



SPECIAL EDUCATION RESOURCES

Student Need for an Intervener: A Guided Team Discussion

Note: The term “deafblind” refers to a student with any degree of both vision loss, that cannot be corrected with glasses or contacts, and hearing loss.

Vision and hearing are referred to as our “distance senses”. Distance senses allow individuals to perceive objects or events from a distance. When both of these distance senses are involved, students cannot rely on the other sense to fill in missing information. Thus, any amount of loss in both senses can impact learning and interactions. These students should be considered “deafblind.”

The purpose of this document is to encourage and assist Individualized Education Program (IEP) teams to consider evaluating the need for [intervener](#) services for a deafblind student.

An Intervener is a Related Service Provider:

- An intervener provides a related service that could be added to a deafblind student's IEP to ensure the student's access to the general education environment and peers.
- The intervener supports the existing service delivery model, collaborating with the student’s team to implement the student’s IEP.
- An intervener helps the student access information and navigate their environment and enables communication with staff and peers.
- An intervener’s role can vary depending on the student's disability related needs and should be based on disability-related access needs, not cognition.
- The overall goal of the intervener is to promote the student’s independence or interdependence, understanding, and meaningful engagement throughout the school day.

Determining the Need for An Intervener is a Team Approach:

- When considering the need for an intervener, a teacher of the deaf with expertise in educating students who are deaf or hard of hearing and a teacher of the blind with expertise in educating students with low vision or blindness should be a part of the IEP team discussion.
- In addition, related service providers with knowledge of assessment and

instruction (such as: Orientation & Mobility Specialist, Speech Language Pathologist, Educational Audiologist, Educational Interpreter, Physical Therapist, Occupational Therapist) can also contribute valuable information on the student's unique communication needs.

- Eighty-eight percent of individuals who are deafblind have four or more disabilities, therefore it is important to involve specialists with a variety of perspectives in the IEP team discussion.
- Not every student who is deafblind requires the support of an intervener. The IEP team should carefully assess the student's disability-related needs, determine the necessary supports, and identify who will provide the supports to ensure the student can engage in the school environment and access their education.

Information to Consider when Determining the Need for an Intervener as a Related Service Option

- Auditory and visual environment
- Physical environment
- Visual access to communication, learning and the environment
- Auditory access to communication and learning (including implementation and effectiveness of assistive listening devices and technology)
- Access to communication
- Conceptual development
- Access to social learning (peer interaction)
- Access to the curriculum
- Unique strengths and needs of the student

Types of Supports Provided by an Intervener

- Facilitating access to environmental information
- Providing sensory information
- Supporting communication development
- Fostering relationships and encouraging social connections and participation
- Encouraging exploration
- Developing conceptual understanding
- Promoting independence

If the IEP team determines that a student might benefit from an intervener, the [Determining the Need for an Intervener in Educational Settings](#) document should be used to guide the decision-making process. This guide provides a structured framework for IEP team discussions, supporting informed decision-making by outlining key areas to consider and incorporating insights from a range of service providers. Careful consideration of the need for intervener services can help ensure the student has access to learning, communication, and peer interactions.

For more information on interveners or to access additional resources, visit the [Department of Public Instruction Intervener Webpage](#) or the [WDBTAP Intervener Webpage](#).



WESP-DHH
Wisconsin Deafblind
Technical Assistance Project
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