WHAT IS AN INTERVENER?

An intervener is highly skilled at providing one-to-one support for students who are deaf-blind, helping them gain access to information and communication in the classroom and facilitating their social development and emotional well-being. An intervener is typically a paraeducator who is a member of the student’s educational team, working under a classroom teacher’s direction. Ideally the educational team has access to a teacher with expertise in deaf-blindness and consults with their state’s deaf-blind project.

Educational systems are required by law to provide a free and appropriate education to students with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. Intervener services are a way to help meet this requirement and the challenges of providing students who are deaf-blind with access to information they are unable to gather via vision and hearing. Interveners also can help students who are deaf-blind compensate for the difficulties with communication and concept development that occur as a result of combined vision and hearing loss.

PRIMARY ROLES IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING

- Provides consistent, one-to-one access to instruction and environmental information usually gained by hearing-sighted students through vision and hearing but unavailable or incomplete to an individual who is deaf-blind
- Facilitates concept development
- Provides access to and/or assists in the development and use of receptive and expressive communication skills
- Facilitates the development and maintenance of trusting, interactive relationships that promote social and emotional well-being
- Provides support to form relationships with others and increase social connections and participation in activities

In carrying out these roles, the intervener serves as a bridge, not a barrier, between the student and their environment and other people.

ADDITIONAL ATTRIBUTES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- Participates as an active member of a student’s educational team
- Participates in IEP meetings
- Attends regularly scheduled planning and feedback meetings with the student’s teacher and other team members
- Is actively supervised and supported by the classroom teacher and other professionals
- Receives ongoing support and training from professional educators or technical assistance providers with expertise in deaf-blindness
- Works with the teacher to prepare/adapt learning materials and activities so they are provided in ways that support the student’s specific needs and preferences
- Assists the teacher in modifying instruction so it aligns with learning objectives
• Provides guidance to peers and adults on how to communicate and interact with the student
• Assists the teacher with data collection
For a comprehensive list of intervener knowledge and skill competencies, see the Council for Exceptional Children's standards for interveners.

HOW DO INTERVENERS COMPARE TO OTHER PARAEDUCATORS?

Although interveners are often considered paraeducators, their roles are different in important ways.

Other paraeducators...
• Typically do not have training in specific disabilities, including deaf-blindness
• Are usually assigned to work with groups of students (sometimes one-to-one) rather than assigned exclusively to one student
• Assist in preparing learning materials and activities for all students in a class rather than for a student with deaf-blindness
• Do not usually participate in IEP meetings
• Typically are not responsible for students’ social connections and development
• Are sometimes responsible for classroom maintenance and other school duties

To learn more, visit Tools to Employ and Support Interveners.

REFERENCES


National Center on Deaf-Blindness. (2021). Intervener services and interveners in educational settings: Definition.


National Center on Deaf-Blindness, March 2022 | nationaldb.org

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