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 National Center on Deaf‑Blindness

 Effective Intervener Supervision Practices

 October 12, 2022

 2:00 p.m. EST

>> KRISTI PROBST: I'm going to get started here in about a minute. Okay. It's the top of the hour. And I want to honor everyone's time. So, I'll get us started. Thank you, everyone, for joining us today. This is Kristi Probst, the initiative lead for interveners and qualified personnel at the National Center on Deaf‑Blindness. I want to begin by welcoming everyone too today's webinar.

Before we begin, I have a few notes. Mics have been muted and we ask you keep your mic on mute for the duration of the presentation. Today's session is being recorded, and will be archived on the NCDB website. If you have any questions for the presenters, please use the chat feature. There will be time for questions at the end of the presentation.

So now I will gladly pass this along to Ritu Chopra who will begin today's presentation. Ritu, take it away.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Thank you, Kristi. I am Ritu Chopra. I work with the Paraprofessional Research and Resource Center at the University of Colorado Denver. And we manage the review board for national interveners certification. And I have me and my colleague, Leanne. Leanne, would you share a bit about yourself

>> LEANNE COOK: My name is Leanne Cook. I've been lucky to work on the national intervener certification portfolio since about 2017 is I think when we launched. I'm excited to be here and to share with you all.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Thank you, Leanne. Before we go any further, I would like to kind of just have ‑‑ share a couple of clarifications and considerations. First and foremost, I want to clarify what we mean by intervener supervision. Many times, supper supervision is mistaken for evaluation which is done once or twice a year by administrator. That's not what we mean. What we mean by intervener supervision is the ongoing guidance, direction and oversight the intervener receives or should be receiving if they are not, from licensed professionals, team of licensed professionals which includes teachers. Special education teachers, general education teachers. It could be OT's, PT's, special language pathologist. So, we're talking about supervision by an individual or by a team.

And another thing to highlight, irrespective of the level of training, certification, credentialing that intervener may have, they should be working under the supervision of a licensed professional. We are not trying to diminish the importance of the role of interveners. They have a critical role. We cannot provide one‑on‑one services to students with significant support needs, multiple needs without the interveners. But what we need to keep in our minds is they should not be working independently or in isolation from the rest of the team.

And another thing I want to emphasize before we go further is that the supervision comprises of many elements. I do a two‑day training on supervision. For the purposes of this webinar, we are going to focus on only two components of supervision, which is instructional planning and systemic communication. At the end of the seminar, the last slide has other resources that address the elements that we are not addressing in this particular webinar.

Let's move on to the next slide, Leanne and have everybody introduce themselves. Please answer the questions you see on the slide in the chat box so we can see who all are here and get a feel of our audience.

>> LEANNE COOK: It's wonderful to see some familiar faces and now ones as well. So, thank you all for joining us today. There they go. They're always furious in the chat box. They always get excited there. Welcome. Mark, we see you're a slow typer [laughing]. Wonderful.

>> RITU CHOPRA: We see a lot of answers to the first question. If you could also start kind of jotting down some responses to the second and third question, that would be great.

>> LEANNE COOK: Those questions are, what's your role in providing Sports supports to supervisor teachers and/or interveners in school settings? And what intervener supervision practices have you practiced or observed? We see a lot of folks working with folks who are interveners, others who are not. Some came out of retirement just to spend time with us today. Wonderful.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Thank you. This is giving us a really good feel of who all are here.

>> LEANNE COOK: And the challenges many of us have. Wonderful.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Yes. Wonderful, you can continue typing and go to the next slide which again is kind of related. So, while you're still responding to the previous slide, we have another question for you, what challenges are districts facing with intervener use and supervision? And some of you already highlighted those. You don't have to put them in chat at this point in time, but go ahead and make notes of those. And as we go through the content of this webinar, we hopefully will address those or we can, at the end of the ‑‑ the end of our webinar, hopefully we have time for question and answers, and we will address them at that time. So, think about the challenges that districts are facing when it comes to intervener supervision.

All right. So just to summarize what is documented in research, a lot is coming from the paraprofessionals and paraprofessionals who support students with deaf‑blindness and other significant support needs. We won't spend too much tame ‑‑ time because it's like preach together choir. But I think the most important top one is, there's not clarity about the rule of the intervener and the licensed professionals. And that lack of clarity exists not only among interveners, but among administrators, teachers, other licensed professionals of the there's noted an adequate training and qualifications for the intervener role by and large. And there are different ways of preparing interveners and there needs to be some kind of common thread around those. So that's another systemic change.

Supervision from licensed professional is one of the top ones that the challenge that intervener utilization we ‑‑ we experience in intervener utilization. Another important challenge, which is a critical challenge is, instructional plans are typically no provided to interveners to really support student effectively and deliver instruction. Planning time, the teams do not have time to meet which really comes in the way of teams working well together, communicating effectively, collaborating effectively and another huge one is there's disconnect between the classroom teacher and special education programs and all other professionals. And interveners working with the deaf‑blind student and there's really lack sometimes ‑‑ the classroom teacher sometimes lacks that knowledge and specific skills that are needed. And as a result, the students are the ones who get shortchanged. Add to that if there's no communication or no collaborative systems in place, things get more complicated.

Next slide. So, we also need to really talk a bit about what happens? What is the downside of lack of supervision for interveners? What we see is interveners, it's not a team ‑‑ the time approach is not in use. Interveners end up taking too much responsibility. They become the primary service provider to the student and teachers, licensed teachers, they kind of give up their responsibility of really providing the first instruction. Being the teacher should be the ones designing instruction, yes, feedback from the intervener and they're the ones who are supposed to provide on the job training and education to the intervener to be effective in their roles. We find that's lacking and that results in intervener becoming the primary service provider.

Sometimes interveners develop an ownership of the student because they are the ones who are spending more time with the student. And that opens up a can of worms literally. It results in overdependence. As for a student is concerned, they start over relying on the intervener. The parents start relying more on the intervener. And the teachers are typically left out of the loop.

Of course, when you ‑‑ one of the roles of the you're, it's part of the CEC internal standards that fostering independence among student. But instead, it becomes fostering dependence and students end up being ‑‑ even if they can do something, they tend to learn helplessness. Where they just stop relying on ‑‑ start relying on interveners for everything. That has a lot of detrimental effects.

First and foremost is students get shortchanged by not having access to more competent instruction from more qualified professionals. Another downside to lack of supervision for interveners is that they have more opportunities and the teachers are not in the loop, they are more opportunities to interact with parents. And typically, we find that parents seek information from the intervener. Interveners provide information to the parents.

And sometimes, information that should be coming from the professionals and teachers gets relayed to parents, to interveners and that, again, can lead to a lot of issues, which can be easily avoided if there's effective supervision practices in place for interveners. Next slide. You know, again based on research and again, a lot is coming from all our work in the paraprofessional field that, what are the overall guiding principles for effective supervision of interveners?

I think there needs to be a strong teacher and professional intervener team. Role of clarification is a big one. Planning for all aspects of the programs, which is instruction. And everything else must be teacher‑driven, not intervener‑driven. Teachers need to find the tools interveners need not leaving interveners to fend for themselves. Teachers need to learn all the skills that interveners have, they need to learn and they need to teach interveners how to use the materials and tools that they will be utilizing. It's very, very important that systems are created.

We are not doing things reactively, but proactively, we create systems where there are ongoing ways of supporting interveners. And also, as the licensed professional, the teachers, must have systems in place to sustain the supervision plan they develop. We can't emphasize much when it comes to the topic of confidently ‑‑ confidentiality. There needs to be some guidance around that. As I said for this particular webinar, we are going to focus mainly on instructional planning and communication. But these are overall principals. The website, we have that for everything else we're not addressing today and NCDB has several resources on the NCDB website too, which we'll share on the last slide.

Next slide, please. We are focusing, as I already said, importance of clear instructional plans for interveners. And the second focus of the session is to really helping everybody developing the same ‑‑ a common language and also developing an understanding around the critical nature of consistent targeted, meaningful communication that results in effective collaboration.

>> LEANNE COOK: We're going to start with instructional planning. One of the things we think about in instructional plans is the most effective teachers have plans. They know what the outcomes are, they know what's expected of their students and know the methods, whether it's method logical approach they're going to be using to get the outcomes from students. Sometimes we hear a narrative that teachers wing it. Or they make it up, for lack of a better term on the spot. Where here, a teacher may have ability and experience to do that, but the folks in the classroom, interveners or folks acting in a similar role, may not be able to follow along with that.

They don't carry that in their head. They don't carry that with them and experience. While a teacher may be able to wing it, the paraprofessional or intervener working with the student may not be able to of the when we look at that, interveners shouldn't be forced into primary teaching responsibilities. It's the legal and ethical responsibility of the special education teacher or classroom teacher to determine and do the primary teaching for that student.

And we kind of get into this idea where the licensed professionals, you can't read their minds. Whether it's the intervener or professional in the room, they actually have to have communication about what the plans are for the student. Ultimately, we have to go back to that idea that instruction must be led by a licensed professional or supervising teacher that's designed by the team in the disciplinary approach and it's not the intervener. It's important to note, it's not to discredit the role of the intervener and their input and participation in planning because oftentimes, they're the ones that know the students better than anyone else. So, their voice seen important one to make sure is heard and considered in the process of creating and implementing and modifying plans for teams.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Leanne, if I could once again stress it doesn't matter ‑‑ whether it's a higher educational training or state training, state certificate, it doesn't matter. It becomes the job of the licensed professionals and they're in the lead when it comes to designing instruction. I may sound like a broken record but I don't want to discount that your interveners are not important and that their role is not important.

>> LEANNE COOK: It comes back to this idea of who plans or provides plans of the intervener? And if there aren't plans, what are the problems we run into, right?

>> RITU CHOPRA: Should we take a few minutes and seek responses from our audience?

>> LEANNE COOK: Yeah, I think we have time. I would really love to hear some of that. Who is the person planning? But also, what happens when we don't have plans? What are the problems we run up against or into? So, we'll give you a minute just to respond and share some of your thoughts there. Don't all rush to the chat box all at once.

Beth said she encourages the classroom teacher to do it. Teachers of the deaf‑blind are rare in Michigan. And oftentimes, vision teachers or teachers with visual impairments take on that role. It's really true. A lot of times it can fall back on the visual teacher to do some of that planning. It's a good point. Jessica, good point. The special education teacher does more of the planning and creating lesson plans. Yeah.

Lyn, yes, there's a breakdown in written planning. Time is always an issue.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Yes. And I think written plan, we should have underlined that. Glad, Lyn, you got that. That's the critical ‑‑ it's not the hall way directions or do this, do that, it's having that written plan.

>> LEANNE COOK: Susan, I love what you said. Thinking TA in general for either special ed or ‑‑ thinking about, TA in general for students that have paras working as interveners, no plans lead to miscommunication and lack of implementation.

>> RITU CHOPRA: This is one of my favorite cartoons I use in all the trainings. If you don't know about objectives, how would you know what you're doing to do? And a good written plan really clarifies, what is the purpose of a lesson? What are we trying to accomplish? What are the short‑term goals of the student and long‑term goals? What tools will you need? What kind of debt will you collect? That's all part of a good written plan. And Leanne will go over that in depth. How are you doing on your unspoken objectives? My what? I'm referring to the goals in my mind I had never mentioned. How are those going? I'm totally nailing them. We expect our paraprofessionals and interveners to be mind readers.

Even the most experienced teachers, they carry those ideas in their heads and they explain once in a while if there's opportunity, they would share those but those never really permeate to the extent they should because we don't have written plans.

>> LEANNE COOK: When I see this, what I think about, when we're talking about having our interveners understand the things that are unspoken is we are ensuring failure. We're not ensuring the success with them and the success of the student when we ask them to read our minds. I say this too as a vision professional, there are times where you are ensuring failure rather than giving tools to be successful.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Absolutely.

>> LEANNE COOK: Components of plan. I love a good lesson plan. Anyone who worked with me knows this. It needs several components. There's the purpose of the task whether it relates to an IEP goal, short‑term, long‑term objectives. Student needs or strengths. This is something that can change over time. Materials, resources, sequence of actions and data structure. This is just the foundations of plans we need to have.

And one of the things I think Lyn says, are you thinking there should be a quote, formal plan? Yeah, we do. One of the things important with our students with complex and multiple disabilities is we also see routines as instructional plans. When working with these students, we create routines and those become our plans. They contain those same components but we're ensuring the paraeducator understands the purpose, long‑term and short‑term goals of the routines, as well as the data and that because we're asking these interveners to be with students all day and for long periods of time. Where we need to give them tools to work with that and routines are a wonderful way to have instructional plans and also things that are built together in collaboratively.

I'll be a little vulnerable here and show some plans that ‑‑ there's a formal written plan and also a routine style plan I would like to share you with. I know it's a lot of words but it has the student's name, goal area and IEP date. I think the transparency of what we're working towards, long- and short-term goals are critical to interveners. Having a sense, they belong on the team and part of the team and work with students. There's a data structure.

This one, we have a staff key because interveners have lives too. And sometimes students perform differently for different people and I want to make sure that's captured. On the left‑hand side, it's steps. Find the cup, grasp the cup, bring to mouth and place cup back to spot. For the student it's adapted but this is the tool they would use while doing a feeding routine during one of their meal times and has the date, time and place to do this. So, we can look at a week at a time to see how it impacts the opportunity. This is an informal plan with a direct goal related to it so the plan is more formal and structured.

The next one is resonance board routine. Here there's a purpose of the tools. This is something we discredit the importance of, what do I need when doing this? Interveners aren't always there every day. In the world of COVID, we know when an intervener is gone for a week, it's painful sometimes for the other staff. So, it's important we are explicit even creating rue tine ‑‑ routines. And a good place to start the conversation of I'll train you to do this and you'll do it regularly.

I have instructions. And there's a place for data. We have a specific conversation around when we should take data and what that data needs to look like. For this its simple data structure as opposed to the one on the previous slide was more in depth. I put pictures in to help with instances someone else is working with the student. And there are some schools where they don't want one person. They may have two people working in that role throughout the day.

So, we get into those things as well making sure there's communication amongst the team members. And it's also a good way to share this resonance board routine, share it with PT so there's input there so it's not one person and we're getting closer to a transdisciplinary team opposed to a disciplinary team.

Interveners are not the ones to ask to develop lesson plans but their input is so critical because I don't know the student the same way the intervener does. All of us on the team become aware that relationship is something and the understanding is something we need to leverage when we are creating plans and routines. That core instruction the interveners provide is supplemental to the teachers, paraeducators. Interveners are not the teachers in the situation. Regardless of the training that they have, they rely on the licensed professional to do that initial instruction: And from there, they build into that.

Communicating the lesson plan. I think this is one of the most important things. How often have we seen or heard or done ourself, we walk through a routine or plan and give a thumbs up and call it good? I know I've done it before. I'm not too proud to admit it. But what happens is the way the intervener or paraprofessional learns? Can they understand and go back and reference it? It's important to go over the plan, flow of the detail, goals, needs the intervener may have but also, how can we provide continuing support?

I love to do role play with the person. Sometimes I'll call it a Marion net where I'll have them do the activity and guide them through it because I don't have the same relationship with the student as the person implementing the plan is. So, I'll coach them through that. Sometimes I'll provide a video of what I think it should look like for the student so they can reference it. Or have them take a video on the student's iPad so if they forget, they know where to go back to get the information and see it implemented. Because so often, it's the small details in the implementation, the way the student's posture it and their gaze. The small details make a difference. It's important to have communication with the intervener, how can we give you this information in a way that's meaningful as well.

Instructional plans and mentorship. I think it's important that we understand the input and feedback is a component of less son planning. Your lesson plan isn't always perfect. But expanding with the knowledge of the intervener and expertise of the intervener. Lesson plans are not fixed, especially routines. How often do we get through and realize, the students’ needs a new challenge or new amount of difficulty. Or there needs to be different scaffolding now. It's important there's an iterative cycle to planning. And understanding the planning and conversation around that allows for coaching the intervener's skills. Whether it's skills or methodology or approaches, we're building that intervener's tool kit. Their confidence and their role on the team. To make sure we have that understanding of working together. It's a really critical part of it.

Going back to role play and modelling when it's needed. Spoken instructions alone don't really produce those lasting results, right. In the days before my time, and sometimes still, where teachers would drop off materials and, have a good day. Or related service would come in and leave and not say much to the other teachers. But it's diving in to that role play and videos, how can we produce long lasting results and do work now to save time later so we don't have v to have the same conversation about this plan four or five times. We're all limited on time but how can we make the time we have so valuable and make it meaningful and lasting? And it's going outside of just spoken instruction or interveners.

And meaningful data collection. It's important we see data collection as part of the lesson plan or routine. One of the things I lovingly have learned is we need to match the data collection to the skills and abilities of the paraeducator. If we give them a complex system and they're not someone who is comfortable with that. English may be their second language. They may not feel like they have the skill necessarily to take the complex data we have. Our data is only as good as the collection. We need to make sure we consider the skills and abilities of the paraeducator when developing the plans that go along with the plans.

This is my favorite of the it's a woman sitting at a desk with lots of boxes and says, if I had known they wanted me to use all this info, I never would have asked for it. The important thing too when we collect the data, we're using the data. We're asking paraeducators to collect data sometimes daily of the but if it never leads to changes or conversations in the plans, what's the intention behind that? And we end up in this relationship where the paraeducator ‑‑ or intervener ‑‑ can be distrusting of what our data is or we're just asking them to do one more thing. It's important when we ask for data collection, we use that data and close that loop. It can be a good way to talk about that date to build that mentorship and relationship with the intervener or para deep than connection and to give them more confidence in those lesson plans and routines.

>> RITU CHOPRA: All right. I think what we're going to do now is open up this instructional plan as topic to the audience. We would like you to address the questions we have on the slide. The first one is, how do districts in your state typically communicate the instructional plans to interveners so they know how to support the student?

The second question, how they do communicate the instructional plan to the parents so the parents know how to support the student learning?

>> LEANNE COOK: We'll give you a few minutes to put together some thoughts there. Thank you, Susan. We loved having you while you were here. Mark says to number one is, how do districts in your state communicate plans with the intervener? Mark says it's not happening as we don't have interveners yet. And it's important to think that interveners are people acting in it that role. I'm in a state we don't have interveners either, but it's about thinking people acting in that role. And how do they communicate plans to the parents? Through the IEP unless specific requests made or DN team.

>> RITU CHOPRA: And we talked about the danger of verbal plans and not having plans, yes.

>> LEANNE COOK: Katie saying these are good questions. That's why we're asking them. We'll ask them for our direct districts to think about that. Lyn says writing a routine needs to be done jointly especially if the teacher in the role has little or no background on deaf‑blindness. Lisa says the intervener teacher go to the student's home and meet family in the community. Sometimes we see that. [Reading from the chat box rapidly] okay, Joanne, okay.

>> RITU CHOPRA: I want to elaborate on Lisa's response. Having that written plan is an amazing communication tool so you can show them what's being done with the student. What data is being collected. It would be hard for a parent to see some things like that so that's why written plans ‑‑ emphasizing the use of written plans.

>> LEANNE COOK: The consideration between EI and school age, learners ‑‑ the students may be at school eight‑hour as day but parents may need or want support to understand what's happening at school especially if they have, my kids are different kid at home versus school. And those kind of relationships and tensions on teams.

>> RITU CHOPRA: A written plan serves many purposes. It's accountability also. If parents question what is being done with my student, you have a plan is something you can share and show them, this is what's going on. I think it serves many, many purposes.

>> LEANNE COOK: And Jennifer is commenting that interveners hours, students are in school and when do we meet and when do we have time? Jennifer, we're already thinking of you.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Right. I'm reading Mark's comment about, indeed, contract districts require plans, but experience is not required to have written plan prior the less son. We've run into this issue many times. We've been scolded by teachers we're questioning their capability. Every teacher needs a plan. Particularly, if an intervener or paraprofessional is part of the equation, they need lesson plans because the interveners and paraprofessionals cannot read their minds. That's why we need the plans.

>> LEANNE COOK: I'm going to push us on. If the teachers you work with are providing written plans ‑‑ instructional plans to interveners, how would you empower them with the information they received? How can we take these plans and use them for mentorship or empowerment for these interveners? And if written plans aren't provided, it's helpful for teachers to think about, what do we need to make the changes? To collaborate with and who pulls the responsibility for the educator or IEP.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Leanne, I would like you to elaborate how you create instructional plans. Is it something you have a template you create once and then you make changes to it, or is it something that you have to do every day? Every week? How do you, in your role, how do you work with your interveners or those providing intervener services in the schools you're working.

>> LEANNE COOK: I though it's the dreaded is it depends answer. Often, I find out it depends less because the more we lead towards routines and instructional plans and see the plans are part of their instructions it's easier. When you take data on your routines, it's a routine implemented regularly. Whether it's a student, in my role I'm using braille instruction or a student that receives more limited service, it's always a routine. And it's about, how do we not only have things be predictable for the intervener or paraeducator, but also for the learner? And I think really going back to routines is important.

I usually write a routine. As I check in with the team, then we adapt it from there. Whether it's a routine of we're doing three things and here's our three things. And plan for a week at a time or longer depending on the student's needs and how quickly they'll grow or learn. It's really up fronted time and adapting it from there because it's really ‑‑ I think about multiple and complex students when they talk about writing plans, it's about iteration. For right now, this is what we're working on, this is their goals, and plans. Making sure the interveners our paraeducators are confident in implementing them and adjusting them to the student's need and how the student responds.

It's really this time up front. And then iteratively checking in on the data and how do we do that? I rely heavily on routine, unless there's a specific goal. And it's much more prescribed. But then I really rely on routine as an instructional plan so that it's not only routine for the student but routine for the paraeducator and allows them to have a part of their day that's predictable in a job that can be so unpredictable at times. It's how to make everyone have expectations and predictability for their day.

>> RITU CHOPRA: All right. At this point in time, we can take a few questions about instructional planning if anybody has any insights to share. All right. Maybe we will have time for questions and answers too.

Moving on to the second part of the webinar and systemic communication for effective collaboration. And, again, we really want to, in this context, highlight the consistent, targeted communication that should occur between ‑‑ among the team members. Particularly among the supervising teacher and intervener in order to work together effectively as a strong team.

So, let's look at what we have in this section. Next slide, please. Next, I'll start with we are asking you, think of the teachers you work with. How do they convey information to the interveners? How do they get information back from them? And what kinds of information typically needs to be shared between team members in a typical week? And then, of course, the second part on the slide is for if you could just type in and share was some of the ways that you think are systemic ways of communication among the team. We are trying to get to what kind of communication practices exist in the districts that you work with.

>> LEANNE COOK: Beth is saying, brief meetings before or after school. Student focused team meetings, professional learning communities, meeting between teams and deaf‑blind project staff.

I think more often than not, there's some rush planning. There are formal planning meetings as well.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Leanne, in your context, how do you communicate because you go from one school to another? So how do you communicate with the time and the interveners?

>> LEANNE COOK: Yeah. Personally, I like to schedule meetings with teachers. And then oftentimes, there will be follow‑up meetings with the intervener if the intervener doesn't have those hours in school where the teacher and I will have conversation. Because it may be such the classroom teacher doesn't have the time to sit down and have that meeting. But they know there's the collaboration between the teacher and I. So, we're not putting the teacher in a power down relationship. Sometimes that happens. A lot of times, things are sent virtual or virtual planning documents where we can see what's coming up, what do we need? Who is doing what when? I've even seen the communication style notebook between an intervener or paraeducator acting in that role as a classroom teacher where they have questions of things that come up during the day. I think one of the things I heard recently if it feels like it's not working, there's probably an easier way. And a place for the intervener to have a place to have that communication with the teacher even if they don't have a before and after meeting times but a place to write it down so the teacher can know it.

In the chat, it goes along the same lines, using a Google Doc for the students where plans would be communicated. Angel is saying, rushed planning, rushed meetings. And one of the things that is helpful is focusing on if they have rushed meetings, have can we have communication throughout the day? What are ways to communicate when there is some down time? Or there are things that need to happen.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Rush planning and rush meeting, we know details fall through the cracks. Or if more than one person is involved, some of the information doesn't get to everybody so everybody isn't on the same page. Those are some of the challenges with rushed planning and rushed meeting. And that's why we're trying to highlight the ways to communicate systemically in a targeted and in a planned manner.

All right. So, examples of systemic communication, and I think Jennifer touched upon Google docs as well. We cannot highlight enough the importance of face‑to‑face meetings. They don't have to be in person. They can be Zoom. There's so many other platforms like Teams and Google Meet. It's extremely important to have a regularly scheduled meeting. There's a fixed time. And I know planning time is not there, but that's where we need to start ‑‑ administrators need to start paying attention to that and planning the time ‑‑ allowing the teachers and interveners and rest of the team to meet.

The face‑to‑face meetings. We'll talk in a minute about the meetings need to be meaningful and held in an organized systemic way, but we cannot underplay the importance of the face‑to‑face meeting. How we make the meetings effective is something we'll discuss in a minute. But we cannot rule out we need to have all the team members at the same place and having ‑‑ so that everybody's on the same page.

Of course, written communication is to e‑mail, teams, printed plans and schedules. And use of documents. Life is made easier using Google docs, planning schedules. Leanne, you have examples of how you communicate electronically with your team.

>> LEANNE COOK: Yeah, and I've seen with students with iPads, teachers having Google Forms open where there's things that are put in for each student throughout the day by other staff members. Or things ‑‑ so there's like a Google form that follows the student throughout the day if there's things that need to be used. So, it's really what method is ‑‑ again, I think it goes back to the idea of thinking about paraeducators you're working with and meeting them in a way and form of communication that's effective not only for you, but effective for them and meaningful for them that you can both use because we often implement things, we think are great in our head and we get to the classroom and they don't implement well because we may not be considering the other people using it and engaging with it. So, it's really important to see that.

Sometimes I've also seen monthly meetings where you will have an entire team that serves a classroom talking about things that maybe roses or thorns. And that way, there's a regularly scheduled time to discuss not only that opportunity but multiple students with the entire team in place. For the people especially in self‑contained classrooms, that's a wonderful tool. To get the whole team on board and asking them all to participate and so that you know while an intervener does exist in isolation, they don't always exist in isolation, right? That they may be working with one student but things happening in the classroom is so important as well. Thinking about that and how do we involve those other people? Lyn said it earlier, it's not just the teacher of visually impaired or PE teacher it's the PT, OT and getting all the other people involved in communication and planning. I think we'll talk more about meeting structure so we cannot have a rushed meeting, but intentional meetings

>> RITU CHOPRA: Next slide. We have some of your responses in the chat. Also have kind of highlighted what we are going to share on this slide. The importance of systemic and regular communication we cannot underplay that. The purpose of systemic and regular communication is so we can provide ongoing support for the intervener. We can address issues as they come. What they're struggling with. What is it they need supports for? What is it they need additional information or training on?

Ongoing support for the interveners. And when we meet with them, also, it's like a way of showing respect to them that you are valuable and we are here to support you. So, I think it is really important they're part of meetings and we meet with them regularly. Also, it's a way of having a meeting regularly also helps everybody being on the same page. So, the services the students receive are cohesive. The entire team has made decisions and they're consistent.

Everybody is on the same page; everybody has the same language around issues and everybody is addressing them as a cohesive team. Meetings are also an opportunity for lesson implementation. Not just meeting. Other ways of systemic communications like Google docs and all the things we talked about. Even the written plan of the they provide guidance for the intervener for implementing the lesson effectively.

And as Leanne shared in those examples of less son plans, instructional plans, there's a huge section on data collection. So, meetings are also a forum to have a data discussion. As we all know, assessment informs future instruction. So, we can do future planning based on what we find out. Meetings need to provide that platform, too.

Also, they're a platform for providing feedback, debriefing and coaching to the interveners. Based on how a particular plan was implemented, what challenges were faced by the intervener, what needs to be improved upon. It's a way of the team reflecting together. Reflecting on how are we doing? What is it we need to do differently?

And this doesn't have to be about the instruction alone. As a team, how are we working? What is it that we need to do to make us stronger? I think that's the reason we need to really have systems for regular consistent communication in place.

Next slide. Leanne. All right. So again, as we said, finding the time is a challenge. And we would really like to discuss that and see what examples you have seen where people have created schedules for meetings and having planning time. I think it's one of the team meetings for the growth of all the team members and growth of our students and to really monitor progress, we really need to have a consistent and regular schedule for content between, key players.

The frequency of the meeting will depend on the purpose of the meeting. We could have larger team meetings. And there could be regular team meetings between the intervener and the supervising professionals. But there needs to be a consistent schedule. The rush meetings, they pose a lot of challenges.

Also, they should be figuring out, what would be the common framework for our meetings? What mode are the meetings going to be? And, again, depending on the team, depending on the line of the supervision practices that already exist, the level of supervision that is needed, level of communication that is needed, but we cannot take away the importance of regular contact. And we need to figure out what is needed for our team and how we make that happen.

>> LEANNE COOK: One of the things this really brings up for me I run into sometimes is that without consistent meeting and contact, the information can end up being hoarded as opposed to flowing through the team. One person may hold this information, but the intervener wasn't told and wondered why the implementation hasn't changed or there's an intervention being used and not used. But when we have meetings where there's multiple people on the team. It allows for flow of information on the team opposed to getting into quarrels or frustration where two people may know something and it may not be implemented across the team as well. And really coming back to that the intervener is the person doing the consistent daily intervention with them, how do we make them sure, empowered rather than between a teacher of the deaf and a choir teacher.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Absolutely. So, who all needs to be part of the meeting? Whether we're talking about a large meeting or meeting for a specific group of team members. But there's a list of participants of the meetings. It could include the related service providers. Again, depending on the needs of the students, it could be anybody who works with the intervener. And intervener implements the lesson plans. And plans developed and designed by the related service providers. So those could be part of the meeting.

It could be other subject teachers as needed depending on the needs. Students. It could be physical education, art or any other subject and could include parents. Parents need to be part of the communication because they are critical members of the team. And they need to be aware of the conversations and communication that's happening among the school-based team so that they can reinforce some of what the student is learning at school. They can have consistently; they can also follow the same kind of patterns and same techniques and strategies so they can support the student at home.

Again, team meetings can be very large with everybody included. At the same time, I still want to highlight the meeting that teachers and interveners have to really go over the instruction plan, its implementation so we can make sure the intervener is delivering instruction with Fidelity and under instruction of the licensed professional.

What are examples of agenda items that could be part of the meetings? Lesson plan and what support is needed for their implementation. Reviewing data and progress. We talked about this. Because assessment informs future instruction. Planning for upcoming lessons and other things to do done. What's the next task and how you're going to do it. Reflection. What went well and what could have gone better and what to do in the future? Teaching and coaching on identified skills. Our hope is instructional plans ‑‑ an intervener is using an instructional plan; the teacher has the opportunity to observe them and see how they're doing it.

And also, they are identifying the areas where the intervener needs support, needs coaching, needs further training. So, I think that's another ‑‑ that would be part of the agenda of the meetings, too. Celebrating, sharing good news. Any success you had with a student during the week. Just celebration is important, too. Giving each other a pat on the back saying, wow, we're doing good.

And addressing questions/concerns. These are the typical agenda items that can guide the conversations in a meeting. Next slide.

>> LEANNE COOK: One of the things I wanted to share, how a meeting feels, we get this idea is rushed meetings. By taking 30 seconds to plan the things you'll talk about. If you think about what you want to talk about for the next 15 minutes, we have a greater sense of purpose and where our meetings are going. And they're actually being used more meaningfully and that time is meaningful opposed to, we'll talk about what happened today.

When they're really specific and take that 30 seconds to list out three things we would like to talk about and what that means. And it holds an accountability to that. In creating an agenda, we not only have intention of our time together but we're on the same page of what's happening together. It's almost like we're creating a plan for our meeting. It's being intentional with our time and what we're doing.

It may sound silly, but the power of the agenda being used in the meeting is really the difference between feeling a little chaotic and rushed and feeling like we're actually getting through the things we need to even if it is only 15 minutes long.

>> RITU CHOPRA: And taking notes is equally important. So, we'll talk about holding meaningful meetings in a minute. I think we just wanted to share this cartoon with you. Many times, meetings become like ‑‑ if they're not meaningful, we don't want to go. We look at them as waste of time. They're not serving any purpose and it's like being there and having ‑‑ if there's no agenda, there's no time keeper. If the agenda doesn't have items that are really that are burning issues for you and they're not included, it's a waste of time.

We are not getting anywhere with those. I think it's really important. In the bigger training I do around supervision, we often ask people, raise your hand if you like meetings. And people are always hesitant to raise your hand. And they said, depends on the meeting. If you ask people, raise your hand if you don't like meetings. And they say it depends on the meeting.

What everybody tries to communicate when we ask that question is, if the meeting is not serving any purpose for me, and it's not addressing any of the issues I'm facing, I don't like it. So, I think we all like meetings where we ‑‑ lead to solutions for us. Which help us really have a sense of, yeah, we are here for each other. We have each other's back. I have an answer for your question and I will support you. If that's the outcome, we all wanted to go to those meetings. If they're around all complaints and no solutions. If the meeting is you come with an agenda and don't use it. People don't like to attend and they serve no purpose.

Considerations for a meaningful meeting are, first, finding a time which is convenient. It should work for everybody. Again, it has to be a face‑to‑face meeting. It may not be in person. It's hard to do in‑person meetings particularly if you did have a TVI like Leanne who is at ten different schools in a day. We have to find a way to have a face‑to‑face meeting. There's so many different ways one can find the time. Beginning of the school year.

If we make a priority, we'll find the time for it. If the meetings are important and we highlight the team leads and supervising teachers, they highlight the importance of the meeting, everybody will find time for it.

Establish group norms right in the beginning. They could be respecting everyone's opinions. It's a safe place to express your opinions. These things, they sound sometimes, do they matter? Yes, those things do matter what we have done in our group meetings is beginning of the year, we pull out a flip chart and generate group norms from the group itself. And we write them down. Then we just roll out the flip chart and every meeting we have, we bring that out and stick it on the wall. And just remind everybody these are the group norms we come to a consensus at the beginning of the school year.

It sounds a little philosophical but at the same time, I think it does work. Establishing a functional location or virtual platform. I already talked about it. It's important that everybody has access to technology and the platform we're using. Facilitation of the meeting is another important consideration. It doesn't have to be the same person facilitating the meeting. We can take turns. There should be a facilitator who is a time keeper also.

Because it's important to create long agendas for the meeting and we get stuck just on one item and we never go forward. And there are people who feel unheard. People who say, this is why wanted to discuss, but we never got to it because we got stuck on one agenda item. It's important there's effective facilitation that takes place where somebody is guiding the flow of the meeting. It doesn't have to be the same person. Take turns in doing that using an agenda.

I think Leanne touched upon it already in the previous slide, I think I will talk more about developing the process for ‑‑ process for developing an agenda. It shouldn't be one person saying, here are the items. This is what we'll discuss. It's a good idea that we start off an agenda whoever is the facilitator or whoever has taken on the role for the week to lead the meeting, send it out to others. Here are three items that are coming to my mind. What is it that's important for you? Is there anything we can add to it? Of course, if you give an opportunity for people to add, the agenda might become very long. But then the conversation around, how do we prioritize so we have an hour, 45 minutes, what do we discuss? So that everybody feels that they had an input to the agenda.

The most important thing is following the agenda. Sticking to the time that is allotted for a particular item. That all items are addressed. It's important how we develop and use the agenda that drives our meeting in an effective way.

Documenting group decision and action items. Many times, we go to meetings and there's nothing to follow‑up on. You don't remember what we talked about. We're busy people. If notes are not taken properly, what are the action items, who is going to do what, those things get lost in the mix. Again, documenting decision and action items, doesn't have to be pages and pages of notes that nobody will get to.

I sometimes get minutes from meetings, which are three or four pages, paragraphs after paragraphs. Nobody reads those. Over the years, the shorter the minutes, but with clear guidelines around what action items, what bullet point ‑‑ discussions recorded in a bullet point manner and go into what are future action items, who is going to do what and what's our time line?

I'm going to share ‑‑ I hope this works when I click on this. Yeah. This is a little template we use. As you see ‑‑ Leanne, I can't see the whole page could we make this bigger or maybe scroll to it? As you see, this is the agenda item we use. I'm sure you all have similar templates you use. Basically, this is agenda items on one side, bullet points for discussion notes and action needed, who is the person responsible and by when?

These are ‑‑ this is it. And I share ‑‑ Leanne, if you can go back to the presentation. Click on the second one. This is an example of, I hope I don't get into trouble because I didn't change the names of the people who attended this meeting. But this is a two‑hour meeting. And we have everything we needed in terms of future action in one page.

The process we follow with our team meetings, and I know other people who have adapted this template where they follow this. If the meeting took place on a Monday and the next meeting will be next Monday, right after the meeting because typically one person is taking notes as we speak. We bring our laptop and take notes and send a link to the notes right after the meeting. On Wednesday, there's a reminder for the next meeting ‑‑ send us agenda items to the next meeting and how are you doing with the action items from the previous meeting? And we send them again on Friday. We look forward to the meeting on Monday.

What people told me is what they sometimes do is do the word search and find their name and find the action item that was assigned to them and they get it done. Things move in the direction we want them to move because everybody's taking responsibility for their actions. Just again, this is not written in stone. This is something I'm sharing from our personal experience we use at para center for all the projects and team meetings and it does work for us. I think it can be adapted and used for others.

Another thing is reviewing the meeting effectiveness. Take a few minutes after the meeting, you can do a simple thumbs up, thumbs down. Did it work for you? Can we do better? It's important to check the temperature, how everybody's feeling about the meeting. And meetings are effective and it's not a waste of time for anybody. Follow‑up to the meetings.

Again, very important. So many times, we take notes and we don't act on those. And it's extremely important we figure out within our team processes and structures that we need to make sure that what we discussed and challenges we brought up and solutions we offered, how are those working? What do we do to make things better?

>> LEANNE COOK: One of the things ‑‑ it may sound cerebral or unrealistic, is in creating this meeting, we're creating a routine. Whether it's establishing group norms. By the third meeting, everyone knows what is they are. They weather they know what it is or where to find the agenda and know to check items, we're creating a routine. We are spending time up front but we're getting the payout of having a routine and a plan developed around how meetings work.

If we do only have 15 minutes, we're making the most of our 15 minutes because we have an understanding how these meetings flow, what the expectations are and how that works together. So, we get away from that rushed and feeling time pressure of a meeting to having freedom within that time to collaborate and think through what is going on with the students or how we need to communicate better.

>> RITU CHOPRA: And it's all about routines, Leanne. You've been highlighting since the beginning of the webinar. Routines for us, the interveners and students and having systems and routines, yes. All right. Leanne.

>> LEANNE COOK: One of the things that's so important is reflective practice. And how meetings are really a place for things that didn't work, things that did work, and improving that supervision and relationship. And going back through, we write routines for interveners or paraeducators to then have a conversation about them later. Whether this is a one‑on‑one type of meeting or a small group, it's making sure we allow space for reflection in whatever our meetings are. Even if they're ten minutes in the middle of the day, but allowing a space for reflective practice and mentorship and team work within our meetings is what gives our team more efficacy and continues to build the strength with that team. Especially in a time there's so much descent and frustration in education. We see that.

It's, how do we take the people we're working with or utilize the people in our classrooms and give them some security and to see intervention as a career and something they're doing. And how do we give them that independence and that joy in the work they're doing. And a real part of that can be reflective practice. We're growing and learning through this not only as a licensed professional or a related service, but also the paraeducator or intervener.

It's also important to think about that continued cycle. That we take time to stop and think, and change our practices to meet what our students need. It can be reflective not only for ourselves but the intervener and also thinking about needs of the student. What we're starting to do is think deeply about what we're doing, think about what is working and not working, think about the changes, implement those changes. And then we go back and do that again. So that we get this iterative practice that has reflection built into it so that we're allowing opportunities for that continued growth. And again, thinking about our interveners as having a career in this classroom. And that that is something they're choosing to do gladly ‑‑ they're coming to work every day. How do we give them that satisfaction in their career? And part of that is allowing for a cycle and for reflective practice and make sugar we're thinking about what we're doing. What's working? What's not? How do we change it and implement the changes? And continuing that cycle.

We can't do this cycle without lesson plans, without data, without effective meeting. It's all built together to be able to implement these changes for what we see is working or not. And the collaboration that's necessary to do that to serve our students the best we can.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Yes.

>> LEANNE COOK: Oh. The slide decided to have fly ins. It's important we think about they have a better understanding of the students and their abilities. They looked at data, implementation and methodology and how to change that and keep that cycle going. They have an ability to reflect and analyze on what they need to do to not only improve the student but to improve their own learning. It's not just one sided for the students but it's how can we, as educators and professionals in the classroom, support the interveners? And that can be through our own learning.

We mentioned it earlier when we have the classroom teachers that may not have the knowledge in deaf‑blindness or special education teachers, how do we improve their understanding to keep positive relationships in the classroom

>> RITU CHOPRA: I would like to add, reflective educators, even the student that we work with, they become more reflective, too. If we are reflective, our practicing with them will encourage reflection in them. So, we are ensuring their growth as well.

>> LEANNE COOK: Right. And acknowledging that, we're going to change this and do this differently. Is something that allows our students to adapt, change and grow as well. It's really important we are talking about emotional intelligence, self‑awareness and recognition and management of emotions. Well, it was really frustrating the last two weeks when we did this so we'll do something different now. Not only are we doing that for ourselves but the learners get to participate in that as well. We get this full circle reflection being good not only for just us but also for the learners.

The slide keeps flying in. It wants to keep going. Reflective practice is the key to improvement it's not only for the improvement of educators but paraprofessionals or interveners in the room and the student. It's the trickle-down effect of it really impacts everyone in the room.

>> RITU CHOPRA: Beth has a good comment about the interveners who have gone through the national credentialing or certification process are provided ‑‑ are encouraged, that's part of their portfolio, to reflect on their practice and that helps their growth. Thanks, Beth.

How do you take this information about reflection back to the teams and teachers and districts you work with? We want you to ‑‑ our plan was to have an activity we do and ask you questions for guided reflection, but what we are asking you to do is, if the teams are encouraged to create their own questions or use questions we have, and in a minute, we'll show you questions are not focused only on instructional but also overall growth as a team member. So maybe share those questions with the folks you work with.

And any opportunity that you have to work with those folks directly or somebody yourself is working directly with interveners, read the questions from time to time. It's a huge list of questions. Bring one or two questions, depending on the time available to you in a meeting. Or have a regularly scheduled meeting for reflection if we can find the time. And really talk about those things. Those are sometimes one has to dig deeper within ourselves to find for the issues we're facing and we're hesitant to do that. But if we make reflection part of our work, an activity we do together, we can really address a lot of issues in a very strategic manner. Leanne, if you can go to the next slide.

Yes. These are questions that have been actually gathered from our trainings from teachers and paraprofessionals and interveners, and even administrators. As you look at the list of the questions, how do I find a trusting place to bring my questions and reflections? How do I nurture a trusting environment to share my ideas? How does my relationship with a student affect his/her learning? How does my relationship with other team members affect my work with the student? How do my relationships at work affect my learning and growth? What do I do right? What is it I need to do differently? What skills do I need to learn? Why am I so angry, frustrated stress? What are my sources of stress? How do I react to stress? How do I manage stress? These are some examples.

Working with teams, we typically have them generate a list of questions they want to use as team reflection or individual reflection. These are just some ideas. As I said, the focus of these is, of course, instruction, but also, how do we bring a strong team? How do we feel safe on a team? How can I be an effective member of the team? Okay.

All right. Next slide. Leanne.

>> LEANNE COOK: You should see it now. One of the things I think is interesting is that there's definitely one of the benefits we had about the COVID‑19 pandemic was that we became okay with interacting virtually. We broke down those barriers that there is line of sight and in person supervision is not always possible. But it's the principals of intervention that need to apply as well. We need to consider how we spend this time together whether we're virtual or face‑to‑face and we need the same structure and supports in place even if it's 15 minutes over Zoom opposed to time in the classroom. Or how do we make these things support, or how do we provide that support to them within the classroom?

And sometimes it's the creative of technology that helps. Whether it's beaming in on an iPad to watch a lesson or see how something is going or what supports they need. Or is someone recording this time during a day that was tough for the intervener and feedback? How can we leverage tools of technology to help us and that's where creativity counts. You may not always be able to stay in the same place but we learned throughout this time it's possible to give an equitable opportunity for virtual super vis but it comes down to the creativity of what the problem or area of need from the intervener is and how you interact with the intervener to support that.

>> RITU CHOPRA: All right. Next slide. Here's a list of resources. As I mentioned in the beginning, we are addressing only instructional planning and communication in this particular webinar, but there are all these resources, some are from our website, the paraprofessional center website and the others were provided by Kristi and they're on the NCDB website on coaching as well as roles and responsibilities and training and certification. Some of the components we did not address.

Do visit the link we provided for para center. It has specific tools. There are examples less son plans for paraprofessionals and examples how to handle confidentiality related issues and how to build strong teams. There are lots of resources. And you can always reach out to us if you are looking for a specific resource, we mentioned we had on our website and you can't find it, let us know and we'll help you locate it.

Next slide. All right. Any questions? We have three minutes left. And please if there's anything that you have in mind and you want to share. All right. Kristi, any final words from you?

>> KRISTI PROBST: Sure. Hi, everyone. This is Kristi Probst. I want thank you again for attending this webinar and wanted to thank Ritu and Leanne for doing this presentation. We appreciate you share your expertise with us. Everyone, Peggy has put an evaluation link in the chat. If you could please do that for us, that would really help us. If you have any questions or anything you need answered, feel free to e‑mail Ritu and Leanne or myself. So, we want to thank you so much. Have a great day.

[End of webinar]