

## Effective Use of One-on-Ones for Children who are Deaf-Blind

by Maurice Belote, CDBS Project Coordinator

### Job title

In California, most people serving in the capacity of an intervener do so with the job title—formal or informal—of one-on-one aide, one-to-one assistant, or one-on-one paraprofessional. There are a number of other titles for this position: intervener, interpreter-tutor, communication facilitator, or communication aide.

For purposes of ease and clarity, the term “communication facilitator” will be used to broadly encompass all of these positions, with the understanding that support for individual students is as varied and unique as the individuals themselves.

### The role of the one-on-one

While the title of the position may vary, and the duties of the person in the position may vary, many responsibilities remain the same. For students with combined vision and hearing impairments, communication facilitators provide critical information about what is happening in the students’ world, which then allows students to access their world in a natural way. Communication facilitators provide students greater access to communication and richer language environments. This all contributes to an enriched, meaningful educational experience, and greater and more positive integration into the mainstream of life.

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In addition to services provided during the traditional school day, some children and youth who are deaf-blind receive intervener services before and/or after school hours in order to integrate home, school, and community activities. For many of these individuals, this model continues into adulthood with the use of support service providers (SSPs) in living and work settings. Therefore, the successful use of communication facilitators during childhood and adolescence prepares students to more effectively use support services they may need or want in adulthood.

### Possible barriers

The use of communication facilitators, however, has raised a number of questions and issues that must be addressed if students who are deaf-blind are to receive maximum benefit from their educational experiences.

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1. Communication facilitators can, in some cases, act as barriers between the students they serve and these students' classmates. These barriers can interfere with the development of friendships and natural systems of support.
2. There is often confusion in the delineation of duties to be performed by communication facilitators. Many communication facilitators also function as quasi-teachers and program coordinators, and have responsibility for planning instruction, adapting materials and curriculum, and making day-to-day and minute-to-minute programmatic decisions. This has the unintended effect of creating separate educational systems, which also create confusion and misunderstandings regarding roles and responsibilities among team members. Communication facilitators do not necessarily have the skills to serve as children's primary teachers, nor are they paid to do this level of work. This can create resentment, which may affect team functioning and communication.
3. The presence of communication facilitators may cause some students to develop patterns of learned helplessness, which then create program-induced challenges for these students, their families, and the staffs that serve them.
4. The use of communication facilitators and one-on-one aides in general is being questioned by local educational agencies because of the costs associated with providing these services, and IEP teams are forced to confront this issue when trying to reach consensus about appropriate levels of support.

### Strategies to consider

The following strategies represent a basic framework for using communication facilitators in school programs. These strategies are based on field observation and input from individuals serving as communication facilitators.

Systemic support – There must be systemic support for the establishment of the position of communication facilitator when the need is identified by the child's team. As a result of systemic support, policies can be implemented regarding issues such as chain of command, contingencies for staff absences, etc.

Training plan for new staff – There will always be staff turnover, and programs must have in place a system for training new communication facilitators. This

training might include overlapping the schedules of the incoming and outgoing communication facilitators so that the person leaving the job can train the new person. The training might also include pairing the new person with a more experienced communication facilitator who can serve as a mentor. Establishing a mentor relationship is an effective strategy for sharing information and providing support and encouragement.

Role definition – This seems to be the single most common reason for problems with the use of communication facilitators. The child's team must define the role of the communication facilitator with special attention to job duties and responsibilities. This will help ensure that the communication facilitator is clear on what his or her duties are, and will also help ensure that all *other* team members are clear on the duties of the communication facilitator as well.

Inclusion on educational team – It is vital that the communication facilitator be a full and equal member of the child's educational team, including participation in all team meetings. This may require additional paid time for the communication facilitator, and the development of staff coverage plans if team meetings are held during the school day. There may also need to be guidelines for communication between all team members, including between the communication facilitator and the child's family.

Unique nature of relationship – The relation between the communication facilitator and the child is unique and fragile. A child who is deaf-blind must know that he or she can trust someone before they are ready to learn from that person. This is why it is critical that the communication facilitator have as much information about the child—including an understanding of the child's communication system—before the communication facilitator ever actually interacts with the child. Obviously the communication facilitator will learn more about the child each day the two work together, but having basic information from the start will help ensure that this fragile relationship of trust is not put at risk. This may require additional "front-end" training time for the communication facilitator, which will need to be included in the budget for the position.

Training in the child's communication system – It is also critical that the communication facilitator be trained in the use of the child's communication system before interaction between the communication

facilitator and the child takes place. If the child does not perceive that the communication facilitator understands the signs and signals that everyone else in her or his world understands, the child may question the need to attend to this new person in her or his world. This training will involve a team approach to the identification and consistent use of: signed communication; adapted signs (sometimes referred to as home signs); touch and name cues; line drawings; photographs; spoken words; gestures; and other modes that form the child's unique communication system.

Strategies for increasing natural interactions and friendships – The communication facilitator will benefit from training and strategies for increasing natural interactions among peers. The communication facilitator should not be a barrier between the child who is deaf-blind and the child's peers, nor should the communication facilitator be a filter to interactions and the development of friendships.

Support systems for the communication facilitator – It will be helpful to the communication facilitator that systems of support be put in place. These may include ability to attend workshops and conferences, and linkage with other communication facilitators. Support networks will be especially useful to communication facilitators working in rural and/or isolated areas. The opportunity to informally share strategies and raise questions through job-alike pairing has proven to be an effective method of professional development.

Effective use of support providers ultimately leads, in the truest sense, to a least restrictive environment. Only when children have full access to their world do they have opportunities to lead complete, integrated lives.

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*[This article was adapted from a paper presented at the 1996 TASH conference.]*

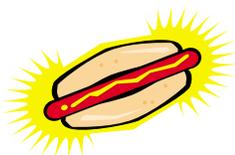
**Great resources on this topic:**

*Competencies for Paraprofessionals Working with Learners Who Are Deafblind in Early Intervention and Educational Settings*, by Marianne Riggio and Barbara A.B. McLetchie. Published in 2001 by Perkins School for the Blind, Watertown, Massachusetts.

*The Intervener In Early Intervention and Educational Settings For Children and Youth With Deafblindness*, by Linda Alsop, Robbie Blaha, and Eric Kloos. Published in 2000 by The National Technical Assistance Consortium for Children and Young Adults Who Are Deaf-Blind, Monmouth, Oregon. (This paper is available on the Internet by going to [www.tr.wou.edu/ntac/](http://www.tr.wou.edu/ntac/) and then clicking on publications.)

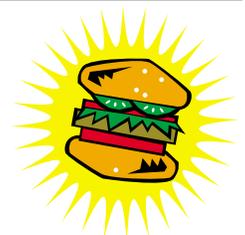
*You & Me: Interpreter-Tutor*. This is one videotape in a series produced by Teaching Research Division at Western Oregon State University.

Each of these resources is available for loan from the CDBS lending library. To borrow materials, contact Patty Figueroa, CDBS Project Assistant, at [cadbs@pacbell.net](mailto:cadbs@pacbell.net) or by phone, toll-free from within California, at 800-822-7884 ext. 27 (voice/TTY).



## Upcoming COPE D-B Picnics!

Coalition of Parents and Educators Deaf-Blind



June 29, 2002  
Morton's Sonoma Springs Resort  
Sonoma

August 17, 2002  
to be announced  
L.A. County

September 14, 2002  
Rio Bravo Resort  
Bakersfield

Contact Myrna Medina or Jackie Kenley at 800-822-7884 (Voice/TTY) for further information.

# Interview with a One-on-One: Stories and Insights from the Field

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CDBS Educational Specialist Gloria Rodriguez-Gil recently interviewed Tricia Helm, who serves as a Classroom Assistant at the Blind Children's Learning Center in Santa Ana. In her role as a classroom assistant, Tricia is assigned to work primarily with Juan Carlos Salas, a six-year-old boy who has both hearing and vision loss. Our thanks to Tricia and the Blind Children's Learning Center for agreeing to be part of our newsletter, and to CDBS Family Specialist Myrna Medina for transcribing the interview. Note: Regular readers of *reSources* may remember that the cover article from the last issue (Fall 2001) was written by Juan's mother, Rosa.

## **Gloria: What is your job title working with Juan Carlos?**

Tricia: I am an assistant teacher in the classroom (ten kids total), but I work one-on-one with Juan at the same time. A lot of my job with Juan focuses on communication, and transitioning through his day—that is, helping him to understand his day and what's going on when he is at school. Of course, encouraging independence is something that we work strongly on here at school.

Gloria: So you work mainly on communication, transitioning through the day, and encouraging independence?

Tricia: Yes, to help him understand his day at school and what goes on throughout the day, and to use the tools that I use along with signs with him and any other tools like his communication box.

Gloria: How long have you had this position, as the classroom assistant?

Tricia: Almost eight years.

Gloria: That's a lot of experience.

Tricia: It is. When I started at the center I had some experience, and there were three deaf-blind students in the classroom that I was in. When I started, it really took my interest and I learned a lot from that experience the first year there.

Gloria: So you've worked with a total of five children who are deaf-blind?

Tricia: Yes, I have experience with five children who are deaf-blind and three I have worked with very closely.

## **Gloria: What is your main role as the one-to-one aide for Juan?**

Tricia: Using sign language and an object system, I help him to understand what goes on throughout his day here at school. I let him experience as much as he can at school, and encourage independence as much as possible.

Gloria: Are you using tactile sign language as part of the communication system?

Tricia: Yes, I cue and prompt him. I try not to help him too much. When I feel he is starting to understand something I just give him enough of a prompt until he is doing it independently, but that takes time.

Gloria: This is something that you say takes time. How much time are you talking about?

Tricia: I think it depends on the child, but with Juan I try not to think too much about time—it could be months, weeks, a year. It just depends on the child and the things he is doing. I just try to remember to have more patience with him.

## **Gloria: What kind of things do you do with Juan on a daily basis, such as the main routines you go through?**

Tricia: The main one I can think of is transitions during the day, from beginning to end. We use an object system and what we call calendar boxes in the room. We probably have ten of them total, and they go from top to bottom and he goes through his day using this calendar. I use it in the morning from the time he comes. We have a small outside object box giving him choices of what he wants to play on. We are also introducing new play objects. Right now he has been introduced to the tire swing so we have a piece of tire.

Then let's say we have Braille that day, so I'll have an object cue for Braille. Some of the things we do throughout the day are repetitive, like snack time, lunch, circle time and nap time. He knows the system very well.

We are also working on his routes—how to get to all those destinations in the morning. He uses his cane throughout the day.

Gloria: In the classroom, who else uses the communication system, that is sign language and object cues?

## Interview with a One-on-One (continued from page 4)

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Tricia: In my classroom, the teacher and I both use sign language, and the grandparents have learned quite a bit of the sign language too. There's probably two or three other rooms that use a similar but slightly different system. Some kids use books, instead of the shelf and boxes that we use.

Gloria: So this is a communication system that the school shares and people in the school know about it?

Tricia: Right, everyone is aware of it and uses it. Deciding how the object system is set up depends on the child and what works best for them. In our room it is the shelf, but some rooms use books, and some use containers that sit on a tabletop. We try it different ways until we find which works best for the child. Every child is different.

**Gloria: What would you say are the main challenges you encounter in this position?**

Tricia: Patience.

Gloria: What do you mean by patience?

Tricia: Basically I mean giving him the time to do something. I think I am a really patient person but sometimes I don't know if I'm patient or not with Juan.

Repetition and consistency is another challenge. As a team member, I work with other people and as a team we try to do the same thing for a child. If another person at school or even the parents all try to work on something different, it gets to be challenging. It's a challenge if they are not working on the same thing that we are at home or vice versa, but I do not experience that with Juan at all. Everything that we do at school Juan does at home, and we get good ideas from his mom also.

Another big thing that's a challenge and is very frustrating at times is that other kids in the classroom might need a "Tricia" sometimes too. At certain times, especially during lunch, it is almost impossible to try to meet everyone's needs while working closely with Juan. So, usually what we try to do is make sure we have a lot of help in the room. Some people don't realize that it is a lot of work to meet the needs of ten children. It's a lot of fun, but it's a lot of work too.

**Gloria: What about your main satisfactions working with Juan Carlos, or children who are deaf-blind?**

Tricia: When they understand—when you are communicating to them and they can communicate back, and you know when they get it. Juan has been

signed to and worked with since very early on, and my experience with other children is that this makes understanding communication happen pretty quickly.

Sometimes there is a lot of behavior involved. There is not a lot of behavior involved with Juan as much as some other children. Sometimes this means a lot of frustration. One child was very strong and wanted to understand and wanted to communicate, but was frustrated so there were a lot of behaviors that we had to get over. It took a year, but it happened, and when he understood, it just opened up a new world for him. That was probably the most challenging two years I ever had in this position.

Gloria: And what is the challenge for this particular child?

Tricia: There was a lot of behavior and again frustration—wanting to communicate, wanting to understand and being frustrated. He was very strong and there was physical behavior, physical violence hurting himself, biting himself, trying to hurt us. We really had to come up with a behavior plan and really be very strong and consistent with it. It was very difficult. I would go home at night and cry it was so challenging. But we had a behavior plan set up for him so we were successful, and just helping him transition through the day with object communication and sign language helped a lot. After a year it quite clear and he kind follow through with understanding on communication, it really made a difference. And if the whole team is not involved in doing the same thing, you can really have some loose ends.

Gloria: So, the main satisfaction is when the child gets it, and starts to understand what you are trying to communicate to him?

Tricia: Yes—helping them to understand their world, what goes on here at school, if they are hurting or if they do not feel good, tell us if they have to go to the bathroom or if they are hungry. If they can tell us they want something it makes a huge difference, and when you have that, you can introduce more to them and they become more independent.

**Gloria: What kind of support do you think a person in your position needs in order to do a better job working with Juan or with other children who are deaf-blind? What kind of support has helped you to do what you are doing?**

*(continued on page 6)*

# CENSUS ALERT!

## WE NEED YOUR HELP!

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The 2002 California census of children who are deaf-blind was mailed to all school districts and county offices of education this month, and now we need your help. It is vital that we have a thorough and accurate count of all children (birth to age 21) in California who have combined hearing and vision problems. It doesn't matter how the child is counted on their IEP for the state count, and it doesn't matter if the child is receiving vision and/or hearing services. It also doesn't matter if the child has additional disabilities or if the vision and/or hearing losses are cortical in nature. If the child's hearing and vision loss is significant enough so that adaptations and modifications need to be made, then we would like the child included on the state census.

**Families:** Please help CDBS by making sure that your child's program completes a census form for your child and sends it in to CDBS as soon as possible.

**Educational personnel:** Please watch for the mailing to arrive, and route the packet to the appropriate teachers/specialists/administrators who are able to provide the necessary information for each student. Please complete a form even if you don't have all the requested information. We will contact you at a future date to determine how to complete the missing fields. Statistically there are about two children with deaf-blindness for every thousand receiving special education services, or about one child with deaf-

blindness for every 4,200 students in a school district.

**Vendored early intervention program personnel:** Please complete a census form for all infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who have vision and hearing problems. This includes children who are experiencing developmental delays in vision and hearing, have a diagnosed physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay, or who are at risk of having substantial developmental delays if early intervention services are not provided [Part C, IDEA 1997].

There are only 198 deaf-blind children in California whose IEPs list their primary handicapping condition as deaf-blindness. We know statistically that there are approximately 1,225 children in California who are deaf-blind. This census is the only accurate data we have to use with the federal government to let Washington know how many children in California have combined hearing and vision problems. Adequate funding for technical assistance services depends on an accurate count.

**Deadline:** Completed census forms are due back to CDBS by March 22, 2002. For assistance in completing the census, contact Patty Figueroa or Maurice Belote at CDBS: 800-822-7884 (voice/TTY).



CDBS welcomes Project Assistant Patty Figueroa to the project. Patty is a graduate student at San Francisco State University in the Gerontology Program, and comes to us from San Diego State University. For general project information, questions about the census, or to borrow materials from the library, contact Patty at 800-822-7884 ext. 27 (voice/TTY).

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### Interview (continued from page 5)

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Tricia: Personally, because it is an emotionally challenging job, I think the support from everyone is important—from the teacher and my co-workers, my supervisor, the other team members who work with Juan, his mom, the O&M instructor, the OT, and the speech therapist. Good comments and helpful comments of course help a lot, along with anything related to deaf-blindness, like conferences and inservices that we have had. Just working with families has made a big difference. I've learned so much from experience. A lot of my training has been through experience, and many people that I work with are specialists in this area, so I feel fortunate to work and learn from these people.

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# Fact Sheet

## The Use of Interveners

by Gloria Rodriguez-Gil, CDBS Educational Specialist

### What is an Intervener?

An intervener is a trained individual who has knowledge and skills related to deaf-blindness; and provides a one-to-one direct support to a learner who is deaf-blind at school, home and in the community.

The need for an intervener and the level of support the learner needs to participate effectively in his or her environment are determined through the IFSP or IEP process.

### Importance of an Intervener for a Child who is Deaf-Blind:

Deaf-blindness creates very unique and complex challenges caused by the concomitant effect of both vision and hearing loss. These challenges are mainly in the area of communication, concept development and social and emotional development. An intervener responds to these challenges by serving as a link between the learner and his or her world, and by helping to expand it.

### Role of an Intervener:

- Facilitate the process of accessing information usually gained through vision and hearing.
- Facilitate the development of the learner's receptive and expressive communication.
- Promote a trusting and secure relationship with the learner and with the other people in the learner's world.

### Intervener's Responsibilities:

- Provide direct support to the learner.
- Work cooperatively with family members and a variety of direct service providers and consultants including: classroom teachers, deaf and hard of hearing specialists, vision specialists, speech and language therapists, occupational and physical therapists, orientation and mobility instructors, inclusion specialists, and others.

*Fact sheets from California Deaf-Blind Services are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals with dual sensory impairments. The information applies to students 0–22 years of age. The purpose of the fact sheet is to give general information on a specific topic. More specific information for an individual student can be provided through individualized technical assistance available from CDBS. The fact sheet is a starting point for further information.*

**Intervener's Responsibilities (continued):**

- Follow the learner's IEP goals.
- Follow adaptations and instructional techniques suggested by the learner's educational team.
- Be proficient in the learner's communication system.
- Create instructional materials as needed.
- Keep a daily record of the learner's work at school.
- Facilitate the communication between home and school.
- Participate in the learner's IEP and other team meetings.
- Participate in the learner's assessment.
- Participate in trainings related to deaf-blindness.

**Work Attitudes:**

- Set high expectations of the learner, and demonstrate a commitment to helping the learner reach his or her highest potential.
- Demonstrate respect for the learner and his or her capacity for learning.
- Follow team decisions and procedures.
- Accept and use constructive feedback.
- Show interest in developing additional skills and knowledge.

# Hoja de Datos

## **El Uso de Interventores**

*por Gloria Rodriguez-Gil, CDBS Especialista Educacional*

### **¿Qué es un interventor?**

Un interventor es un individuo entrenado que posee conocimientos y destrezas relacionadas con la sordoceguera, y que provee apoyo directo “uno-a-uno” a un alumno con sordoceguera en la escuela, el hogar y en la comunidad.

El grado de necesidad, así como el nivel de apoyo que el alumno con sordoceguera necesita para participar efectivamente en su ambiente, es determinado a través de un proceso de IFSP o de IEP.

### **Importancia de un interventor para un alumno con sordo-ceguera:**

La sordoceguera crea retos singulares y de gran complejidad cuya causa está en la pérdida concomitante de visión y audición. Tales retos ocurren principalmente en el área de la comunicación, el desarrollo conceptual y social y el desarrollo emocional. Un interventor responde a esos retos al servir como enlace entre el alumno y el mundo que lo rodea, y al ayudarlo a que los expanda.

### **El papel del interventor:**

- Facilitar el proceso de acceder a información que generalmente se alcanza mediante visión y audición.
- Facilitar el desarrollo de la comunicación expresiva del alumno.
- Promover una relación de confianza y seguridad con el alumno y con otras personas en el mundo del alumno.

### **Las responsabilidades del interventor:**

- Proveer apoyo directo al alumno.
- Trabajar cooperativamente con los miembros de la familia y los proveedores de servicios directos y

*Las hojas de datos de Servicios Para Sordos-Ciegos de California son para ser usadas por ambos familias y profesionales que ayudan a individuos que tienen dos sentidos incapacitados. La información aplica a estudiantes 0-22 años de edad. El propósito de la hoja de datos es para dar información general sobre un tema específico. La información más específica para un estudiante individual puede proveerse mediante la asistencia técnica individualizada disponible desde CDBS. La hoja de datos es un punto para comenzar una información adicional.*

**Las responsabilidades del interventor (continuado):**

los consultores incluyendo maestras de clase, especialistas en sordera y duros de oído, especialistas en visión, terapeutas de habla y lenguaje, terapeutas físicos y ocupacionales, instructores en orientación y movilidad, especialistas en inclusión y otros.

- Seguir las metas del IEP del alumno.
- Seguir adaptaciones y técnicas de instrucción sugeridas por el equipo educativo del alumno.
- Ser competente en el sistema de comunicación del alumno.
- Crear materiales para instrucción según vaya siendo necesario.
- Mantener un registro diario del trabajo del alumno en la escuela.
- Facilitar la comunicación entre el hogar y la escuela.
- Participar en el IEP y otras reuniones del alumno.
- Participar en la evaluación del alumno.
- Participar en entrenamientos relacionados con la sordoceguera.

**Actitudes para el trabajo:**

- Poner metas altas para el alumno y demostrar su compromiso en ayudar al alumno a alcanzar su más alto potencial.
- Demostrar respeto por el alumno y por su capacidad de aprendizaje.
- Seguir las decisiones y los procedimientos del equipo.
- Aceptar y utilizar la retroalimentación constructiva.
- Mostrar interés en desarrollar destrezas y conocimientos adicionales.

# 2002 Conference on Deaf-Blindness CALIFORNIA COMING TOGETHER

May 16–18, 2002

Handlery Hotel and Resort, San Diego

Sponsored by California Deaf-Blind Services  
and  
Project Needs / San Diego City Schools



A conference for families, teachers, and interested professionals focusing on issues specific to children with both vision and hearing problems. Communication, vision impairment, cochlear implants, and technology are just a few of the topics to be addressed. This is your opportunity to meet the speakers, participate in discussions with these specialists, and learn about the most widely accepted and effective educational techniques in use throughout the world. Join us in beautiful San Diego for three days of stimulating discussion and support.

### Keynote Speakers:

|                  |                                          |
|------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Dr. Jan van Dijk | Instituut voor Doven                     |
| David Brown      | California Deaf-Blind Services           |
| Kat Stremel      | National Technical Assistance Consortium |

### Workshop presenters (partial list):

|                      |                                             |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Shelley Barron       | Project NEEDS                               |
| Maurice Belote       | California Deaf-Blind Services              |
| Dr. Sue Brotherton   | California State University, San Bernardino |
| Dr. Deborah Chen     | California State University, Northridge     |
| Nancy Cornelius      | Exceptional Family Resource Center          |
| Nancy Deutsch        | San Diego City Schools                      |
| Dr. June Downing     | California State University, Northridge     |
| Pam Frankel          | San Diego City Schools                      |
| Gloria Rodriguez-Gil | California Deaf-Blind Services              |
| Larry Rhodes         | California Deaf-Blind Services              |
| Cindi Robinson       | The Arizona Deafblind Project               |
| Joan Schmidt         | Creative Living Options                     |
| Sandy Staples        | Lodi Unified School District                |

Workshop sessions will be divided into three strands: infant/preschool, school age, and transition from school to adult life. Issues regarding communication systems for children and youth who are deaf-blind will be emphasized throughout many of the workshops.

The conference will begin Thursday May 16 at 10:00 AM will conclude at 12:00 noon on Saturday, May 18. **The first night of the conference will include a poolside reception generously hosted by the Southern California Network.**

For a conference registration brochure, contact CDBS Project Assistant Patty Figueroa at [cadbs@pacbell.net](mailto:cadbs@pacbell.net) or by phone toll-free at 800-822-7884 ext. 27 (voice/TTY). **The deadline for the reduced re-registration conference fee is April 15, 2002.**

California Deaf-Blind Services  
*reSources*

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