



201- California Deafblind Census Frequently Asked Questions

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Who should complete the form? Ideally the census form should be completed by the “best service provider,” someone who knows and works closely with the child. However, anyone with access to the child’s file can complete the form, including educators, school health personnel, family members, and/or CDBS staff.

Do I need to sign the form? Yes. If you are completing or confirming a form, please sign or print your name on the bottom of page two. This person can be different from the “best service provider contact” but should be someone we could get in touch with if there is a question about the form.

What if we don’t have any deafblind students in our district/county/SELPA at this time? While it is possible that smaller Local Education Agencies may not have any students with combined hearing and vision problems, statistically we know that there should be about one child who is deafblind for every 4,200 students in a school district. Another guide we use is that there are approximately two students who are deafblind for every 1,000 receiving special education services. CDBS field staff are available to assist you in your identification efforts.

What if I don’t know all the information requested on the form for a particular student? Please refer to the child’s cumulative file if possible and/or the IEP.

Does reporting a child on this census obligate our school program to provide services such as vision, hearing, orientation and mobility? No. Individualized needs and services are determined by the family and educators through the IEP or IFSP process.

Why is the census so important? Funding for specialized services to this population is dependent on having accurate information about how many infants, children and youth in California have both hearing and vision problems. When the state and national legislatures approve funding—and state and federal agencies allocate the funds—census information is used to determine priorities and needs.

What exactly is meant by the term “deafblind”? CDBS recognizes that this is a difficult question for families and educators, and that the federal definition can be confusing. To make it more clear, CDBS uses a functional definition of deafblindness: If an individual (birth through age 21) has combined hearing and vision problems that are significant enough to require considerations (such as specialized adaptations, modifications, and strategies) when presenting information or interacting with the child, then that child is considered eligible to be included on the census and receive services from our project.

What if a child has multiple disabilities that happen to include vision and hearing problems? Most children who are deafblind have additional disabilities, including intellectual disabilities, orthopedic impairments, health impairments, etc. Please complete a census form for all students who have hearing and vision problems, regardless of the presence or absence of additional disabilities.

What if the hearing and/or vision problems are cortical in nature? Please do include children with sensory impairments that are cortical in nature—such as cerebral (or cortical) visual impairment, central auditory processing disorder, and/or auditory neuropathy—on the census. These students usually require adaptations and modifications to their programs in order for them to succeed. In addition, these hearing and vision problems often need to be considered when developing effective, formal communication systems for these individuals. When in doubt, refer to the functional definition of deafblindness above.

What if deafblindness is not the student’s primary disability on her or his IEP? It doesn’t matter which primary disability is identified on the IEP. While California Deafblind Services would like to see all students who have vision and hearing problems identified as deafblind on the IEP (and there are federal regulations regarding this issue), we know that most students who are deafblind are identified under other federal/state primary disability categories, such as “intellectual disability”, “multiple disabilities”, “hearing impairment”, “visual impairment”, etc.

Does a child have to meet my agency’s criteria for vision and/or hearing impairment to be reported on this census? No. Eligibility for vision and/or hearing impairment services varies from district to district, and definitions are interpreted in many different ways. For example, students with only a mild hearing loss and vision loss should be included in the deafblind census count since a combined mild loss of both senses can create an adverse effect on educational success. In addition, students who are deafblind do not have to meet state criteria since this census and the state count are separate entities (the state count being the number of students in California for whom deafblindness is marked on the IEP as their primary disability).

Why is a child’s etiology requested on the census? Knowing a child’s etiology is important for a number of reasons. Maintaining this database allows CDBS staff to make important connections between families. For example, parents of a child with CHARGE syndrome might contact CDBS to ask if there are other parents of children with the same syndrome in their area. The census allows CDBS to make these family-to-family connections. Another important reason to know etiology is that the California census information is combined with data from around the country to determine which causes of deafblindness are on the increase or decrease, if there are geographic clusters of students with similar etiologies, etc.

What are intervener services and why are they now on the census? In educational environments, intervener services are provided by an individual, typically a paraeducator, who has received specialized training in deaf-blindness and the process of intervention. An intervener provides consistent one-to-one support to a student who is deaf-blind (age 3 through 21) throughout the instructional day. This new question has been added to the bottom of page 1 of the census so that state and federal governments can examine the need for intervener-specific training and/or regulation initiatives.

How can I get extra copies of this FAQ, the census guide, and/or the census form? Extra copies of all census materials can be obtained on our website at: <http://www.cadbs.org/census>

What if I have a question that hasn’t been answered here?
Contact Brian Devereux at devereux@sfsu.edu or (415) 405-7561