



INTERVENER SERVICES AND INTERVENERS IN EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS: DEFINITION

Interveners, through the provision of intervener services, provide access to information and communication and facilitate the development of social and emotional well-being for children who are deaf-blind. In educational environments,* intervener services are provided by an individual, typically a paraeducator, who has received specialized training in deaf-blindness and the process of intervention. An intervener provides consistent one-to-one support to a student who is deaf-blind (ages 3 through 21 or as mandated by state regulations) throughout the instructional day.

Primary Roles

Working under the direction of a student's classroom teacher or other individual responsible for ensuring implementation of a student's IEP, an intervener's primary roles are to

- Provide consistent access to instruction and environmental information usually gained by students through vision and hearing but unavailable or incomplete to an individual who is deaf-blind¹
- Facilitate concept development
- Provide access to and/or assist in the development and use of receptive and expressive communication skills¹
- Facilitate the development and maintenance of trusting, interactive relationships that promote social and emotional well-being¹
- Provide support to form relationships with others and increase social connections and participation in activities

Although some educators worry that interveners may create dependency, the exact opposite is true. Interveners are trained to “do with, not for” their students and support them to function as independently as possible.

Teaming

An intervener does not work in isolation. Instead, they

- Participate as an active member of a student's educational team
- Participate in IEP meetings
- Attend regularly scheduled planning and feedback meetings with the student's teacher and other team members
- Are actively supervised and supported by the classroom teacher and other professionals responsible for a student's IEP
- Receive ongoing support and training from professional educators with expertise in deaf-blindness

Training

In the absence of specific state standards to the contrary, programs that train individuals to be interveners should comprehensively model the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) intervener standards, *Specialty Set: Special Education Paraeducator Intervener for Individuals with Deafblindness*.² State deaf-blind projects and non-degree, online university-based programs are the primary sources of intervener training in the U.S.

**Although this definition focuses on intervener services in educational settings, it is important to note that interveners also provide services to individuals in early intervention and community settings.*

There are three essential components of training:

1. Coursework or training on deaf-blind intervention aligned with the CEC standards.
2. Supervised experience, such as a practicum or coaching by a professional with expertise in deaf-blindness. The intervener candidate must be working with a child or youth who is deaf-blind in an educational setting.
3. Documentation of proficiency (through a portfolio or other method) that shows attainment of the knowledge and skills outlined in the CEC standards.

An intervener's communication skills must align with their student's skills. As such, they should receive training in their student's methods of communication, if not already proficient.

Designation in IEPs

Intervener services are typically provided as part of a student's related services. As noted by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs,

If the IEP Team determines that a service, including the services of an intervener, is an appropriate related service for a child and is required to enable the child to receive FAPE, the Team's determination must be reflected in the child's IEP, and the service must be provided at public expense and at no cost to the parents. 20 U.S.C. §1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(IV) and §1401(9).³

REFERENCES

1. Alsop, L., Blaha, R., & Kloos, E. (2000). *The Intervener in early intervention and educational settings for children and youth with deafblindness*. National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Young Adults Who Are Deaf-Blind. <https://www.nationaldb.org/info-center/intervener-in-early-education/>
2. Council for Exceptional Children. (2015). Specialty set: Special education paraeducator intervener for individuals with deafblindness (PDBI). *What every special educator must know: Ethics, standards, and guidelines*. Arlington, VA: CEC.
3. U.S. Department of Education. (2018). *August 2, 2018, Letter to Linda McDowell, Ph.D.* [OSEP Policy Document]. <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/files/osep-letter-to-mcdowell-08-02-2018.pdf>

National Center on Deaf-Blindness, 2013 (rev. 2021) nationaldb.org

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