

National Coalition on Deafblindness FY10 Funding Request

Legislative Request:

The National Coalition on Deafblindness requests an increase of \$5 million dollars over the current budget in fiscal year 2010 to address the resource needs of children who are deafblind and their families.

What it means to be deafblind:

Persons who are deafblind have a variation of sensory impairments that range from being profoundly deaf and totally blind to having usable vision and/or hearing. This range of abilities gives each person who is deafblind a very singular experience of the world.

Children who are deafblind have loss of sight and hearing that require distinct educational practices to assure they will reach their potential. A child with limited senses of hearing and vision understands the world by means of physical contact. Even children with usable vision or hearing often receive very distorted information through these senses. To benefit from their education, significant support and curricular modifications may be necessary.

An Inside Look

Kelly is an intervener who received special training about communication and choice making through her state's deafblind project. Kelly works with Sam, a young boy who is hearing impaired and has very little usable vision. Young Sam started kindergarten in August. Kelly is in attendance with him for a portion of each week. One afternoon, Sam began showing signs of distress that quickly escalated. After trying to interest the child in a number of choices, Kelly decided to try something. She took two objects that had been chosen for his communication system, the piece of sheepskin representing "home" and the wooden block relating to "school". Kelly handed Sam each object and, after repeating the process for assurance, determined that the boy wanted to return home. As it turned out, Sam was getting a cold. His mom was now sure that the new communication system gave Sam a meaningful way to communicate his feelings and needs to others.

Why is federal funding needed?

There are two times as many children with deafblindness requiring services as there were 20 years ago when the federal deafblind program last received an increase in funding.

- In 2007, more than 10,000 children and youth in the United States were identified as deafblind (NCDB, 2007) with 90% percent having at least one additional physical, cognitive or medical disability.
- As medical science and technology improve, increasing the survival rate of the tiniest premature infants, the number of children with deafblindness and the need for services increases.

- The 46 state and consortium project centers that support the deafblind community have not had a budget increase in over 20 years, resulting in families receiving fewer services for their children.
 - Twenty years ago staff from the state deafblind projects were able to provide on-site technical assistance (TA) to each child on their census. Currently, on-site TA rarely occurs.
 - Projects had been able to sponsor family learning retreats annually. Many projects host such events every two or three years while others have eliminated them altogether.
- Many programs operate with personnel trained only in special education and not with skills specific to the needs of a deafblind child.
 - Educational teams function with no staff with experience, skills and competency in deafblindness.
 - Teams flounder because they cannot implement effective educational practices.
 - Children fail to learn.

<i>National Data</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ 10,000 children who are deafblind live in the US ❖ 6% of children who are deafblind have a teacher trained in deafblindness ❖ Including family and educational members, about 110,000 people utilize these TA & D services

<i>Areas of Greatest Need</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❖ Increased on-site technical assistance ❖ Teacher Training ❖ Information about best practice in multiple formats and languages ❖ Training and support to educational teams

For more information, please contact us at (617) 972-7768, send email to dbcoalition@perkins.org or visit our website at <http://www.dbcoalition.org/>

For more information about deafblindness go to: <http://nationaldb.org/NCDBProducts.php>

For state by state census information go to: <http://nationaldb.org/TACHildCount.php>

How do federal deafblind programs work?

State Deafblind Projects

- Exist in every state
- Offers training and support to teachers and other educational team members
- Works with State and Local Education Authorities to help them provide appropriate services for children who are deafblind
- Employ Family Specialists to work directly with families in about 1/3 of the projects

National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness

- Strengthens the capacities of families, children and young adults who are deafblind
- Strengthens the capacities of service providers and agencies serving children and young adults who are deafblind and their families
- Links research-based practices to state and local service providers and families
- Facilitates the sharing of information and practices between agencies, organizations and individuals
- Provides resources and personalized service to anyone needing information about or for children who are deafblind through a toll free number and on the web
- Helps parents, teachers, and others by providing them with information to foster the skills, strategies and confidence necessary to nurture and empower children who are deafblind
- Identifies, coordinates, and disseminates, at no cost, information related to children and youth who are deafblind from birth through young adulthood

Personnel Preparation

- Trains graduate students to teach children who are deafblind
- Graduates approximately 25 new teachers of children who are deafblind annually
- Provides in-service training to special education teachers
- Includes course work about deafblindness in programs for other specialists
- Develops methods of providing quality distance education course offerings

What could increased funding for deafblind programs do?

- \$3 million could be added to the State Projects to help them strengthen their support to families
 - Add Family Specialists
 - Support family learning retreats
 - Increase training and support to families

- \$1 million could support the activities of the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness
 - Support training opportunities for families
 - Support training and support for Family Specialists
 - Develop critical materials for families and staff to be distributed nationwide
 - Assure that all persons have access to a full array of information about curriculum and instruction for children who are deafblind
 - Help personnel preparation programs provide access to information that supplements training initiatives

- \$1 million could be earmarked to strengthen personnel preparation programs
 - Increase the number of teachers who receive training
 - Provide access to training to teachers in geographic areas far from university programs
 - Provide greater opportunities for training for teachers already working full time

Deafblind Education Funding Gap

