



(303) 866-6681 or (303) 866-6605

Fact Sheet

Strategies for Successful Medical Appointments for Individuals with Deafblindness

Individuals with deafblindness have various medical needs that may require frequent medical appointments. These visits can be very frightening for the person receiving the medical treatment if the procedures are not expected or understood. As the individual with dual sensory impairments becomes frightened, he/she may express fear through tantrums, assaultive behavior, and/or rigid body postures that make the examination difficult. The visits can also be very frustrating for the families and care providers assisting these individuals during the examinations as they try to explain and manage the behavior expressed.

The following points are some general guidelines to promote a successful and positive experience during medical appointments. It is suggested that parents and care providers review these guidelines with the medical professionals when the appointment is made or upon arrival at the office. A copy of this fact sheet can be left with the medical staff to inform them of the needs of their patients with dual sensory impairments.

1. Call the medical office staff in advance of your visit to let them know what to expect (i.e., difficulty waiting, vocalizations, behavior challenges, etc.)
2. Bring something for the person to do during the periods of waiting at the office.
3. Bring the person's medical records to decrease the repetition of developmental history, waiting for records to be sent, and duplication of unnecessary exams. Include addresses and phone numbers of all service providers.
4. Bring information on the person's specific medical issues if the medical professionals are new or unfamiliar with the particular syndrome or condition, etc. (i.e., Congenital Rubella Syndrome, CHARGE Association, etc.)
5. Introduce each of the medical professionals to the person with deaf-blindness before the professional touches the person. This can be done with a name sign, an object, or a distinctive scent.

6. Warm hands or instruments before touching the person with dual sensory impairments.
7. Tell the person what each procedure will be before beginning the procedure. This can be done by allowing the person to examine the equipment by touch. You can then touch the body part that will be examined by that piece of equipment. Pause for a few seconds to allow the person to prepare for the exam before it begins. You can also have the medical professional demonstrate the procedure on the family member/care provider to model appropriate responding.
8. Let the person know how the exam is proceeding. Tell the person what will happen next and what the reasons are for the particular examination.
9. Model and reward cooperative behavior, appropriate waiting, confidence, acceptance and relaxed body posture.
10. Give feedback to the medical professionals (i.e., physicians, nurses, receptionists, hygienist, etc.) regarding their interactions with the person with dual sensory impairments and the family/care provider (i.e., terminology used, bedside manner, emotional tone, willingness to work with you, etc.) This information will be very valuable for the professionals to make future interactions positive with person with deafblindness.

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Fact Sheets from the Colorado Services to Children and Youth with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss Project are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals with vision and hearing loss. The information applies to children, birth through 21 years of age. The purpose of the Fact Sheet is to give general information on a specific topic. More specific information for an individual student can be provided through personalized technical assistance available from the project. For more information, call (303) 866-6681 or (303) 866-6605. Updated: 1/09