# The Colorado Child Count of Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss

## Answers to the Most Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the Child Count of Children who are Deaf-Blind?**

   Along with the other State Deaf-Blind Projects, the Colorado Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project (the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project) conducts an annual count of all children from birth to age 21 in Colorado who have both hearing and vision impairments.

   These data submitted to the National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB), who prepares a national summary that includes State specific information. A child can be identified at any time in a calendar year. Although project staff adds to the Child Count throughout the year, the annual mailing to schools and programs occurs in late October to early-December and forms are due back to CDE no later than mid-January.

   Since some of the collected information on the Child Count is confidential (personally identifiable information), only non-specific personally identifiable data are submitted to NCDB (such as cause of deaf-blindness and type of school placement), not student or parent names, home addresses, school district names, or any other identifying information.

2. **How long does it take to complete the necessary paperwork?**

   The project staff has worked hard to streamline the form for ongoing students, so that it takes a short time to review and complete each form. For students who new to the Child Count, the paperwork will take more time as the form must be completed in full for the first time.

3. **Why is the Child Count so important?**

   The Child Count is important for many reasons. The Child Count identified in state is used as one part of the funding formula for state projects serving children and youth who are deaf-blind. Funding for specialized outreach services is also dependent on having accurate information about how many infants/toddlers, children and youth in Colorado have both hearing and vision impairments. In addition, all identified children and youth, their families, and their service providers are eligible for *free technical assistance* from the Colorado Deaf-Blind Project.

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4. **What exactly is meant by the term *deaf-blind*?**

   A child with deaf-blindness has concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that he or she cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness. Deafness/hearing impairment will need to be determined by an audiologist and the blindness/visual impairment should be diagnosed by an eye care specialist such as an ophthalmologist.

   The following criteria must be must, along with an educational need for special education and related services: A child with deaf-blindness will have a deficiency in hearing sensitivity as demonstrated by an elevated threshold of auditory sensitivity to pure tones or speech and a deficiency in visual acuity and/or visual field and/or visual functioning where, even with the help of amplification and/or use of lenses or corrective devices, he/she is prevented from receiving reasonable educational benefit from general education.

   For children ages three through 21 years, the IEP staff team should review the state eligibility criteria for deaf-blindness specified in section 2.08 (12) of the Exceptional Children's Education Act Rules. The child must have a condition that results in concomitant hearing and visual impairments that, without special education intervention, will adversely affect the student's educational performance. For children ages birth through three, the IFSP team should review Part C eligibility criteria.

5. **What if a child has multiple disabilities that happen to include vision and hearing impairments?**

   Many, if not most, children who are deaf-blind have additional disabilities, including intellectual disability, orthopedic impairment, other health impairments, and so on. Please complete a Child Count form for all students that have hearing and vision impairments, regardless of the presence or absence of additional disabilities.

6. **What if the hearing and/or vision impairments are cortical in nature?**

   Children with sensory impairments that are cortical in nature, such as cortical visual impairment and/or central auditory processing disorder or auditory neuropathy, should be placed on the Child Count. These students usually require adaptations (accommodations and possibly modifications) to their educational programs. In addition, the combined hearing and vision impairments must be considered when developing effective, communication programs for these individuals. When in doubt, refer to the functional definition of deaf- blindness in question #4 above.

7. **What if deaf-blindness is not listed as a student's primary disability condition on her or his Individualized Education Program (IEP)?**

   If a learner has combined vision and hearing impairments, it is recommended that the label of deaf-blindness on his or her IEP. It can be a primary or secondary label. If the child has an eligibility label other than deaf- blindness and still has combined vision and hearing impairments, he or she can still be counted on the Colorado Deaf-Blind Child Count. For example, the vast majority of school-age learners with deaf-blindness are identified in their administrative unit as being a child with multiple disabilities.

8. **Does including a child on the Child Count obligate the school program to provide services such as vision, hearing, orientation and mobility, etc.?**

   No. Individualized needs and services are determined by the family and educators through the child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) process.

9. **Why is a child's diagnosis included on the Child Count?**

   Knowing the reason that a child has combined vision and hearing impairment is important for a number of reasons. First, it allows project staff to make important connections between families. For example, parents of a child with Cockayne Syndrome might contact our office and ask if there are other parents of children with the same syndrome in their area. The Child Count allows us to make these family-to-family connections (with parent permission, of course). These data are also reviewed from a national perspective (with data from all 50 states) to determine which causes of deaf-blindness are on the increase or decrease, if there are geographic clusters of students with similar condition, etc.

10. **What if my administrative unit or agency does not currently have any students who are deaf-blind at this time?**

    It is possible that smaller administrative units may not have any students with combined hearing and vision impairments. Statistically, we know that there should be about one child who is deaf-blind for every 4,200 students in a district. Another guide that is used is that there are approximately two students who are deaf-blind for every 1,000 receiving special education services. Project staff are available to assist in identification efforts through customized technical assistance.

11. **What if I don't know all the information requested on the Child Count Form for a particular student?**

    Please give us as much information as you have. It is more important that we have an accurate count of students. Project staff will work with you to complete the missing information.

12. **Who should complete the Child Count Form?**

    The project has contact people in almost every administrative unit or educational agency. Contact Tanni Anthony or Gina Herrera to learn who the contact person is in your administrative unit or agency.

13. **What if I have a question about the Child Count that hasn't been answered here?**

    Please contact Tanni Anthony at anthony_t@cde.state.co.us or Gina Herrera at herrera_g@cde.state.co.us.

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