

Communication with Infants & Toddlers who are Deafblind

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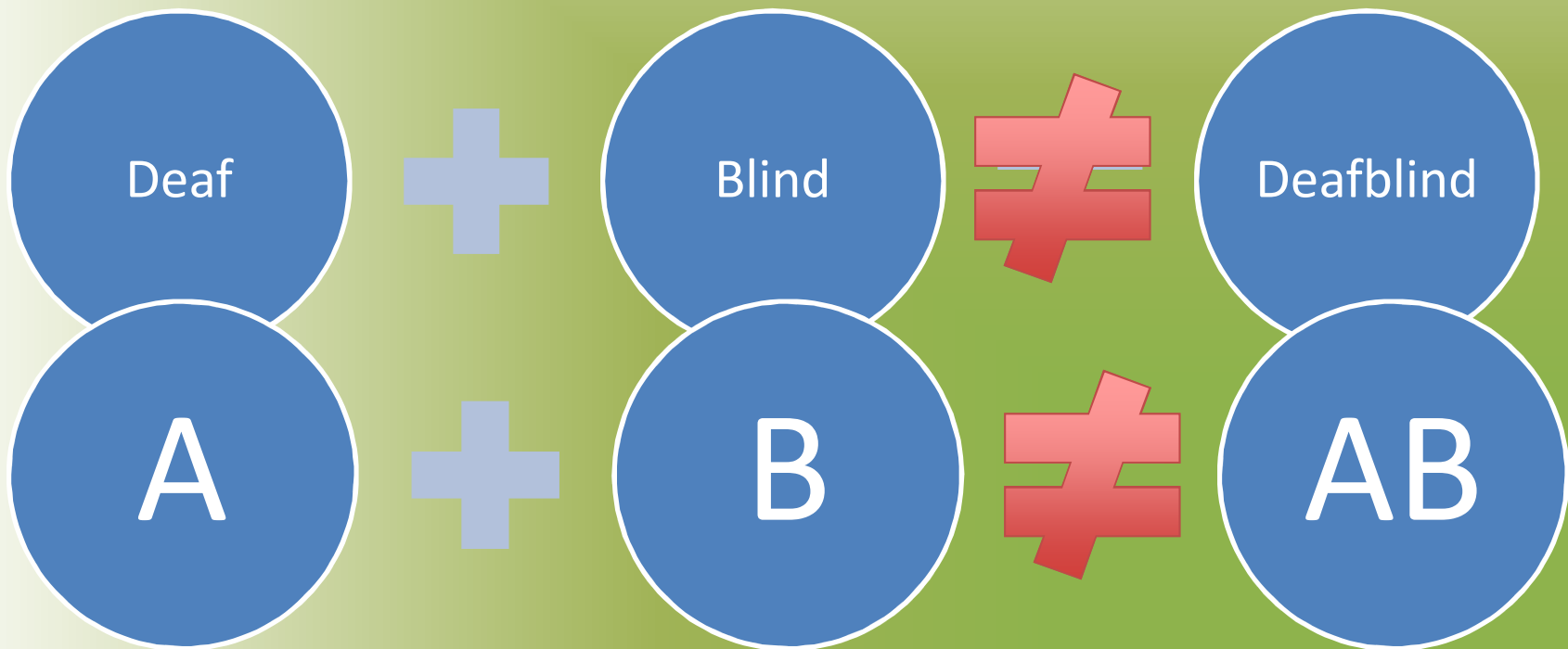
Objectives

- Learn the federal definition of deafblindness.
- Learn the definition of communication and identify the differences between communication and meaningful communication.
- Learn 5 different communication options that a child who is deafblind may use.

Examples of Communication with People who are Deafblind

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F8DiZbCu3TM>
- This YouTube video is an advertisement for an Intervener training program. We are not endorsing the program, but rather, we want you to focus on the many different types of communication taking place in the video.

What is Deafblind?

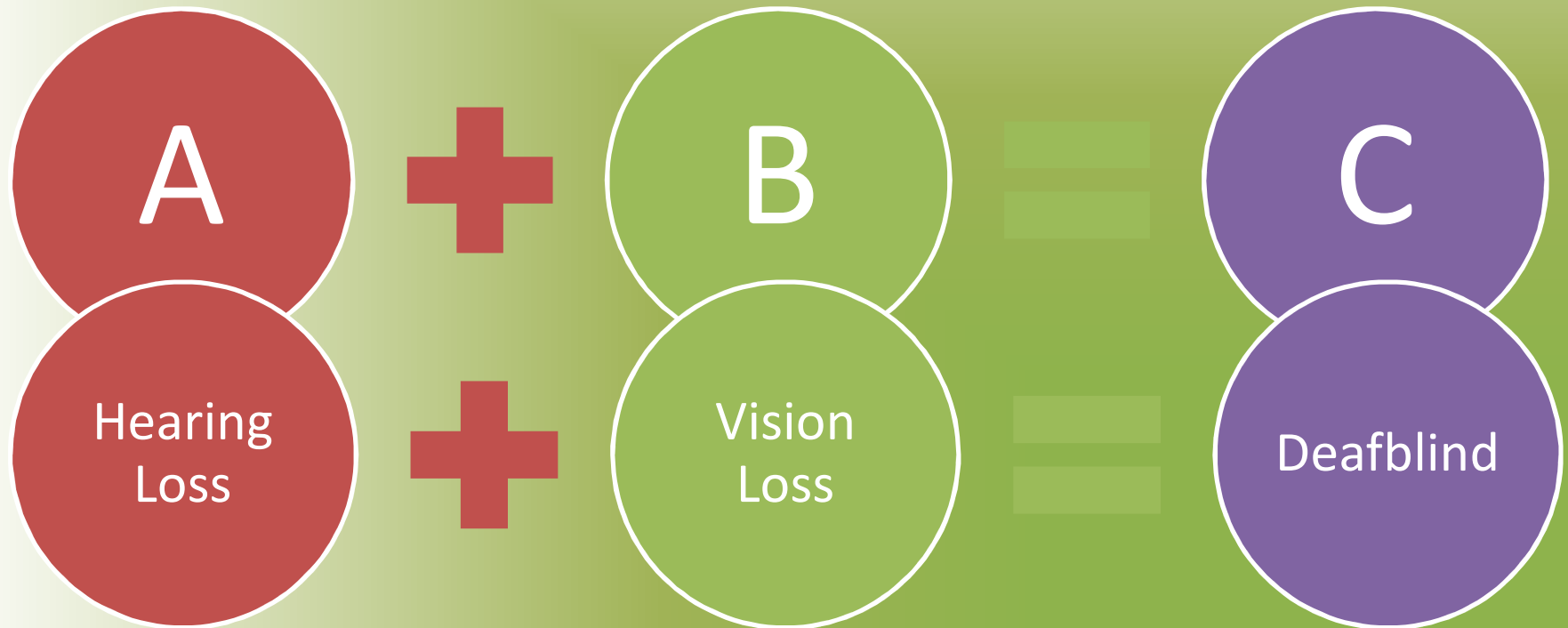


Deafblindness means...

...concomitant [simultaneous] hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

~National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB)

Uniqueness of Deafblindness



What Determines 'Deafblindness'?

Hearing Loss

- Mild, Moderate, Moderate-Severe, Severe, or Profound hearing loss
- Diagnosed Progressive Loss
- Functional Hearing Loss
- Central Auditory Processing Disorder (CAPD)
- Auditory Neuropathy

Vision Loss

- Low Vision (visual acuity of 20/70 to 20/200)
- Legally Blind (visual acuity of 20/200 or worse, or a field restriction of 20 degrees)
- Light Perception only
- Totally Blind
- Diagnosed Progressive Loss
- Functional Vision Loss
- Cortical Vision Impairment (CVI)

Common Syndromes That Cause Deafblindness:

- Aicardi Syndrome
- Bardet-Biedl Syndrome
- CHARGE Syndrome
- Cornelia de Lange
- Dandy Walker Syndrome
- Down Syndrome
- Prader-Willi Syndrome
- Stickler Syndrome
- Usher Syndrome (Types 1, 2, & 3)

~See Resource List for a more complete listing

What is Communication?

...a process by which information is exchanged between individuals through a common system of symbols, signs, or behavior

~Merriam-Webster



Forms of Communication

- Gestures
- Facial Expressions & Body Language
- Signed Languages, including modified forms
- Spoken Languages
- Total Communication
- Touch Cues
- Tangible Symbols
- Tactile

Touch Cues

- A touch cue is a touch that is done in the same place and the same way right before you do something with the child
- It lets the child know that something *familiar* is about to happen
- It allows the child to remain calm and helps him feel safe

Touch Cues

- Many children who are deafblind are tactually defensive, not knowing when or where or how they will be touched, or even if it will be pleasant or hurtful
- Touch Cues alert the child that *something* is about to happen to them
- Touch Cues are often used throughout a person's life

Examples of Touch Cues

- Tap a child on the upper right arm before picking him up
- Tap or rub a child's thighs before changing his diaper
- Rub the back of the child's hand before putting your hand under his for hand-under-hand exploration

Tangible Symbol Systems

- Tangible Symbol Systems is a method of communication that uses concrete, rather than abstract symbols
- Examples include:
 - cup = drink
 - washcloth = bath time
 - shoe = going outside
- www.designtolearn.com

Other Tangible Systems

- Calendar box
- Communication Board



Tangible Symbol Systems

- A tangible communication system is a natural progression from the touch cues as a child gets older and begins to understand concepts such as bath time, eating, and going places

Tactile Communication

- Tactile communication is most often thought of as tactile sign language
- Other forms of tactile communication include Braille, Tadoma, and Print on Palm (all three of these are for older children and adults)



Tactile Sign Language

- For tactile signing with a young child, use the Hand-Under-Hand technique while signing to the child
- Emphasize or repeat words/concepts you want the child to understand (more, eat, finish)

Pre-Braille Activity

- Using the Hand-Under-Hand technique, poke holes in a piece of paper. Turn the paper over and let the child rub his hand over the bumps you made from the holes
- Develop concepts by creating the outline of an object, such as a flower or a house (use a coloring book picture as a template). When the child feels the bumps, you can sign and say 'flower' (and maybe give him a flower) to help create that concept.

Communication vs. Meaningful Communication

- The difference between the two of these is the child's ability to convey their wants and needs (*communication*) verses the ability to tell someone about their day, or to express why they like one thing over another, or to teach them about safety (*meaningful communication*)
- Getting to meaningful communication starts with building a foundation of basic communication and concepts when the child is young

The Importance of Hands

- Deaf children rely on vision to learn language, communicate, and explore the world
- Blind children rely on hearing and touch to learn language, communicate, and explore the world
- Deafblind children rely on touch and any residual hearing and vision to learn language, communicate, and explore the world
- Never grab a child's hand and put it on/in something
- Always use the Hand-Under-Hand technique

The Importance of Communication

- The most important thing you can do for a child who is deafblind is to develop a communication system early
- Children who are deafblind will retreat inside themselves when they have no outside stimulus; they have no idea that an entire world exists outside of their reach
- Building concepts and communication gives them a reason to explore and learn about their environment

Resources

- Please download the Resource List from the EHDI conference website to learn more about the topics we have covered here today.
- We encourage you to contact your state deafblind project (every state has one!) for information on specific resources in your area.

For More Information



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