Summary of National Deaf-Blind Needs Assessment

The National Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Needs Assessment includes questions focusing on current and emerging needs, priorities for technical assistance and the assets in place to address these needs and priorities. A total of 58 individuals representing 45 of the 48 (93.8%) State and Multi-State Deaf-Blind Projects responded to all (52) or parts (6) of the needs assessment.

### **Question 1.** **What is your role on the project?**

The 58 individuals responding to the Needs Assessment had the following roles:

1. Director = 33
2. Coordinator = 16
3. Family Specialist = 8
4. TA Specialist = 6
5. Other = 5
6. Needs, Challenges and Priorities in Your State  
   Section I focuses on individual state level Deaf-Blind technical assistance considerations.

## Child Needs and TA

### **Question 2. What are the most critical needs, or emerging needs faced by infants, toddlers, children and youth?** **Check all that apply** (Responses in order of frequency)

#### Birth – 2 (52 respondents)

1. Communication System (n=40; 76.9%)
2. Appropriate Identification (n=38; 73.1%)
3. Access to information, environment and others (n=32; 61.5%)
4. Qualified knowledgeable personnel at local level (n=31; 59.6%)
5. Comprehensive Assessments (n=28; 53.8%)
6. Quality IFSPs (n=22)
7. Quality Instruction (n=22)
8. Administrative Support (n=22)
9. Quality Transition Plan (n=11)

#### Preschool (55 respondents)

1. Communication System (n=42; 76.4%)
2. Qualified knowledgeable personnel at local level (n=40)
3. Quality Instruction (n=39)
4. Access to information, environment and others (n=33)
5. Comprehensive Assessments (n=32)
6. Appropriate Identification (n=30)
7. Administrative Support (n=27)
8. Quality IEPs (n=22)
9. Quality Transition Plan (n=19)

#### School Age (58 respondents)

1. Quality Instruction (n=53; 91.4%)
2. Qualified knowledgeable personnel at local level (n=50)
3. Administrative support for teachers and interveners (n=46)
4. Communication System (n=43)
5. Comprehensive Assessments (n=40)
6. Quality IEP (n=37)
7. Access to information, environment and others (n=36)
8. Quality Transition Plan (n=26)
9. Appropriate Identification (n=26)

#### Transition Age (58 respondents)

1. Quality Transition planning (n=52; 89.7%)
2. Qualified knowledgeable personnel at local level (n=44)
3. Quality Instruction (n=43)
4. Communication System (n=35)
5. Access to information, environment and others (n=35)
6. Administrative Support (n=31)
7. Quality IEP (n=29)
8. Comprehensive Assessments (n=59)
9. Appropriate Identification (n=18)

### **Question 3. Please add detail and/or identify additional needs here.** (There were 31 individuals who provided one or more responses to this open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Solid identification at ALL ages - kids are not being appropriately served (n=6)
2. Quality of instruction and services varies so much by district/school (n=6)
3. Yes to all these needs (n=6)
4. Lack of qualified knowledgeable personnel (n=5)
5. State does not recognize interveners - no awareness or support (n=5)
6. State teacher prep requirements do not include low incidence populations (n=5)
7. Geographical isolation/distances (n=3)
8. Transition planning/resources (n=3)
9. Lack of technology (internet, phone) makes getting info out hard (n=2)
10. Lack of cultural diversity in our videos/materials (n=2)
11. Parent knowledge and ability to advocate varies greatly (n=2)
12. Appropriate assessments and programming (n=2)
13. We lose instructional momentum in late elementary/middle school
14. Aging of profession - need to pass on critical knowledge and expertise
15. Inclusion is increasing demands for appropriate assessments
16. Availability assistive technologies
17. Zika impacted babies and their families
18. Lack of vision and hearing service birth - three
19. Supports for Academic students in classroom settings
20. Certification (NICE) and acknowledgement of Interveners
21. Communication

### **Question 4. Based on the needs of children in your state, which should be the highest priorities for your State Deaf-Blind Project TA?** (There were 55 individuals who provided one or more responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Knowledgeable/Qualified personnel at local levels (n=23)
2. Identification/Awareness of impact of dual sensory loss (n=17)
3. Development of communication systems (n=14)
4. Ongoing support for high quality instruction (n=11)
5. Transition Planning (n=9)
6. ID and serving Infants and toddlers (n=9)
7. Family Support and training (n=7)
8. Comprehensive assessments (n=5)
9. Administrative support for teachers and interveners (n=4)
10. Quality IFSPs/IEPs (n=4)
11. Culturally appropriate information, resources and materials (n=3)
12. Access to information (n=3)
13. Interveners (n=3)
14. Child Specific TA in classrooms (n=2)
15. New ways to deliver TA - use of technology
16. Overcoming lack of internet, technology
17. Serving rural areas
18. All five current national initiatives
19. Individually based on each child/family need
20. Cross systems sharing of information within states

## Family Needs and TA

### **Question 5. What are the most important things that families need to support their children?** **Check all that apply.** (There were 58 individuals who responded to this question. Responses are in order of frequency)

1. Ability to communicate with their child (n=49; 84.5%)
2. Advocacy Skills (n= 42)
3. Knowledge about the impact of combined hearing and vision loss (n=41)
4. Network of supports for child and family (n=41)
5. Transition – knowledge and skills for all levels of transition (n=40)
6. Early intervention strategies for infants and toddlers (n=34)
7. Access to other families (n=34)
8. Dealing with challenging behaviors (n=28)
9. Teaming skills (n=27)
10. Transition - knowledge and skills around the move from EI to preschool (n=24)

### **Question 6. Based on the needs of families in your state, which should be a priority for your State Deaf-Blind Project TA?** (There were 52 individuals who provided one or more responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Developing Communication systems/methods (n = 22)
2. Networking/support opportunities with other families (n=18)
3. Advocacy skills (n=18)
4. Transition supports (EI-School age; school to adulthood) (n=18)
5. Increasing family understanding of child's needs/impact of VL&HL (n=13)
6. Providing information and strategies parents can use in the home (n=9)
7. Supporting partnerships with school (n=5)
8. Increasing family engagement (n=4)
9. Providing information that culturally and linguistically appropriate (n=3)
10. Dealing with challenging behaviors (n=3)
11. Teaming skills (n=2)
12. Technology needs (n=2)
13. Accessing the environment
14. Keeping family together
15. Highly valued activities for families
16. Resources and respite
17. Training and awareness for all staff that work with child

## Service Provider Needs and TA

### **Question 7. Based on your responses to items 1-4, what do service providers need most to work with children and youth who are deaf-blind?** (There were 51 individuals who provided one or more responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Understanding the impacts of combined vision and hearing loss (n=21)
2. Specific Instructional strategies (n=20)
3. Strategies to develop communication system (n=18)
4. Understanding the unique nature of deaf-blindness (n=10)
5. Modifying the curriculum (n=7)
6. More service providers/lower caseloads (n= 6)
7. Respect for family opinions and knowledge (n=5)
8. Time to implement training and coaching received (n=5)
9. Knowledge about adult services and waivers – transition (n=5)
10. High expectations about children’s abilities to learn (n=5)
11. Administrative Support (n=4)
12. Dealing with challenging behaviors (n=3)
13. More support for interveners/TDBs (n=2)
14. Providing access (n=2)
15. Being willing to learn about DB (n=2)
16. Appropriate assessment (n=2)
17. Coaching skills

## Systems Level Needs and TA

### **Question 8. What are the challenges you face in working with the systems in your state? (e.g., Department of Education, Part C Lead Agency, Medical, Public Health, DD, VR.)** **Check all that apply**. (There were 54 individuals who responded to this question. Responses in order of frequency)

1. Lack of knowledge and skills related to working with individuals who are deaf-blind (n=44; 81.5%)
2. Awareness of deaf-blindness (n=39)
3. System priorities that do not include low incidence populations including deaf-blindness (n=27)
4. Lack of infrastructure for deaf-blindness and low incidence populations (n=27)
5. Lack of resources generally (n=26)
6. Gaining access for providing PD for personnel working with individuals who are DB (n=22)
7. Restrictive policies (n= 13)

Write in comments included additional issues:

1. Large turn-over in special education staff and leadership
2. Lack of interagency collaboration to support transitions – from Part C to Part B and from Part B to Adult Services
3. Lack of commitment to low incidence populations
4. School districts are reluctant to ask for outside help – pressure to meet all needs internally.

### **Question 10. What are the current priorities of agencies in your state that impact children who are deaf-blind and their families? (e.g., Department of Education, Part C Agency, DD, VR, etc.)? How do children/youth who are deaf-blind fit into these priorities, if at all?** (There were 56 individuals who provided one or more responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

Priorities where Deaf-Blindness is included

1. Transition planning starting in middle school (n=7)
2. Child Find (n=5)

Priorities where Deaf-Blindness is not directly included

1. Deaf-blindness not on radar-have to work to get it there (n=4)
2. Early Literacy, understanding the law, vision and hearing  - don't always apply to Deaf-Blindness (n=4)
3. Instruction and communication – Deaf-Blindness is lumped with severe/multiple disabilities (n=4)

Other comments

* State assessments - a real struggle (n=3)
* State focused on SPP, low incidence not on the radar (n=3)
* Most agencies prioritize behavior over access (n=2)
* SEA giving control to LEAs. No PD, few teachers with training in DB. (n=2)
* Investments in teacher training programs (n=2)
* Aligning regular and special education (n=2)
* Kids being identified as deaf or blind, but not DB (n=2)
* State budget crisis. Trying to get through. ESSA state plan. Trying to save programs. (n=2)
* Program planning (IEP) (n=2)
* Changes in restrictions/seclusions (n=2)
* interpreter laws and shortage (n=2)
* Voc Rehab - making sure DB is included
* Fitting DB into Routines Based Interview initiative in Part C
* Mostly focus on high level kids
* Services through vision and hearing specialist - not DB specialist
* Focus on local control - policies and practices vary greatly by district
* Massive restructuring in VR and health - don't know where DB will fit in
* Inclusion
* Focus on low incidence assessments
* Great amount of focus on low incidence and DB in state across many agencies
* State Office for the Blind is very supportive
* general focus of professional development and TA

### **Question 11. Do you think that there is a growing acceptance in your state for interveners as a result of advocacy for this position, the offering of training, and now the possibility of certification?** (There were 43 projects who provided responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Yes (23)
2. No (13)
3. Mixed. Some at LEA level, but not yes at SEA level (7)

## Current Assets and Supports Needed

### **Question 9. What are your most valuable assets within your state for addressing these system needs? Check all that apply**. (There were 55 individuals who responded to this question. Responses in order of frequency)

1. In-state relationships and partnerships with programs and agencies (48; 87.3%)
2. Project staff expertise (n = 44)
3. Project resources (n=34)
4. Project approach to providing TA (n=31)
5. Existence of other resources in the state to address the needs of individuals with deaf-blindness (n=20)

### **Question 12. What are you successful at with your TA (with children, families or systems), what do you struggle with, what type of support do you need? Please note that the items below are organized into three areas: Child Specific TA, TA Strategies, and Systems TA.** **Check all that apply** (There were 53 individuals who responded to this question. Responses in order of frequency: Top responses in order of frequency)

#### Greatest Areas of Strength

1. Providing on-site consultation-TA strategy (n=48; 90.6%)
2. Planning and conducting training events-TA strategy (n=56)
3. Identifying effective practices to best meet the child’s needs-Child Specific TA (n=43)
4. Assessing needs and outcomes for a child-Child Specific TA (n=43)
5. Building relationships with teams-Child Specific TA (n=43)

#### Needs Additional Development

1. Facilitating peer-to-peer learning-TA strategy (n=31; 58.5%)
2. Assessing systemic needs and determining solutions and outcomes – ecological assessment-Systems TA (n=32)
3. Cultivating Communities of Practice-TA strategy (n=30)
4. Project dissemination of impact and outcomes-Systems TA (n=30)
5. Project Evaluation-Systems TA (n=28)

### **Question 13. Please feel free to add any additional details or comments around Section I.** (There were 11 individuals who responded to this open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

* Need more funding to hire more project staff (2)
* Not all LEAs welcome us.
* Readiness for change is also a systems issue
* never have time to get the word out
* Regional approach works well, but staff is aging - need to find new staff
* Need full participation in trainings to be effective
* Systems change will be difficult due to all the new staff coming in
* Child specific TA looks different for each child and in each school
* Systems TA will take time. Need consistent leadership for it to happen
* People don’t know what they don't know - don't know what they need
* Having training resources for interveners and TDB will help
* Need help in developing a community of practice
* Need more staff to do follow-up and coaching
* Evaluation of TA supports

II. Existing and Future National Deaf-Blind Network Assets   
Section II focuses on the broader national network made up of other state deaf-blind projects, the national center and other organizations and projects.

### **Question 14. Who do you rely on outside your state for support to meet your needs? What kinds of supports do you need or want? (e.g., NCDB, Other state DB projects, other national organizations (e.g., NFABD, Perkins, HKNC, CHARGE, etc. national TA projects, national experts, etc.).** (There were 49 individuals who provided responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

* 1. NCDB (n =40)
  2. Other State Project staff (directors and coordinators) (n=36)
  3. HKNC (n=23)
  4. NFADB (n=21)
  5. Perkins (n=20)
  6. State/National experts (n=15)
  7. CHARGE/other etiology specific organizations (n=10)
  8. National Professional Organizations (n=6)
  9. Other OSEP TA&D Centers (n=5)
  10. Gallaudet (n=2)
  11. OSEP Project Officer (n=2)
  12. World Federation for the Deaf
  13. Culturally relevant materials/resources
  14. SKI-HI Institute
  15. NFB
  16. UCEDD
  17. Western Region EI Conference/Committee

### **Question 15. How do current National Initiatives, products or type of TA (collaborative, peer to peer, etc.) address your needs? (EI&R; Literacy; Interveners and Qualified Personnel; Transition; Family Engagement)** (There were 46 individuals who provided responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Interveners & Qualified Personnel (n=30)
2. Literacy (n=22)
3. EI&R (n=20)
4. Family Engagement (n=19)
5. Transition (n=18)
6. Library/Information Services (n=12)
7. Child Count (n=8)
8. TA/Implementation Research (n=5)
9. Non-Initiative Specific Webinars (n=1)
10. NICE (n=1)
11. Haven't use them (n=3)
12. Lack of Cultural Appropriate Materials (n=1)

### **Question 16. What changes or modification to the current national initiative activities would be most helpful to you? (EI&R; Literacy; Interveners and Qualified Personnel; Transition; Family Engagement)** (There were 41 individuals who provided responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Great/fine as they are (n=7)
2. Not sure (n=5)
3. Need to make sure continued support for using OHOA/NICE (n=5)
4. More Culturally Appropriate Materials (n=3)
5. More field wide (ala OHOA Modules) work in the initiatives (n=2)
6. More frequent updates like we had at summit (n=2)
7. National supports/networks for Teachers of the Deaf-Blind (n=2)
8. More on transition to adulthood , WIOA - always need help (n=2)
9. Expand literacy to access to the general curriculum including math, science, etc. (n=2)
10. More Specific Strategies-less theory
11. Transition Institute for less high functioning kids
12. Update home page more often - keep it current
13. initiatives seem more focused on NCDB rather than state outcomes
14. Extend EI&R to be general under-represented child find activities
15. Include transition planning with family engagement
16. Need a list of NCDB staff working on each initiative so we can contact them
17. Don't require participants to respond to OHOA Module evaluations
18. Expand OHOA content to include mild/moderate vision and hearing loss
19. Access to Literacy videos and example of instruction
20. Modules that focus on early intervention
21. Expansion/more sharing of Transition Institutes
22. More stories about the impact of interveners to share
23. Intervener Community of Practice (ala MN)
24. Opportunities to meet and discuss in groups by where housed, topic, geography
25. Spanish language materials
26. Easier time finding resources tied to initiatives
27. More family stories
28. Requirement for trained interveners for all
29. Focus on passing along information and resources when kids transition from one environment to the next
30. More training/networking for family engagement specialist
31. Institute "pilot projects" in states with NCDB staff support
32. Change/reduce the number of notifications coming out of NCDB - too many
33. Provide resources to facilitate face to face work, not just online
34. List of great speakers to draw from to bring into a state
35. Information briefs on research based strategies to share with service providers
36. OSEP letter/paper to states supporting the initiatives
37. How to connect initiatives to state assessments and other federal priorities

### **Question 17. Based on your state priority need areas, what new national or collaborative Deaf-Blind Network initiatives should be developed?** (There were 38 individuals who provided responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Personnel prep-teachers and interveners (n=4)
2. Communication (n=4)
3. Assessment for programming (n=3)
4. Intervener sustainability (n=3)
5. Opportunities to train project staff (n=3)
6. Cultural awareness and inclusion, outreach and identification (n=4)
7. Systems Change Initiatives (n=2)
8. Technology (n=2)
9. UDL/inclusive instructional strategies (n=2)
10. Expand literacy
11. National referral network for NICUs and vision/hearing specialists
12. TA Implementation
13. Cross state collaborative urban oriented initiatives
14. Transition and models of interagency collaboration
15. Focus on national/state policies (e.g. dear colleague letters)
16. Continued use of web tools, online collaboration
17. Emergent conditions (e.g., Zika virus)
18. Educational programming from assessment to IEP development
19. Distance learning/online instruction and micro-credentialing
20. Current initiative serve us well
21. More collaboration for the Transition Institute $ are hard to find
22. Additional webinars on early identification strategies
23. Statewide assessment and alternative assessments
24. Using social media effectively
25. Qualification for consultants
26. Training for Related service providers
27. Focus on Academic students

### **Question 18. What priorities should be included for a National Center in the next grant cycle?** (There were 41 individuals who provided responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Personnel preparation and professional development for low incidence populations (n=13)
2. Maintain current ones (n=11)
3. Communication (n=6)
4. Early Intervention strategies (n=5)
5. Systems change support at state level (tools, TA, etc.) (n=5)
6. Culturally/linguistically relevant materials (n=5)
7. Transition for post-secondary employment (n=4)
8. Support collaborative implementation across states (n=4)
9. Emphasize relationship building within the Initiatives - network behavior (n=4)
10. Core content instruction (n=3)
11. Professional learning opportunities for state project staff (n=3)
12. Information Dissemination/Clearinghouse (n=3)
13. Assessment (n=3)
14. Support new research in the field (n=2)
15. Support to states for implementing products and evaluating outcomes - effective TA (n=2)
16. Policy taskforces/committees (n=2)
17. Distance Conferences
18. Continue Summit
19. Expand modules into other need areas
20. CVI
21. Technology
22. Advocacy for state projects with OSEP -
23. Autism and sensory impairment
24. Identifying and addressing secondary disabilities
25. national Referral database of all agencies that provide services to DB
26. Requirements/availability for interveners
27. Behavior supports
28. Family supports
29. National TA outcomes database - ways to measure effectiveness
30. Webinar series tied to Initiative by national experts
31. Continued support for the NICE process

### **Question 19. Given the directive from OSEP to function as a network, where do you see that happening already? What could help strengthen the network and facilitate and support collaboration at the national level and between states?** (There were 46 individuals who provided responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Doing a good job building a network - National Initiatives (n=20)
2. Coordinating face to face time to work on common things (n=13)
3. Support state project collaboration around topic areas (n=12)
4. DB Summit - opportunity to build relationships (n=11)
5. NCDB website (n=7)
6. Need more information about what states are doing (n=5)
7. Create "opportunities for collaboration" section of NCDB newsletter (n=4)
8. Lots of communication in the NE (old area 4) allow old areas to connect at DB Summit (n=3)
9. Intervener Initiative and transition institutes (n=3)
10. Focus on those states not participating (n=2)
11. More state to state efforts – mentoring (n=2)
12. Regional conferences and workshops – archived (n=2)
13. list serve and webinars (n=2)
14. More individualized TA to state projects (n=2)
15. Projects need to know what to write in their grants to increase collaboration-more consistency (n=2)
16. Align state and national initiatives/priorities must be aligned (by OSEP) (n=2)
17. Focused time to meet - significant time (face to face) (n=2)
18. Communities of practice (n=2)
19. Distance conferences
20. Ways to capture shared products
21. Topic specific distance meetings
22. Regular requests to states to share info on collaborative efforts among states
23. Priority national outcomes to be addressed by each project
24. Centralized reporting relationship with state projects, NCDB, HKNC and OSEP
25. Being part of a TWG helps
26. NCDB working as a fiscal agent could make collaboration easier
27. More frequent reporting out on the status of each initiative (month or every other month) - webinar
28. More product development work that brings states together

### **Question 20. Please feel free to add any additional comments around Section II here.** (There were 11 individuals who provided responses to open-ended question: Responses in order of frequency)

1. Thank you for support, leadership and collaboration (n=4)
2. We need some mechanism to make it easier to exchange $ across state projects to make it easier to collaborate (n=2)
3. As new coordinator, need face to face time with others
4. Involvement in initiatives has been extremely valuable
5. NCDB is the best it has ever been
6. The intervener work (OHOA and NICE) have been game changing
7. Do we have anything on the radar for data collection, aggregation and dissemination?