

Building Connections & Supporting Learning with Infants & Toddlers Who Have Complex Needs Including Deaf-Blindness

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Agenda

- Welcome
- Overview of Deaf-Blindness
- Evidence-Based Practices & Application
- Discussion
- Resources & Training Tools

Objectives

- Participants will:
 - Describe evidence-based practices that build trusting bonds and language & cognitive development with young children with complex needs
 - Connect practices learned in the session to design learning opportunities for infants and toddlers who have complex needs
 - Identify where to find resources to draw upon as you work with infants and toddlers who have complex needs, including those who are deafblind

Welcome

- Introduction
- Who's here? Role/State



Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Network

- National Center on Deaf-Blindness
- State and Multi-State Deaf-Blind Projects
 - Provide resources, consultation, training, and networking opportunities for families & professionals
- Serve Birth - Age 21
- Early Identification and Referral Initiative
- Funded by the Office of Special Education Programs



One-Minute

- **Largest organ on our body - skin**
- **Take one minute**
 - Close your eyes if you feel comfortable
 - Take note of what you feel
- **Let's discuss**

Overview of Deaf-Blindness

- “Deaf-Blindness” refers to combined vision and hearing loss.
- Any range of combined vision and hearing loss that significantly limits the child’s ability to get information from people, objects, and activities around them.
- There are many causes and the majority (87%) of children have multiple complex disabilities
- Annual Child Count: *National Child Count of Children and Youth who are Deaf-Blind.*

Deafblind Activity

Evidence Based Practices

- Building Trusting Relationships
- Child Guided Approaches, Active Learning, and Shared Experiences
- Appropriate Hand Use and Respectful Touch
- Identifying Appropriate Communication Modalities
- Predictable Routines & Cues

Ferrell, Bruce, & Luckner (2018)



Texas School for the Blind and
Visually Impaired (2022)

Building Trusting Relationships

- Touch in a neutral location (shoulder or arm) - not the hands
- Use a greeting ritual to identify yourself- voice, personal identifier, or touch
- Join the child in what they are doing.
- Affirm what the child is doing in a way that makes sense to them.
- Use a parting ritual to say goodbye.



Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (2022)

Building Trusting Relationships

Practice Guide

Child Guided Approaches, Active Learning, & Shared Experiences



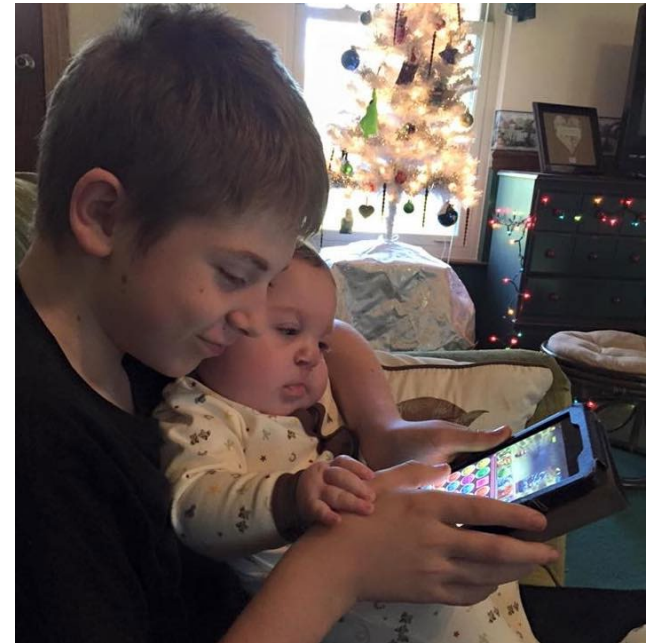
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired (2022)

- Incidental learning is difficult or non-existent
- Follow child's lead and interests
- Pacing and proximity matter!
- Movement, action, and hands-on experiences in interactions in multi-sensory routines
- Thoughtful presentation of experiences that “enable them to develop a gradually expanding view of the world.”

Miles & McLetchie (2008)

Appropriate Hand Use and Respectful Touch

- The hands often serve as the eyes and ears for children who are deaf-blind
- Make your hands available to the child
- Hand Under-Hand is a strategy where the learner's hands are gently guided from underneath, which allows the child to explore and participate as they choose.



Hand Under Hand

Practice Guide

Hand Under Hand: Kailee



Let's Chat

- What are some examples of types of touch infants & young children experience that serve purposes that cannot be fulfilled with other means of communication?
 - How does this apply to an infant/young child that you know who is deafblind and/or has significant support needs?
- What are some ways that mutual touch and co-exploring could be used with infants/young children who are deafblind/has significant support needs to help them reach out to the world? How do they benefit your relationship?

Identifying Appropriate Communication Modalities

- Everyone communicates!
- Modalities may include: body movements, facial expressions, gestures, objects, sign language, cues, AAC device, vocalizations, speech
- Receptive and Expressive Communication modalities may differ
- Watch for subtle communication attempts, allow adequate response time, respond consistently



Importance of Routine



- To bring order/organization to the child's world
- Build concepts
- Create predictability when possible, increases security
- Predictability → anticipation → ↑ intentional communication
- Can include book, objects, or communication board

Miles & Riggio (1998)

Christopher - Bedtime



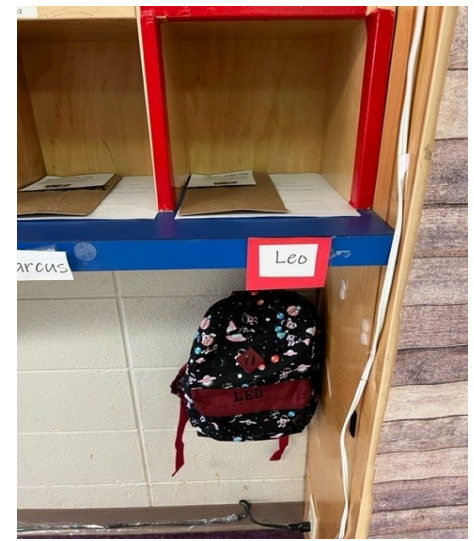
Christopher has high myopia, cortical visual impairment (CVI) and a moderate-to-severe hearing loss.

Routines Activity

- Think of a young child with whom you work who has significant support needs and/or is deafblind
- What routine does this child have that is working?
- Discuss with the person next to you:
 - The routine
 - When it is used
 - By whom it is used
 - How it was developed
 - How it relates to the child's IFSP or goals of the family
 - How it has been adapted
 - How it has benefited the child

Preparing the Learning Environment

- The physical structure is the foundation
 - Provides organization
 - Can either enhance or inhibit access
- Helps everyone understand what occurs in each area
- Helps the child anticipate
- Minimizes distractions



Time to draw!

- Take a few minutes to draw a room or space where you spend the majority of your time with a child who is deafblind
- Include all the things
 - Doors
 - Windows
 - Furniture
 - Appliances
 - Equipment

Essential Components

- Organized, predictable spaces
- Clear, safe pathways
- Environmental adaptations and modifications
- Observation and documentation

Adapting Materials in the Environment

C - Contrast, Color, create defined spaces

L - Lighting

A - Amount of info (auditory and visual) / figure ground issues

P - Positioning of materials, child and communicators

S - Size- “Big is not always best”



Organized & Predictable

- Permanent workspace, marked by an identifier
- Maximizes the use of useful vision/hearing
- Materials positioned consistently in the space
- Space and materials are positioned so the child can meaningfully participate
- Natural environments chosen to enhance skill transfer
- Adaptations/modifications made to ensure safety
- Entrances to learning spaces marked with identifier
- Dedicated space for equipment

***Look at your drawing
Is the area organized
& predictable?***

Take a few moments to write down ways the space/area could be improved

Pathways

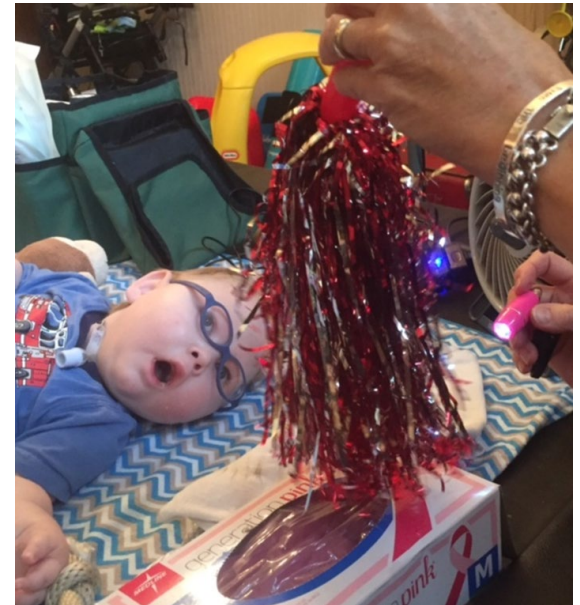
- **Within and between spaces are**
 - Clear of clutter
 - Identified by landmarks and cues that are easily recognizable and understood
- **Consistent routes are established**

***Look at your drawing
Are the pathways
clear of clutter and
include identifiable
landmarks?***

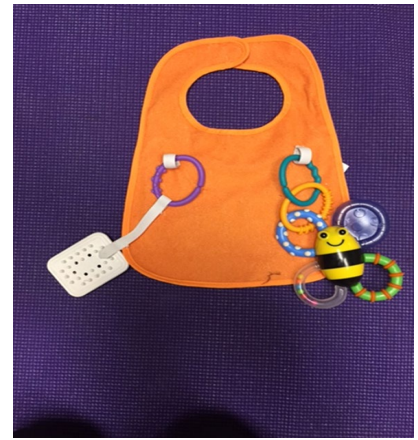
Take a few moments to write down ways the space/area could be improved

Environmental Adaptations and Modifications

- Supports implemented based on consultation with the family and other professionals
- Lighting optimized to maximize child's useful vision
- Background noise minimized
- Color, texture, and contrast used
- Space allowed for
 - Other staff
 - Materials
 - Equipment



Examples:





Video



***Look at your drawing
How has your team
addressed the
environmental
adaptations &
modifications?***

Take a few moments to write down ways the space/area could be improved

Observation & Documentation

- **Monitors the child**
 - Feelings of safety and security
 - Interest
 - Active engagement
- **Appropriate changes implemented based on the child's needs and abilities**
- **Child's environmental needs documented and shared with team**

Kathee Scoggin - Smell & Memory



Likes & Dislikes Tool (1 of 2)

“LIKES” INFORMATION



Child:	Date:
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FOODS taste/ texture	SMELLS	TOUCH texture/ hugs/ fabrics light - heavy	MOVEMENT rock/ bounce swing	VIBRATION car ride toys/ appliances	SIGHTS lights/colors	SOUNDS voices/ music pitch/ loudness environmental

MUSCLES push - pull bear weight	PEOPLE	PLACES	ACTIVITIES	TOYS	SELF STIMULATION BEHAVIORS	OTHER

Likes & Dislikes Tool (2 of 2)

“DISLIKES” INFORMATION



Child:	Date:
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FOODS taste/ texture	SMELLS	TOUCH texture/ hugs/ fabrics light - heavy	MOVEMENT rock/ bounce swing	VIBRATION car ride toys/ appliances	SIGHTS lights/colors	SOUNDS voices/ music pitch/ loudness environmental

MUSCLES push - pull bear weight	PEOPLE	PLACES	ACTIVITIES	TOYS	SELF STIMULATION BEHAVIORS	OTHER

***Consider how your
team uses
observation and
documentation***

Take a few moments to write down ways the team could improve this

Good vs. Whoops (in a classroom)



Discussion

- What is one take-away?

- Questions?



Resources at Your Fingertips



- [National Center on Deaf-Blindness](#)
- [Deaf-blindness, educational practices, and professional development opportunities](#)
- [State Deaf-Blind Projects Contacts](#)
- [Practice Guides](#)
- [Open Hands, Open Access: Deaf-Blind Learning Modules](#)
- [The Sooner the Better: A Framework for Training Early Intervention Practitioners on Deaf-Blindness](#)
- [Communication Matrix](#)

Training Tools

- **Training Resources**

- Learning Module: Deaf-Blindness for Early Intervention Practitioners (VA - open to all)
- Open Hands, Open Access: Deaf-Blind Learning Modules
- The Sooner the Better: A Framework for Training Early Intervention Practitioners on Deaf-Blindness
- Teaching Children Who Are Deafblind: Professional Development for Educators



References

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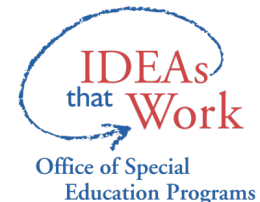
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DEAF-BLIND NETWORK

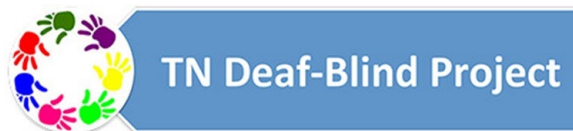
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