



Professional Development Modules for Teaching Students with Deaf-Blindness

PROJECT OVERVIEW

NCDB is planning to create professional development modules for practitioners who want to improve their knowledge of deaf-blindness and gain practical skills that are essential for working with students who are deaf-blind. The intended audience is teachers from a variety of areas (e.g., special education, visual impairment, deaf/hard of hearing, severe/multiple disabilities), related service providers, and administrators.

The primary purpose of these modules is to provide training materials that can be incorporated into existing professional development opportunities offered by state departments of education and other agencies or organizations that provide professional development. Because of the low-incidence nature of deaf-blindness, these agencies do not typically include deaf-blindness in their professional development training. NCDB will not provide training, but by making the content free and ready to use, will make it easier for professional development providers to embed topics on deaf-blindness into their offerings. Our goal is to help make training about deaf-blindness widely available to educators.

Although not the primary purpose, family organizations and families will likely also find these materials highly relevant and easy to use and will be able to access them on the NCDB website.

The modules will be delivered in content-specific lessons that can be incorporated into a variety of professional development platforms for various purposes (e.g., CEUs, micro-credentials, credits). This online, open-source content will be based on a synthesis of high quality literature and expert input.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Because deaf-blindness is a relatively rare condition, educators may have little to no practical experience working with students who are deaf-blind or knowledge and skill content from their university training program. For the same reason, professional development programs typically lack content on how to teach this population of students. NCDB's professional development modules will directly address this need by providing concrete, practical information about high quality practices for children and youth with deaf-blindness that can be incorporated into any professional development program.

Proposed Module Topics

1. The impact of deaf-blindness on learning and an introduction to basic instructional strategies

2. Access to the GEC: How to plan and implement instruction that is aligned with academic content standards
3. Early intervention: Strategies to support infants and their families
4. Transition: Planning for adult life (e.g., postsecondary education, employment, community living)
5. Early communication (e.g., building intentionality, joint attention)
6. Strategies for building and using symbolic communication
7. Communication systems, including AAC, and creating opportunities for communication
8. Educational strategies, including communication supports, for proficient communicators (including students with Usher Syndrome)
9. How to conduct assessments with children who are deaf-blind
10. Learning environments for children with deaf-blindness
11. Instructional strategies
12. Unique considerations for assessing and supporting behavior in children with deaf-blindness

This is a long-term project that involves numerous phases. We anticipate creating four modules during this grant cycle, and modules will be released as they become available. The estimated release date for Module 1, on the impact of deaf-blindness on learning and basic strategies, is Spring 2022.

Module Project Concept

- Modules will be designed for flexible use, for example, as self-guided/self-paced learning or inclusion in face-to-face or online courses.
- Modules will follow a clear sequence of instruction for participants with differing backgrounds in deaf-blindness. Multiple pathways will be available (e.g., novice, intermediate, advanced).
- Each module will be divided into 30-minute lessons. Content within lessons will be delivered in short chunks of information (~10 minutes).
- Each module will have specific competency-based learning objectives (e.g., derived from CEC standards).
- Modules will meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) AA standards.

Module Components

Modules in this program will share the following components and characteristics:

- Provide skills and knowledge that can be easily adapted for and implemented in the classroom (rather than theoretical in nature)

- Incorporate short intermittent videos (<6 minutes) with experts in deaf-blindness, such as state deaf-blind project staff, who will highlight particular content areas (long, lecture-style videos will not be used)
- Use real-world examples, activities, and discussion points that allow learners to apply knowledge to current and future teaching situations
- Include general discussion questions and reflection prompts that can be used in multiple contexts (e.g., discussion boards, wikis, online meetings, face-to-face discussions)
- Provide links to additional resources for expanded learning

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