



## Interveners: A Related Service

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**Our Mission:** NFADB exists to empower the voices of families with individuals who are Deaf-Blind and advocate for their unique needs.

**What we believe:** NFADB believes individuals who are Deaf-Blind are valued members of their communities and should have the same opportunities and choices as others in the community.

**Our Position:** Intervener services should be included as an example of a related service under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

**Definition of Deaf-Blind:** Deaf-Blindness involves combined vision and hearing loss to the extent that neither of these senses can compensate for the lack of the other. Deaf-Blindness creates an inability to access both visual and auditory information about people and things in the environment necessary for learning, communication, and overall development. It is a very isolating condition.

**A Successful Model:** Helen Keller is the most famous Deaf-Blind person in the world. She and her one-to-one teacher, Anne Sullivan, became the model for persons who are Deaf-Blind. Before having our children who are Deaf-Blind, Helen Keller was the ONLY Deaf-Blind person that many families knew of in this world. We have since learned this is true for most of the people that we have encountered in our lives. It's true for too many teachers, principals, therapists, and educators coming face-to-face with their FIRST and ONLY student who is Deaf-Blind.

Thanks to Helen Keller's successes, the world was able to see that our children who are Deaf-Blind must have access to their environments. Our children do not learn incidentally. They may be tactilely defensive and fearful of exploring on their own. However, our children can learn from a trained professional known as an Intervener. Just as Anne Sullivan worked with Helen Keller, an Intervener builds a trusting relationship and works consistently one-on-one with a child to provide access to the world around them.

**Interveners are the bridge between the Deaf-Blind child and the seeing and hearing world. An Intervener working with a Deaf-Blind child provides (1) Access to clear and consistent visual and auditory information, (2) Support for the development and use of receptive and expressive communication, and (3) Support for social and emotional well-being.<sup>1</sup>**

**Where We Are Now:** Intervener services are not currently included as an example of a related service in IDEA. This has been problematic for families across the country because even though it is not necessary to have intervener services listed as a related service example in order for a child to be provided with an intervener when needed, many school districts do not understand this.<sup>2</sup> When the first and only child who is Deaf-Blind enrolls in their local school, the teachers, principal, and other educators scramble for the appropriate services. If our child was deaf, they would have interpreting services. If our child was blind, they would have orientation and mobility services. These are related services currently listed in IDEA. Our children who are Deaf-Blind do not have related services specific to their needs, such as an Intervener.

**Consequences:**

- Our children who are Deaf-Blind without this related service will live a life of ISOLATION AND DISCONNECTION FROM THE WORLD.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind lack the ability to learn incidentally.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind lack access to conceptual learning.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind do not have access to visual and auditory information in their environment.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind do not have access to communication within a hearing and seeing society.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind do not have access to social and emotional development.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind may not have the ability to communicate their needs.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind have a unique mode of communication or may be developing a mode of communication (receptive and expressive).
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind may be unaware of their surroundings and feel unsafe, insecure, and anxious making learning difficult.

**Where We Should be:** Intervener services should be included as an example of a related service under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

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<sup>1</sup> Role of the Intervener, Intervener.org

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Department of Education. (2018). OSEP Letter to McDowell, 08/02/2018. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/osep-letter-to-mcdowell-08-02-2018.pdf>

Including intervener services in IDEA would increase recognition and acceptance of interveners and thus make it more likely that our children would receive this important service.

**Benefits of Having an Intervener:**

- Our children who are Deaf-Blind with this related service will live a life FREE of ISOLATION AND DISCONNECTION FROM THE WORLD.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will learn through experience.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will have access to their environment.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will have access to communication within a hearing and seeing society.
- Our children who are Deaf-Blind will have access to information necessary for social and emotional development.

**Resources:**

[NFADB Advocacy](#)

[Advocating for Qualified Personnel](#)

[Council for Exceptional Children Intervener Competencies](#)

[What is an Intervener?](#)

[OSEP Letter to McDowell, 08/02/2018](#) (addresses current use of interveners as determined by IEP teams)

[Increasing Recognition and Use of Intervenors: State Success Stories](#)

[OHOA Module: The Role of Intervenors in Educational Settings](#)