



reSources

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CDBS Announces a New Model for Trainings in Communication Systems for Individuals who are Deaf-Blind Overview of Communication Training of Trainers Model

by Maurice Belote, Project Coordinator

Why has CDBS developed a new model for training? CDBS recently received another four years of funding from the U.S. Department of Education. Based on the funding priorities for this project cycle, the activities that CDBS will conduct will be very different than those of years past. The key focus of this new service delivery model is on building local capacity. To build local capacity is to give people throughout the state the skills needed to better meet their local needs related to individuals with deaf-blindness and their families. Overall, CDBS believes this is a much more effective use of project resources, and will ultimately have a greater impact on more children than CDBS staff could serve through the old service model.

What is this new plan? Of all the project activities in which CDBS is involved, the activity that is conducted most frequently is assistance in the development of formal communication systems for individuals who are deaf-blind. Communication systems is the most frequently addressed topic in both trainings and technical assistance activities. Because of staff turnover at the local school and agency level, school and/or agency staff may need this training on a fairly regular basis. Therefore, the first major goal of CDBS will be to assist local regions to conduct their own trainings in this area, and thereby better meet the local needs of a greater number of children.

What is a formal communication system? A formal communication system is a communication system that is designed for a specific student based on that student's needs and strengths. The system is "formal" because it is documented in writing so that it will continue and flourish beyond a single service provider. The system moves with the student from program to program, so that the individual who is deaf-blind isn't forced to learn a new way to express and receive information every time they change programs. Typical formal communication systems often include a number of modes, including: objects, pictures, symbols, signs, printed words, speech, speech output devices, augmentative communication devices, and gestures.

Why are formal communication systems important? The staff of California Deaf-Blind Services operates under two basic assumptions: 1) everyone communicates, and 2) all individuals have the right to a communication system. The goal of service providers and families is to help children who are deaf-blind to develop more effective and efficient ways to communicate. The ability to effectively communicate is critical to a child's sense of worth and self-esteem, gives the child control over her or his environment, and facilitates greater inclusion in family, school, and community life. The ability to be a competent communication partner dramatically increases the quality of life for a child who is deaf-blind.

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Overview of Communication Training Module (continued from page 1)

What is training of trainers? CDBS will train 44 individuals throughout the state to become trainers themselves in the area of developing communication systems. Participants will develop competence in the subject matter, and at the same time develop effective strategies for teaching these skills to others.

Who can become a communication trainer? Teachers, parents, specialists, and administrators are all invited to participate.

What will be covered in the training of trainers? The training will be divided into three key sections. The first section will cover the content material specific to the topic: what and how individuals communicate, name cues, touch cues, object cues, calendar systems, and the rights to communication access. The second part of the training will focus on the development of presentation skills, including effective training techniques and strategies for meeting the needs of adult learners. The third component of the training will cover systems change strategies—that is, how to develop local systems so that each of the 11 regions can effectively produce a semi-annual training.

How many communication trainers will be trained? CDBS will develop 11 training teams throughout California. The 11 teams will correspond with the 11 Superintendent of Public Instruction's regions of the state's Regional Coordinating Council. Each team will consist of at least 4 people.

What will be expected of regional trainers? The targeted objective of CDBS is that the regional trainers will conduct twice-a-year trainings in their local areas (e.g., fall and spring). Since there will be four trainers in each region, it may not be necessary for every trainer to participate in every regional training. However, both research and practice suggest that the sooner a newly learned skill is actually used, the more likely that the knowledge and skills will be retained. Therefore, each of the four trainers in the region should plan on being involved in at least the first training conducted in the region.

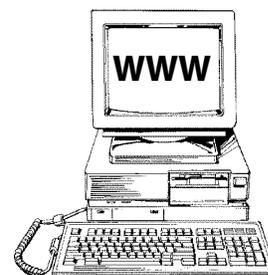
Where and when will the training of trainers occur? CDBS will conduct three trainings: northern, central, and southern California. Participants will attend—with their regional team—the training closest to their local area. All three trainings will be conducted during the winter of 2000.

What will be the benefit to local educational agencies? Each of the 11 Superintendent's regions will have a cadre of parents and professionals who are knowledgeable in the area of communication, and who can share this knowledge with others in the region. This group of regional trainers will be a valuable asset in the development of staff in-service and family trainings. In addition, although the strategies that trainers will share have been designed specifically for children who are deaf-blind, the same strategies have and can be used with many other students, including students with severe and/or multiple disabilities.

How can I get more information? For more information, contact Maurice Belote at CDBS. Maurice can be reached by phone at 800-822-7884, ext. 2 (V/TTY), by email at cdbsemb@sfsu.edu or by mail and fax (see back page for CDBS address and fax number).

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the CDBS website
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**Point your browser to:
www.sfsu.edu/~cadbs**

Position Announcements

EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST

TIME BASE: Full-time (approx. 215 work days per year).
SALARY: Commensurate with education and experience.
Complete benefits package, including California Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).
MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS: Must possess an advanced degree in special education or related field, and valid teaching credential in a related field of special education. Excellent verbal and written communication skills and interpersonal skills required. Must be able to travel extensively throughout California.

Successful experience in:

- Educating individuals who are deaf-blind in integrated school and community environments;
- Developing, conducting, implementing and evaluating personnel development activities;
- Developing and implementing alternative and augmentative systems of communication;
- Developing partnerships with families of individuals who are deaf-blind;
- Assisting systems change for school districts, SELPAs, County Offices of Education, and public and private agencies.

SPECIAL SKILLS AND ABILITIES: In addition to minimum qualifications, experience with the following is strongly preferred: development of multi-media products; identification and coordination of local, regional, and statewide resources; knowledge and demonstration of effective individual and group consultation skills; and demonstrated ability of effective presentation skills.

FAMILY SPECIALIST

TIME BASE: Half-time (approx. 108 work days per year).
SALARY: Commensurate with education and experience.
Complete benefits package, including California Public Employees Retirement System (PERS).
EXPERIENCE: Must be the parent of a child who is deaf-blind.
ENGLISH / SPANISH BILINGUAL APPLICANTS ENCOURAGED TO APPLY.
QUALIFICATIONS: Must be able to communicate clearly and effectively both in writing and verbally. Must be able to address challenging situations with a positive and constructive attitude. Must be able to travel extensively throughout California.

Applicants will be considered based on experience in:

- Managing various family situations involving children who are deaf-blind;
- Developing family-professional partnerships;
- Using alternative and augmentative systems of communication;
- Collaborating with local/regional family and community resources;
- Consulting with other families in person, by telephone, and through correspondence.

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Contact Maurice Belote at 415-405-3579 (V/TTY) or by email: cdbsmb@sfsu.edu

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