**Module 1 Lesson 1 Part 1 Descriptive Video Transcript**

**Narrator:** Teaching Children Who Are Deafblind: Professional Development for Educators

Module 1: The Impact of Deafblindness on Learning and Development

Lesson 1: An Introduction to Deafblindness

**[On Screen Text]** Maurice Belote, Former Project Coordinator, California Deafblind Services

**Maurice Belote:** So, at the beginning of a school year a very typical request I will

get for technical assistance is a teacher of the deaf calling me and saying Help! I've

been doing this for years, I thought I understood what I was doing, but everything I do is visual and now I have a child in my program who is deafblind and the visual teaching isn't working. Or a teacher of the blind and visually impaired calls me up and saying says ackk! Everything I do is auditory. I don't know what to do with this child who is deafblind. What I want to say is asking for help is not a sign of weakness. Asking for help is actually the truest sign of strength. Understanding that you're challenged, and these kids are challenging and complex, but understanding that you need to reach out and get more information, more help, is a real sign of strength.

**[Visual Description]** A series of images - Teachers and other educators connect with the children they work with.

**Narrator:** You might have worked with children with disabilities before, and your first student who is deafblind has been added to your classroom or caseload. Or you might have worked with a child who is deafblind before, and you want to improve your understanding of deafblindness and gain practical skills. Regardless of your background, this lesson will help you better understand the deafblind population of children age birth to 21. You’ll learn how deafblindness impacts learning, and how vision and hearing loss are identified.

Lesson 1 provides a foundational understanding of deafblindness that you can put to use right away.

Before we begin, let’s check what you know.

True or False?

1. Like Helen Keller, children who are deafblind have no vision or hearing.
2. If children who are deafblind cannot casually observe or overhear things, they will have problems with communication and concept development.
3. Basic vision and hearing tests are the only way to confirm whether a child is deafblind.

We’ll revisit these questions at the end of this lesson.

Lesson 1 has 3 learning objectives. After completing the lesson, participants should

be able to

1. Define deafblindness and the diversity of the deafblind population
2. Demonstrate an understanding that children who are deafblind face significant challenges to learning and need support to access information
3. Describe why it is important to identify deafblindness as early as possible.

**[Visual Description]** An infant boy who is deafblind, smiles and touches his hands together.

**Narrator:** Part 1. An Overview of Deafblindness.

**[Visual Description]** Two young boys kick a soccer ball towards a toy soccer net in a backyard.

The primary way most people learn about the world around them is through the distance senses of vision and hearing. These two senses help us access, interact with, and understand information and the people in our environment.

**[Visual Description]** A young boy who is deafblind walks down the street with a white cane; there are no obstacles on the street.

You might have heard that when one of these senses is impacted, the other steps up and compensates. For example, if a child is blind, their sense of hearing can become far keener and more sensitive with intervention, training, and practice.

**[Visual Description]** A series of images - A young girl who is deafblind holds a small toy figure of aman with a white beard close to her face. She is also shown sitting in wet sand at the beach with the sand all over her hands and feet.

But what happens when both of these primary senses are impacted and neither can fully compensate for the other? When both hearing and vision are reduced, distorted, or absent, the difficulties aren’t simply doubled . . . They create an entirely unique disability. And the implications are immense, impacting nearly everything about how the child accesses, understands, and interacts with the world.

**[Visual Description]** A young boy who is deafblind sits on the floor with his back against a colorful back support. He smiles and has a stuffed toy lion on his lap.

So what is deafblindness? There’s no “one condition” that illustrates “deafblindness.”

**[Visual Description]** A boy who is deafblind sits in a supportive chair. He has a big smile on his face.

In general, “deafblindness” involves a combination of hearing and vision loss where

those senses are reduced, distorted, or missing entirely. In some children, needs associated with being deafblind may not be fully recognized, and other terms might be used such as deaf plus, visual impairment and additional disabilities,

or multiple disabilities

**[Visual Description]** A series of images - Children of various ages, ethnicities, and etiologies of deafblindness.

Although the number of children in the U.S., birth to 21, who are identified as deafblind

is extremely low--just over 10,000 in all--they make up one of the most diverse and complex of all disability groups. Some children are totally deaf and totally blind, but the vast majority have some usable vision and/or hearing. Some are born with their disability, while others lose their vision or hearing over time. Some have hearing and vision loss due to things like head trauma, illness, or stroke. And sometimes there’s no known cause.

About half of the children who are deafblind have complex healthcare needs, and many also have physical and intellectual disabilities. The impact of deafblindness can differ depending on whether it’s congenital--it existed at birth--or was acquired later as the child developed. For example, you’ll learn in Part 2 that having once had vision can make a big difference in how a child uses that “visual memory” to learn new things.

**[On-Screen Text]** Maurice Belote, Former Project Coordinator, California Deafblind Services

**Maurice Belote:** This is a really remarkable group of students, a very heterogeneous group of students. They are all very different. So when we think about how to teach a child who is deaf blind, so much of it is dependent on that individual child and meeting the child's individual needs.

**[Visual Description]** Liam, a young boy who is deafblind, uses a tactile book and tactile signing to communicate with his mother.

**Narrator:** Of the many possible causes, or etiologies, of deafblindness, a few are more common than others. Approximately 10 percent of cases arise from prematurity complications. Others, like Liam, became deafblind because of an illness.

**[Video playing]** “Hi, my name is Sandy Kenrick. I am the mother of two boys. My oldest is six years old. His name is Liam; he is deafblind. My youngest’s name is Finn. He is three years old; he has typical vision and hearing. Liam was born with typical vision/hearing. When he was 2 years old, he became sick with meningitis. After months in the hospital and therapies and such, we came home with a kiddo who was now deafblind.”

**[Visual Description]** Paul, a young boy who is deafblind, signs with his mother and claps his hands.

**Narrator:** Several hereditary syndromes and conditions are also common. In the U.S., the most commonly identified cause of congenital deafblindness among school-age children is CHARGE syndrome. Paul is 6 years old and has vision and hearing loss due to CHARGE.

**[Visual Description]** Paul sits in a toy wagon and claps his hands.

He is profoundly deaf in one ear and wears a hearing aid for the other. He can see only what is very close to him. Children like Paul with CHARGE are typically born with serious birth defects and have extensive medical and physical challenges, in addition to vision and hearing loss and balance issues. Usher is another more common syndrome.

**[Visual Description]** Ava, a young girl, talks and bounces a ball towards a basketball hoop and shoots the ball into the basket.

**Video Playing:** “Hi, my name is Ava Bullis. I have Usher syndrome. That means I was born profoundly deaf and I’m slowly losing my vision over time. At night I use a cane to help me see, and during the day my vision is limited. Just because I’m losing my vision doesn’t mean I’m losing my ability!”

**[Visual Description]** A series of images - Ava as a toddler, kissing her mom. Her cochlear implant is visible. Ava, in elementary school, stands by her mom and holds a white cane.

**Narrator:** Children like Ava with Usher syndrome have partial or total hearing and vision loss that worsens over time, and some experience severe balance issues. There are three major types of Usher, distinguished by the severity of symptoms and the age of onset.

**[Visual Description]** A young toddler sits in a booster chair with a white cane.

A vast number of etiologies have been identified for deafblindness. Some causes are so rare that only a few children have been identified with them.

**[Visual Description]** A teacher reads a book with a boy who is using a supportive standing desk and chair.

As a practitioner, you’ll want to learn as much as you can about the many factors

that play a role in a child’s deafblindness. They help determine what specific, individualized educational strategies are best, given the child’s unique disability.

**[Visual Description]** A boy explores a tactile sensory box that contains corn kernels and other objects.

All children with deafblindness will require intensive support and specialized services or instruction throughout their lives. The type of support will vary depending on the degree and severity of vision and hearing loss and the presence or absence of additional disabilities.

Despite the incredible diversity, there are several qualities children who are deafblind share:

1. They need help from others, and often technology, to understand their world, communicate, and build social relationships.
2. They need to be intentionally taught concepts that typically come naturally to their sighted-hearing peers.
3. Their education and support are often provided by a team of specialists (in addition to the family).
4. They can feel extremely isolated unless someone is very close to them, often touching them.

These and many other qualities that impact learning will be explored in greater detail

in Parts 2 and 3 of this lesson.

Let’s take a break and check what you know.

Remember Liam, Ava, and Paul, who you met earlier? Each of these children is deafblind. In what ways do they differ from one another?

**[Visual Description]** Pictures of Liam, Ava and Paul

They differ in many ways…. Here are a few:

Liam was born hearing and sighted but became deafblind at age 3 from meningitis.

Ava has Usher Syndrome. She was born deaf and is slowly losing her vision over time.

Paul has CHARGE Syndrome. He is profoundly deaf in one ear and wears a hearing aid for the other. He has very limited vision. Good work!

This ends Part 1 of Lesson 1. In Part 2, we’ll take a closer look at the impact of deafblindness on learning and access to information.

**[On Screen text]** National Center on Deaf-Blindness.   
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IDEAS that Work.

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