profound effect on a student and learning (Huebner, Prickett, Welch, & Joffee, 1995).

What will it take to help move the child forward educationally and socially?

Many times, a skilled intervener is needed who can consistently bridge the gap caused by sensory loss so that the child can receive information and become linked to the outside world. An intervener is usually a paraeducator who has *specialized training and skills in deaf-blindness* and works consistently one-to-one with the student. They have three major roles: (1) to facilitate access to environmental information; (2) to facilitate the development and/or use of the student’s receptive and expressive communication skills; and, (3) to develop and maintain a relationship that promotes social and emotional well-being for the student who is deaf-blind (Alsop et al., 2007). The intervener must learn all about the child who is deaf-blind and have a secure understanding of the child's vision, hearing and personal communication methods. This will be the basis for building a communication system that will provide the child access to the environment and the people who are active within it.

What are the differences between an intervener, a paraprofessional and an interpreter?

Intervener	Paraprofessional	Interpreter
Works under the direction of the classroom teachers	Works under the direction of the classroom teacher	Usually works independently in interpreting information
Assigned to work on-to-one with a student who is deaf-blind	Usually works with groups of students, but can work one-to-one when assigned	Usually does not have a consistent relationship with the individual
Must have comprehensive specialized training in deaf-blindness	Typically does not receive disability specific training	Usually does not have disability specific training
Facilitates the student’s connection to others by explaining and modeling the student’s communication system, acting as a bridge to the world, and creating a safe environment that encourages successful interactions	Typically is not required to facilitate communication connections between students and others	Translates information from one mode or language to another
Has skills in deaf-blind intervention including communication methods, sensory loss, deaf-blind instructional strategies, and how to create independence rather than dependence	Has varying levels of skills dependent on assignment, experience, and training	Does not have, nor is required to have these types of skills
Prepares materials for the student who is deaf-blind, with whom he/she works, with the teacher	Responsible for materials preparation for entire class as assigned by the teacher	Does not prepare materials in the classroom
Participates as an active member of the student’s team including attendance at IEP meetings in order to contribute valuable day-to-day knowledge of the student	Generally does not attend IEP meetings	Generally does not attend IPE meetings, unless present to translate for a participating student.
Maintains a trusting, teacher-student type of relationship	Maintains a teacher-student type of relationship	Is expected to keep a professional distance

Alsop, L., Robinson, C., Goehl, K., Lace, J., Belote, M., & Rodriguez-Gil, G. (2007). Interveners in the classroom: Guidelines for teams working with students who are deaf-blind. Logan, UT: SKI-HI Institute and Morgan, S. (2001) “What’s My Role?” A comparison of the responsibilities of interpreters, interveners and support service providers.”