

### **The Intervener's Motto: Do With, Not For**

By Gloria Rodriguez-Gil

There is a phrase that describes the way interveners should strive to work with individuals who are deaf-blind. This phrase has come to be called the intervener's motto—"do with, not for." The basic idea behind "do with, not for" is that when supporting an individual who is deaf-blind, the intervener should allow and encourage the individual to be *in charge* of their activities, interactions, explorations, etc. In other words, the individual should be in control of the things they do, even if they need great amounts of support from their intervener.

"Do with, not for" does not mean that the intervener needs to do everything *with* the individual who is deaf-blind. There are things the individual who is deaf-blind does (or will do) independently as his skills increase, and these new skills are often smaller steps within larger activities.

This fact sheet describes how "do with, not for" might look in actual practice. These strategies might need to be adapted to fit specific individuals and/or situations.

#### **Provide clear information so that the individual who is deaf-blind *understands what is happening*:**

1. **Anticipate.** Before asking the individual to move from one activity to another and/or travel to the location of the next activity, tell the person what is going to happen by using the individual's mode of communication, including a calendar system if applicable.
2. **Introduce.** When introducing yourself, another person, an object, or a particular area in the environment, consider the following:
  - a. Bring what you are introducing to the individual or, if this is not possible, bring the individual to what you are introducing.
  - b. Help the individual to use information from all available sensory systems.
  - c. If the individual uses their sense of touch to access the environment, use the hand-under-hand approach (i.e., bring the object or your hand to the individual's hand by bringing it under or next to his hand).
  - d. If you must move the individual's hand to what you are introducing, bring your hand under his and move both hands together to what you are introducing.
  - e. Allow the individual adequate time to perceive and interpret what you have just introduced.
3. **Inform student about changes.** There may be times when unexpected changes happen within a routine, (e.g., a person arrives who wants to interact with the individual who is deaf-blind, the activity is about end, etc.) Let the individual who is deaf-blind know this

by gently and respectfully interrupting what she is doing. This kind of interruption may only be appropriate for specific individuals or situations.

**Provide just the enough support so the individual who is deaf-blind learns that he or she is the person who is *in charge*:**

4. The hand-under-hand approach. Avoid hand-over-hand support; try to first use the hand-under-hand approach. If this isn't possible, try holding the individual's wrist or supporting the individual by the elbow when you need to help the individual to do something.
5. Where to sit or stand. When interacting with an individual who is deaf-blind, sit by their side or in front of them. Sitting from behind gives too much control to the intervener and should be done mainly with very young children or in very special circumstances.
6. Modeling. Show the individual what he needs to do by modeling the activity or relevant steps of the activity.
7. Whole activities. Provide opportunities for the individual to participate in whole activities as much as possible. For example, think of ways you can include the student in all steps of an activity—gathering the materials, arranging them, using them, putting them away, and cleaning up after the activity.
8. "Magic fairy syndrome." Avoid "magic fairy syndrome" (i.e., moving things around for the individual without the individual's awareness). For example, if the individual places an object in a certain place on a table, do not move it for him to a different place. If it needs to be moved, move it *with* him.
9. Accessibility. Provide accessibility by having the individual's materials and personal belongings in a place where she can reach for them when she needs them.
10. Observation. Observe the individual and the context and act accordingly. Although you may know the individual very well and understand the context of the activities, it is important to observe what is happening so you can support the individual when and how she needs the support.
11. Time for reflection. Stop and reflect on what you are doing with the individual in order to identify better ways to support this person. Reflecting may help avoid automatic and repetitive ways of support and/or manipulation of the individual and what she is doing.
12. Modifications in levels of support. As the individual progresses or the situation changes, modify the level of support you provide. The approach of one-on-one support for an individual who is deaf-blind may change throughout the day or week, or over longer periods of time. There are inevitable changes in the individual's interests and needs, health status, physical abilities, and moods. In other words, the individual is changing and so will the things you do *with* the individual.

**Provide *enough time* so that it is possible for the individual who is deaf-blind to respond accordingly:**

13. Slow down. When vision and hearing are limited or unavailable, the speed at which the individual can perceive, understand and process information will be slower. One of the ways you can "do with, not for," is to slow down your support.

14. Pause. When you slow down, you also need to pause so that the individual has time to participate in his experience.
15. Wait for a response. You can also extend your pause by waiting for the individual to respond to you or the situation. The type of response will vary depending on the way the individual expresses himself. These responses may be very subtle and, for this reason, the intervener needs to have good observation skills.
16. Change the planned schedule in the classroom. Sometimes an activity will take longer than expected while, at other times, the individual may complete an activity before the rest of his classmates. Know that this can happen, and when possible try to adapt the schedule to the amount of time the individual needs to participate in and finish an activity. In some situations, you may want to stay within the time frame of the planned scheduled so the individual can be part of the group to which he belongs.

**Provide a *partnership* so that the relationship with the individual who is deaf-blind is not only about the support you provide, but also about the things you do together.**

17. When appropriate, communicate to the individual information about what you are doing together (e.g., naming actions, objects, and people involved in activities; touching the side of her hands to tell her that you see what she is doing or are commenting on what she is doing).
18. When appropriate, join the individual during an activity by doing the same kind of activity but with slightly different materials. During snack time for example, this can be accomplished by having a snack together and talking about what you are doing together, by naming the objects, the differences (e.g., different snacks), what is the same (e.g., both eating a snack), and what is his and what is yours (e.g., his snack, your snack).

California Deaf-Blind Services  
San Francisco State University  
1600 Holloway Avenue  
San Francisco, CA 94132-4158  
(415) 405-7560 VOICE/TTY  
(415) 338-2845 FAX  
[www.cadbs.org](http://www.cadbs.org)