



Provincial Outreach Program for Students with Deafblindness

Tips for Getting Started

Congratulations! You accepted a position as an Intervenor, supporting a learner with deafblindness! Now, what?

1. **Put yourself into the world of the learner with deafblindness.** Stop and think what it is like for your learner to be at school with reduced vision and hearing. It will help you understand what you need to do to make activities meaningful and ensure that your learner is actively involved in all activities.
2. **Start to work on forming a trust bond with the learner with deafblindness.** The trust bond is the foundation of all the future work you will do with the individual you support. It takes a great deal of time to develop a good relationship of trust and respect between the Intervenor and the learner with deafblindness. You might start to work on the trust bond by finding a shared interest or a fun activity. Get to know your learner's likes and dislikes.
3. **Find an identifying name cue or personal identifier for yourself.** A personal identifier is a unique cue that identifies who you are to the learner with deafblindness. Check with other team members that the identifier you select is not one already being used by another person.
4. **Talk to team members, family members, and previous Intervenor.** Find out what is motivating. Ask for information on how the learner communicates, what type of communication system s/he is using, and how does s/he expressively communicate wants and needs. Ask about the student's routines.
5. **Learn about deafblindness.** Deafblindness is a complex and unique disability. Knowledge is empowerment. Use the internet to gather information and find out what resources are available. Ask your POPDB Consultant about courses available.
6. **Embrace the Intervenor's motto: Do with, not for.** You will be on the right track if you **do** activities, from set-up to clean up, **with** the learner you support.
7. **Find out information about your learner's vision and hearing, as well as other disabilities.** It is important to understand your learner's visual and auditory conditions and how they affect his/her learning at school. The presence of additional disabilities may also impact life at school for your learner. If you are unsure about the jargon in medical reports and how it impacts your learner, write down your questions and ask a team member right away.
8. **Keep your documentation accurate.** Work with your team members to establish an effective way of recording information that pertains to the learner's program.
9. **Attend team meetings.** Each person on the learner's team brings a unique and important perspective to the program. Be sure to listen and contribute to discussions with respect and openness. Program ideas and strategies are very specific to the learner with deafblindness.

10. **Observations by various team members will happen.** The learner with deafblindness has a team consisting of many members and these professionals will make appointments to observe the program in action so as to provide suggestions, strategies, and information that will help you in your role as Intervenor.
11. **Be patient and expect to spend a great deal of time waiting.** Learners with deafblindness need extra time to process information. Work at the pace of the individual you are supporting.
12. **Creativity in all areas is essential.** You may need to try new things in different ways in order to teach the individual you support. Spontaneous creativity is good. For example, you may need to play silly games to work on turn-taking and communication.
13. **Public relations and advocacy for deafblindness and Intervention is important.** You will likely need to spend a significant amount of time educating others about your learner and deafblindness. You might memorize some useful phrases and keywords that clearly describe deafblindness and Intervention. Be respectful and patient as you teach people about this field. You were once a newcomer as well.
14. **Intervenors are friendly and supportive of one another.** There may be times when you are able to get together with Intervenors from around the province, for example, during the POPDB Conference, EA Mentoring Day or during courses. Talk to one another. Intervenors have lots of good ideas and can provide encouragement and support.

*The suggestions in this handout have been adapted and edited from **Intervention - a guide to getting started** (2002), Olson, J. Editor. pp. 8-10. A POPDB Publication, Richmond, BC.*