Who’s Who at CDBS

California Deaf-Blind Services says farewell to many of the staff members based at our former southern California office in Lake Forest, but we are pleased to welcome new field staff, support staff, and related personnel affiliated with CDBS.

The CDBS central California region is now served by a new team—Educational Specialist Vivian Perez-Kennedy and Family Specialist Melinda Shipman. Vivian comes to CDBS from the Los Angeles County Office of Education, and Melinda has been active in many organizations and advisory boards in the Sacramento and Yolo counties area. Both Vivian and Melinda are based at the CDBS south office located at California State University, Northridge (CSUN), and can be reached at 818-677-4532.

Sam Morgan, who formerly served central California as an Educational Specialist, is now serving northern California in the same position, and Maurice Belote has moved into the position of Project Coordinator.

CDBS is also pleased to welcome new support staff to the project. Sylvia Freiberg has joined the project as Project Assistant for the office based at CSUN, and Rebecca Randall Jones serves as a part-time Project Assistant in the north office.

Dr. Lori Goetz of San Francisco State University (SFSU) serves as the Project Director for CDBS activities that the California Department of Education has contracted with SFSU to provide. Dr. Goetz is a nationally recognized leader in the field of deaf-blindness, and serves as the Director of the California Research Institute. Dr. June Downing and Dr. Deborah Chen of CSUN serve as the Site Co-Directors for the new CDBS southern office, located on the CSUN campus. Dr. Barbara Franklin serves as the Principal Investigator for the project, and will coordinate the upcoming May 1998 satellite training on the use of FM systems for students who are deaf-blind. Each of these four university professors has served on the CDBS Advisory Committee, and they each bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to CDBS related to individuals who are deaf-blind.

These staff changes and additions present our project with exciting possibilities, and will allow CDBS to move forward to identify innovative approaches to meeting the needs of those we serve.
Positive New Approaches to Service Delivery:
The Child Centered Planning Process

CDBS has made a number of changes to our service delivery model in order to better meet the needs of the individuals we serve—infants, toddlers, children and youth who are deaf-blind. When requests are received for technical assistance and training services, CDBS regional teams will explain these changes and orient those familiar with our services to the new process.

One of the most significant additions to the service delivery model is the introduction of the child centered planning process as an integral part of all technical assistance activities. Technical assistance activities will begin with a planning process developed by CDBS, but individually tailored to meet the unique needs of every individual and situation.

CDBS has been involved in technical assistance activities for a number of years, and we have learned many things along the way. We have learned that technical assistance to schools and families is most successful when everyone on the child’s team joins together to identify common desired outcomes. We never really know what the team’s goals are for a child until we sit down together and talk about them.

The child centered planning process provides a method for bringing people together who know the student well and care about that student’s future. This group of people, under the leadership of a group facilitator, identifies the student’s strengths, preferences, and connections to life communities. The group also explores the student’s history, and the many significant events that have shaped and influenced the student throughout her or his life.

The information gathered by the child centered planning process guides the group in better meeting the child’s needs. The information also guides California Deaf-Blind Services, as we identify how we can best be of service to that child, the family, school, and community. The information that comes from a student centered planning process is also extremely valuable in that it guides the members of the IEP team as they develop goals and objectives that are relevant to the student, and valued by the family and school staff.

Evaluating Child Change

The second addition to the CDBS service delivery model is implementation of a tool to evaluate child change—we want to determine if a child who CDBS serves through project activities has a better life because of the contributions that CDBS provided to that child’s team. CDBS will be asking school staff who receive technical assistance from the project to choose a few days throughout the year to document what kind of activities the child is involved in.

CDBS is most interested in the quality of life of the children we serve. Although defining positive quality of life is a difficult and subjective issue, we have identified some key factors that we think make up a life that any of us would want—for our children, for the students we serve, and even for ourselves. Some of these factors are:
opportunities to choose activities
opportunities to make friends
opportunities to be engaged in active participation throughout the day
interaction with non-disabled peers
access to an appropriate communication system for receptive and expressive use
information on what is about to occur—now and in the future
access to information about what is going on in the environment

This evaluation tool is based on the Valued Outcomes Information System (VOIS), developed by the Neighborhood Living Project, at the University Of Oregon, College of Education. CDBS has adapted the VOIS tool to allow us to gather information specific to students with sensory loss.

Over time, this gathering of information will give CDBS a better idea of our effectiveness. This information will also be shared with state and federal agencies to demonstrate the need for services specifically targeted at meeting the unique needs of children who are deaf-blind.

If you have questions about these changes, contact your CDBS regional team, or Project Coordinator Maurice Belote at (800) 822-7884, ext. 23, voice/TTY.