

The National Intervener Certification E-Portfolio: A Mentor's View

February 2018



For 19 years, the Arizona Deafblind Project provided an in-depth face-to-face Intervener Team Training Program, coordinated by Cindi Robinson. During that time, several hundred professionals and paraprofessionals completed the two-year program. In 2017, their 20th year of training, they decided to transition from the face-to-face training program to the Open Hands Open Access (OHOA) modules.

Knowing the importance of certification for interveners, Cindi recruited individuals with exceptional skills to pursue certification through the National Intervener Certification E-Portfolio (NICE). Lisa Kurtz and Marg McGrath were the second and third interveners in the country to obtain the certification, with Cindi serving as their mentor. She describes a mentor as someone who “supports, counsels, and offers guidance to another person.”

When asked to describe what she did as a mentor, Cindi shared that she “made onsite visits, took photos and videos, and became a sounding board and cheerleader. As their mentor, I did whatever I could to help. We set up quite a few phone meetings to discuss the process and where they were in the development of their portfolios. I answered questions if they had them, and gave feedback to them. I reviewed their portfolio pages and gave suggestions in terms of content and grammar so that their descriptions were as clear as possible.” She also met with each candidate to discuss the Council for Exceptional Children’s intervener competencies, tying them to the documentation products they used as evidence that they could successfully implement the competencies.

Cindi also provided support to interveners during onsite visits made as part of the Arizona Deafblind Project’s Intervener Team Training Program. During the visits, she observed them working, made recommendations, demonstrated and modeled strategies and techniques, and provided support in any way she could (providing written reports and even sending materials, when needed). Cindi says she felt like she “was a

cheerleader who supported and provided guidance to our interveners and offered emotional support as well as ideas and feedback.”

Cindi found that mutual respect and a sense of collaboration between herself and the interveners she mentored, as well as a commitment to the process, were critical components of successful mentoring. She believes the national certification process provides a way to demonstrate knowledge and skills and not only helps interveners reflect on what they do (and how they do it), but also benefits their students and advances intervention as a profession.

Cindi has a few pieces of advice for mentors working with intervener candidates going through the NICE process. First, she suggests that mentors assist candidates in determining how to cluster competencies and link them to pieces of documentation (e.g., videos, photos, work samples) related to their students. “This is one of the most complex parts of the portfolio process.” Another way to be helpful is to “serve as the videographer and photographer for the candidate, so they can focus on their job, and at the same time know that they’ll have critical pieces of documentation that shows them in action.” Finally, she says that mentors must “be committed and willing to put in *a lot* of extra time because this process requires work, work, work, and more work. It’s intense and sometimes repetitive when you have to reread your interveners work over and over. But however, much work you think you’re putting in, know that the intervener is putting in 10-plus times as much. The process is rigorous, so be prepared!”



The contents of this document were developed under a grant from the U.S. Department of Education #H326T130013. However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of The Research Institute, nor the US Department of Education, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government. Project Officer, Jo Ann McCann.