

DeafBlind Intervention is Now a Related Service in Illinois

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The language regarding DeafBlind Interveners has now been approved, and intervention is a related service for students with combined vision-hearing loss in Illinois. You can find this language at

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/25ark.pdf> p. 237 – 238.

DeafBlind Interveners are still a new concept to many in Illinois. The [National Definition](#) notes that interveners:

- Provide consistent access to instruction and environmental information that is usually gained by typical students through vision and hearing, but that is unavailable or incomplete to an individual who is deaf-blind;
- Provide access to and/or assist in the development and use of receptive and expressive communication skills;
- Facilitate the development and maintenance of trusting, interactive relationships that promote social and emotional well-being; and
- Provide support to help a student form relationships with others and increase social connections and participation in activities.

Because this is a new service, people have questions. These are four of the frequent questions regarding DeafBlind Interveners in Illinois:

Question: Must a student's primary disability on the IEP be deafblindness?

Answer: No, but the student's combined vision-hearing concerns will cause issues with academic and social access, the gathering of environmental information, and the formation and maintenance of social connections. Interveners are trained to meet these specific needs created by the dual sensory loss, no matter what the educational team (including the family) has determined is the primary disability.

Question: Can any person fulfill the role of an intervener?

Answer: While a number of people can provide interactions in a manner similar to the [National Definition](#), this new language requires that persons providing intervention as a related service have the ISBE approval. To get the approval, individuals must complete a portfolio in which they demonstrate [seventy-nine specific standards](#) of knowledge and skills established by the Council for Exceptional Children. Approved portfolios lead to certification or credential, which is submitted to ISBE as part of the approval process.

Question: Won't having a one-to-one make the student more dependent?

Answer: An important part of training for deaf-blind interveners is on how to provide missing sensory

information to students, so that they are empowered to make choices, connect with others, and do as much as possible on their own. The motto of interveners is to "Do with, not for". This means that interveners have specific training that other paraprofessionals do not have to support the independence of students with deafblindness.

Question: What if a team determines an intervener is appropriate, but one is not available?

Answer: As with any newly recognized profession, this may happen. There are online university training programs ([Utah State University](#) and [Central Michigan University](#)) where staff currently working with a student can attend to eventually meet the approval. Another option is to advertise in the U. S. and Canada with the Interveners and Deafblindness Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/Interveners/> or with the National Center on Deafblindness at <https://nationaldb.org/jobs> Both are free.

Are Intervener Services Appropriate for Your Student With Deaf-Blindness?

Some teams wonder whether a student with deaf-blindness is a candidate for a Deaf-Blind Intervener. "Are Intervener Services Appropriate for Your Student With Deaf-Blindness? An IEP Team Discussion Guide" is an invaluable tool to support that discussion and can be found at https://91372e5fba0d1fb26b72-13cee80c2bfb23b1a8fcedea15638c1f.ssl.cf1.rackcdn.com/cms/IEPGuide_NatIDB_822_1083.pdf Project Reach staff, and your [deaf-blind specialist](#), would be

happy to support your family and team with any of this new information. Please feel free to [contact us](#) with questions.