



## Minnesota DeafBlind Project

# FAMILY PACKET - TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The Minnesota DeafBlind Project provides FREE technical assistance to families, education teams and service providers to support children (from birth through the year of their 21st birthday) who **have a combined vision and hearing loss or are highly suspect of having both vision and hearing losses**. The combination of these sensory impairments, even if both are mild, may qualify a child for Project services. These services are in addition to those provided by schools and other state and local agencies.

### ABOUT US:

The technical assistance team has been recognized nationally as a truly unique staff consisting of two parents of deafblind children an educator and a pediatrician. This combination allows for a holistic look at each child, his or her family and education team. We help families and educators understand the impact of combined vision and hearing loss on development and learning. We can help staff with individualized programs for children based on student need. We provide resources and facilitate opportunities for teachers through networking and training workshops. We recognize that families are the most important advocates for their children. Families need to be involved for their children's education to be successful. We feel that families are an integral part of the IEP and IFSP teams.

### WHAT IS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE?

Technical assistance is an array of deafblind-specific information, practical advice and recommendations. Technical Assistance may include the following:

- family support
- in-service training
- on-site consultation
- phone and/or email contact
- program development
- resource materials
- workshops/conferences
- person centered planning
- use of distance technology

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# JUST FOR FAMILIES

### Is my child really DeafBlind?

As a parent, you may have trouble using the term “DeafBlind,” and it may not seem to really describe your child’s disability. You may be thinking, my child is deaf, but she can still see-she is not “blind.” Often, a child may have very mild vision and hearing loss or have an impairment that only effects one eye or one ear. Of course, there are all types and degrees of vision and hearing loss among children who are DeafBlind.

### Deafblindness is greater than the sum of its parts.

Deafblindness sounds pretty dramatic, but it also seems to describe the reality of combined hearing and vision loss. Think of a world where 1+1 does not equal 2, but instead equals 10. Missing a little bit of what can be seen and a little bit of what can be heard often means missing a whole lot of what is going on in the world. Additionally, missing information causes misunderstanding which causes big problems. It is important for us to realize that without proper modifications and support, even a mild vision and hearing loss has a dramatic impact on a child’s ability to access information and learn.

### It’s OK to be uncomfortable with the term “deafblindness.”

It’s OK to be uncomfortable with the term “deafblindness” if it makes you feel awkward. However, please don’t be afraid to use that term -it helps people understand that your child has some very special needs. Educators, service providers, community members and others need to understand that with a little extra effort they can make the world accessible to your child with deafblindness. Without these accommodations, your child is denied access. Just like a child in a wheelchair needs a ramp to enter the school building, your child will need help to overcome his vision and hearing loss to access information at school so he can learn.

### Opportunities for Families

These are a few of the resources we offer for families. For detailed information on any of these resources please visit our website at [www.dbproject.mn.org](http://www.dbproject.mn.org).

- Family Internet Connection
- Family Workshops
- Family Events
- Project SPARKLE
- Parent to Parent

- Mom’s Get Away Weekend
- Dad’s Night Out
- Resource Lending Library
- Parent Road Map



## Minnesota DeafBlind Project

# TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

The Minnesota DeafBlind Project provides technical assistance and support to assist school districts, families and service agencies in the implementation of IDEA and evidence-based practices. The Project works to identify the needs of children, their families and education teams, and implements an array of technical assistance to build local capacity to meet those needs. Technical assistance may include: phone and/or email contact, use of distance technology, workshops, resource materials, referral to specialists (ie: DB Network Members) in your area. We ask that a collaborative approach be used when possible, involving those team members who have significant impact on the daily functioning of your student. In an effort to make the technical assistance meaningful, efficient and successful, the roles and responsibilities of the Project Consultants and the family/school/agency shall be defined as follows:

### PROJECT CONSULTANTS AGREE TO:

- communicate and follow up with school/agency administration on any requests for technical assistance that involves staff, physical space, and/or resources of the school/agency.
- schedule technical assistance during times that attempt to accommodate all persons involved.
- prepare an Action Plan that outlines Promising Practices designating tasks/strategies/persons responsible and timeline along with desired outcomes.
- provide video equipment needed for initial consultation.
- provide Project SPARKLE DVD for parents and staff members.
- add staff to our database to receive notification of DeafBlind-related training opportunities.
- be available for follow-up activities/interventions as identified by the team members (conference call, email, phone, on-site visit).
- evaluate the effectiveness of the technical assistance provided.

### SCHOOL/AGENCY STAFF AGREE TO:

- provide all required information, including video.
- notify all participating staff who may need to be aware of the Project's role (principal, special education director/coordinator).
- identify a contact person within the school to coordinate and communicate with Project consultants.
- assure that all classroom staff and appropriate team members are available and prepared to meet with Project consultants at the scheduled time.
- contact the Project if the student is ill or if the teacher cannot be directly available to participate.
- assist with obtaining parent consent and participation in the technical assistance process.
- clarify responsibilities of classroom staff and educational team for implementing recommendations.
- follow through with Action Plans and desired outcomes.
- View, read and disseminate suggested materials.

### FAMILIES AGREE TO:

- take an active role in the desired outcomes as listed on the Action Plan.
- provide all required information, including video.
- view Project SPARKLE DVD and participate in the SPARKLE conference calls.
- maintain contact with the Project through email/phone, etc. as needed.
- sign consent and agreement forms.

## ANNUAL CENSUS OF STUDENTS WHO ARE DEAFBLIND

Every year, the federal government asks each state DeafBlind Project to take a count of students who fit the federal definition of deafblindness: “Children and youth having auditory and visual impairments, the combination of which creates such severe communication and other developmental and learning needs that they cannot be appropriately educated without special education and related services, beyond those that would be provided solely for children with hearing impairments, visual impairments, or severe disabilities, to address their educational needs due to these concurrent disabilities. This term includes infants and toddlers with deafblindness.”

Collection of census data takes place during the year and is the main instrument to track DeafBlind children and youth in Minnesota for the federal government. We need your help completing the census when it is mailed to you after the new year.

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This document is available in alternative formats for individuals with disabilities by calling 612.638.1531