

VIBRATIONS

NEWSLETTER OF COLORADO SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WHO ARE DEAFBLIND, THEIR FAMILIES, AND SERVICE PROVIDERS

Modified Winter 2009-10 Edition: Identification of Deafblindness

This is an edited version of the original newsletter. Only the section specific to the identification of deafblindness has been retained from the original content of the newsletter. If any content is taken from this edition, please credit the original source.

COUNTING OUR KIDS SO THAT EVERYONE COUNTS!



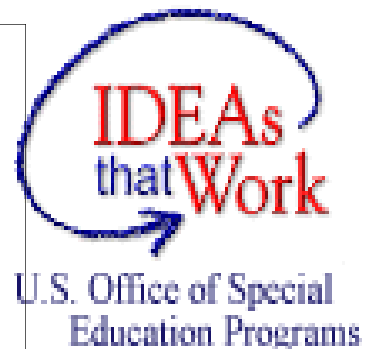
By Tanni Anthony

Each year the CO Services for Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss completes an annual census of all learners, ages birth through 21 years who have both a vision and a hearing loss. The identification of a combined loss is important for educational and support services to the child, his or her family, and service providers.

Vision and hearing are key gateways to acquiring information about the world, forming relationships, understanding and expressing communication, moving safely and efficiently from one place to another, becoming literate, and participating in the every day activities of our families, friends, peers, and community members. When we know there is any type of compromise to vision and hearing, we have the opportunity to design the best possible interventions for learning, moving, and communicating. Personnel who are trained in sensory disabilities may not be invited to the planning table, without proper identification. Families may miss out on learning opportunities from other families or system of support. The most important people surrounding the child in his or her home, school, and community may not understand how best to communicate and support the child.

Identification should always lead to a better understanding of how to work together on behalf of the child. We want every child to achieve to his or her fullest potential by building a program that is designed to the individual needs of the learner. We need to be vigilant in our identification efforts so that every child counts.

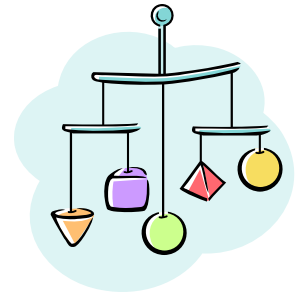
The Colorado Services for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project is part of the Colorado Department of Education. This project is supported by Grant #H326C030022 from the U.S. Department of Education. This newsletter was produced and distributed pursuant to the grant. Points of view do not necessarily represent CDE positions or policies. Mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations does not imply endorsement by the U.S. Government. The newsletter is published three times a year. Requests to be placed on the mailing list should be mailed to Gina Quintana, CDE, ESLU, 1560 Broadway, Suite 1175, Denver, CO 80202. This newsletter was prepared by Gina Quintana, Tanni Anthony, and Anna



WHAT DOES YOUR CHILD SEE?

RISK FACTORS FOR VISION LOSS

- ❑ Family member concerned about child's vision.
- ❑ Baby was exposed to alcohol or drugs before birth.
- ❑ Baby was premature and given oxygen in the hospital.
- ❑ Baby had birth weight of less than 3.3 pounds.
- ❑ Child had meningitis or encephalitis.
- ❑ Mother had infection (toxoplasmosis, rubella, cytomegalovirus (CMV), syphilis, herpes) during pregnancy.
- ❑ Family history of vision loss (congenital cataracts, retinitis pigmentosa).
- ❑ Child has neurological problems, such as seizures.
- ❑ Child has other medical concerns (hearing loss, cerebral palsy).



TYPICAL VISION DEVELOPMENT

0-1 month	Looks at mother's or caregiver's face. Responds to lights.
2-4 months	Begins to smile at others. Follows a moving person with his/her eyes. Fascinated by lights and bright colors. Begins to look at own hands.
5-8 months	Watches things happening across the room. Reaches for nearby toys. Looks at small objects, such as raisins or small cereal.
9-12 months	Reacts to facial expressions of others (smiles, frowns, funny faces, etc.). Looks for fallen toys, even around corners. Is interested in picking up tiny objects, such as lint on carpet.
12-18 months <i>1-1½ years</i>	Marks and scribbles with a crayon. Interested in picture books. Can reach in and pull out objects easily. Builds a short tower with blocks.
18-36 months <i>1½ -3 years</i>	Sees detail in familiar pictures. Copies a circle with a pencil or crayon. Looks for familiar things in the distance. Can imitate movements of others. Matches objects to pictures.

If you suspect a child has a vision, hearing or speech/language problem, contact the Child Find Program at your local school district.

Prepared by the Colorado Services for Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss 2000

WHAT DOES YOUR CHILD HEAR?

RISK FACTORS FOR HEARING LOSS

- ❑ Family member concerned about child's hearing, speech, language and/or development delay.
- ❑ Baby was in nursery intensive care unit for 3 days or more, or was given oxygen for 10 days or more.
- ❑ Baby has unusual ear, head or neck formation (cleft lip or palate, Down syndrome).
- ❑ Baby had birth weight of less than 3.3 pounds.
- ❑ Baby had severe jaundice and an exchange blood transfusion was recommended.
- ❑ Mother had infection (toxoplasmosis, rubella, cytomegalovirus (CMV), syphilis, herpes) during pregnancy.
- ❑ Child has had an injury or trauma to the head.
- ❑ Child had childhood infectious disease, such as meningitis or chicken pox.
- ❑ Family history of hearing loss.



TYPICAL LISTENING, SPEECH AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

0-4 month	Startles to loud sounds. Quiets to the sound of a familiar voice.
4-6 months	Turns toward or looks for a familiar or new sound. Likes rattles and objects that make sound.
6-12 months	Turns or looks up when called by name. Imitates sounds and pitches. Understands the meaning of simple words and phrases, such as "no" and bye bye." Uses voice to get attention.
12-18 months	Uses 4-5 words by 18 months. Points to at least one body part when asked. Understands one-step instructions, such as "Get me your diaper," or "Close the door."
18-24 months <i>1½-2 years</i>	Uses 10-15 words and puts 2 words together by age 2 years. Likes music. Points to familiar objects when you name them.
24-36 months <i>2-3 years</i>	Uses 200 words by age 3 years. Listens to radio or TV at the same loudness as other people. Hears when called from another room. Uses 2-3 word sentences. Strangers can understand most of your child's speech.



Children Who Are Deaf-Blind

Practice Perspectives - Highlighting Information on Deaf-Blindness

Number 2 November 2007

The nature and extent of deaf-blindness in children is often misunderstood, but a new report, *The National Deaf-Blind Child Count: 1998–2005 in Review*, shines a light on this unique group of children. The review, which summarizes 8 years of data, not only provides a count of the number of children, from birth through age 21, who have been identified as deaf-blind in each state, but also reports other details about this population. These include the classification of vision and hearing loss, the types of additional disabilities that may be present, and the causes of deaf-blindness.

Although the term *deaf-blind* implies a complete absence of hearing and sight, in reality, it refers to children with varying degrees of vision and hearing losses. The type and severity differ from child to child. The key feature of deaf-blindness is that the combination of losses limits access to auditory and visual information.

Children with deaf-blindness require teaching methods that are different from those for children who have only hearing or vision loss. When *both* vision and hearing are affected, especially from birth or early in life, natural opportunities to learn and communicate can be severely limited.

More than 90% of children who are deaf-blind have one or more additional disabilities or health problems and some may be identified as having multiple disabilities rather than deaf-blindness. In these cases, the impact of combined hearing and vision loss may not be recognized or addressed.

Training and Support

It is critical that families and educators have access to training and support for the assessment and education of infants, children, and youth who are deaf-blind. Each state has a federally funded technical assistance project to provide this training and support. For information contact the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness:

Phone: 800-438-9376 TTY: 800-854-7013
E-mail: info@nationaldb.org



Reported Vision and Hearing Loss in Children Identified as Deaf-Blind

Vision Loss

- 17% totally blind or light perception only
- 24% legally blind
- 21% low vision
- 17% cortical vision impairment
- 21% other

Hearing Loss

- 39% severe to profound hearing loss
- 13% moderate hearing loss
- 14% mild hearing loss
- 6% central auditory processing disorder
- 28% other

Additional Disabilities in Children Who Are Deaf-Blind

- 66% cognitive disability
- 57% physical disability
- 38% complex health care needs
- 9% behavior challenges
- 30% other

Data from Killoran, J. (2007). *The national deaf-blind child count: 1998–2005 in review*. Monmouth, OR: NTAC.

Causes of Deaf-Blindness

There are many causes of deaf-blindness. Those that are present or occur around the time a child is born include prematurity, childbirth complications, and numerous congenital syndromes, many of which are quite rare. Deaf-blindness may also occur later in childhood or during adulthood due to causes such as meningitis, brain injury, or inherited conditions.

Many experts in the United States and other countries believe that the population of children who are deaf-blind has become more severely disabled over the past several decades. This may be due, in part, to advances in medical technology that have increased the survival rates for premature infants and children with very serious conditions, who are also deaf-blind.

However, deaf-blindness is not always associated with additional disabilities. For example, Usher Syndrome, an inherited condition that causes hearing loss and progressive vision loss, is not typically associated with other significant challenges.

Educational Settings

National Deaf-Blind Child Count data shows that although children who are deaf-blind are educated in a variety of settings, most are educated separately from students who do not have disabilities.

Infants and Toddlers

Seventy percent of children with deaf-blindness from birth through age 2 receive early intervention services at home. The rest are typically served in specialized settings such as hospitals, clinics, early intervention centers, and residential facilities.

Pre-school

Seventy-two percent of children aged 3 through 5 are in special education classrooms, separate schools, or residential facilities. Only 20% are in classrooms with young children who do not have disabilities, and 5% are educated at home.

School-age

Most children and youth aged 6 through 21 are also educated apart from students who do not have disabilities:

- 39% in separate classrooms
- 16% in separate public schools
- 10% in public or private residential facilities
- 8% in separate private schools
- 7% in hospitals or at home
- 5% in other settings

Only 15% are educated in regular classrooms and resource rooms.

Most Common Causes of Deaf-Blindness in Children in the U.S.

- Heredity
- Prematurity
- Prenatal complications
- Postnatal complications
- CHARGE Syndrome
- Microcephaly
- Cytomegalovirus
- Hydrocephaly
- Meningitis
- Usher Syndrome

Race/Ethnicity of Children Who Are Deaf-Blind

- 56% White
- 14% Black
- 12% Hispanic and Latino
- 3% Asian and Pacific Islander
- 2% American Indian and Alaska Native
- 13% Other

Data from Killoran, J. (2007). *The national deaf-blind child count: 1998-2005 in review*. Monmouth, OR: NTAC.

Profiles

In reviewing the National Deaf-Blind Child Count data submitted over the years, it is clear that no single portrait can be painted to represent a typical child with deaf-blindness. Children who are deaf-blind are as varied as the number reported. The photographs and stories below illustrate this diversity.



BJ, age 2½, is from Kosrae, an island in Micronesia. He now lives in Hawaii with his parents and sister and attends a special education preschool. He has a conductive hearing loss and vision loss caused by optic nerve damage. BJ loves to explore his environment and enjoys activities that involve movement, vibration, or rhythm. He likes to swing, jump, and wrestle. He also likes music (especially drums and keyboards) and toys that light up, make sounds, or vibrate.



Divya is 21 and has Usher Syndrome. She has hearing loss, night blindness, and tunnel vision, which are all characteristic of this condition. Divya is fluent in American Sign Language (ASL) and has a cochlear implant. She lives in Florida, where she is a senior at her local high school. She is fully included and uses interpreters. When Divya graduates, she plans to attend a 2-year college and earn a degree or certificate in a field that will allow her to help people and use her ASL skills. Indian dance is one of her special interests. She won the best talent award two years in a row at the Florida School for the Deaf and the Blind (FSDB) Talent Show, and was also crowned Miss FSDB. She performed with other students at the Super Bowl in 2005.

Malik is 11 and lives in North Carolina. He has CHARGE Syndrome, a condition that can cause hearing loss, vision loss, other disabilities, and medical problems. Malik attends the Eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf, where he is in a special needs classroom. He is profoundly deaf and visually impaired. Malik uses American Sign Language to communicate, chooses his own meals, and even carries a wallet. He is known as the "Little King" to his family, teachers, and doctors, and with their love and support, he has thrived.



Brittany, age 14, lives with her grandparents in Pennsylvania. She was born prematurely, and she has cortical visual impairment and is deaf and developmentally delayed. Throughout her life, Brittany has had many health problems, including asthma, pneumonia, scoliosis, and kidney failure (she had a kidney transplant in 2003). She now attends Overbrook School for the Blind, and her goals are to live independently, find productive employment, and have an active social life. Brittany enjoys exploring things with her hands and other activities that take advantage of her sense of touch.

National Deaf-Blind Child Count

Details about the population of children with deaf-blindness provide educators and policy-makers with information to guide the development of services to meet the early intervention and educational needs of these children. The National Deaf-Blind Child Count has been conducted for the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs since 1986. The data are collected by state projects for children and youth who are deaf-blind and compiled by the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness.

**For more information go to:
www.nationaldb.org/TACHildCount.php**

This publication was prepared by Peggy Malloy and John Killoran at the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB), with design and layout by Betsy Martin-Richardson, NCDB.



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Key Points

- ◆ Deaf-blindness is varied and complex.
- ◆ Children with deaf-blindness are as diverse as the number of children reported.
- ◆ Early identification and intervention are critical.
- ◆ Children and youth who are deaf-blind often have other disabilities.
- ◆ Training and support are available through federally funded technical assistance projects in each state.

Resources

Killoran, J. (2007). *The national deaf-blind child count: 1998–2005 in review*. Monmouth, OR: National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Young Adults who are Deaf-Blind (NTAC), Teaching Research Institute, Western Oregon University. Available at <http://nationaldb.org/NCDBProducts.php?prodID=57>

Kimberling, W. J. (2004). Genetic hearing loss associated with eye disorders. In H. V. Toriello, W. Reardon, & R. J. Gorlin (Eds.), *Hereditary hearing loss and its syndromes* (pp. 126–165). New York: Oxford University Press.

Brown, D., & Bates, E. (2005, Spring). A personal view of changes in deaf-blind population, philosophy, and needs. *Deaf-Blind Perspectives*, 12(3), 1–5.

For additional resources and information about children who are deaf-blind, go to www.nationaldb.org.



The purpose of NCDB *Practice Perspectives* is to expand and broaden the use of current information resources by developing easily understandable products with accessible formats.

Funded through Award #H326T060002 by the U.S. Department of Education, OSERS, OSEP. The opinions and policies expressed by this publication do not necessarily reflect those of The Teaching Research Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.