

Deaf-Blind Perspectives

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This issue of *Deaf-Blind Perspectives* is primarily devoted to considerations that surround the reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). We are very fortunate to have a lead article by Judith Heumann, Assistant Secretary, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. We are grateful to her for taking the time to prepare and submit the article. However, the reauthorization of IDEA is not without potential problems for the deaf-blind community. These are highlighted by the reprint of the letter from the National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness and by presentations made at the recent Project Director's meeting, which are reproduced in this issue. People interested in the future of deaf-blind education should read all of these articles carefully.—ED.

Improving Outcomes and the Quality of Life for Children, Youth, and Adults who are Deaf-Blind

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For individuals who are both deaf and blind, having both a visual and auditory impairment represents a unique series of challenges. But we know that with the support of families and friends, the right programs, the right skill development and training, anyone, regardless of the significance of their disability, can achieve their chosen level of independence and dignity. I see my work, and that of my staff in the Department of Education's Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS), as helping to create an environment and a society which will foster this independence in new and positive ways.

We in OSERS administer a number of programs designed to increase positive outcomes for individuals who are deaf and blind. I would like to briefly describe these programs, remembering though that programs in and of themselves are not enough. We need the involvement, commitment, and dedication of family members, service providers, and of course, disabled people themselves for these programs to achieve the success for which they were established.

In this Issue

Improving Outcomes and the Quality of Life for Children, Youth, and Adults who are Deaf-Blind	1
Judith E. Heumann	
The 307.11 Program in the New Millennium	4
Bud Fredericks	
Assessment of Today's 307.11 Program	6
Michael T. Collins	
Now is the Time for Action	10
Dawn Hunter	
Functional Assessment: Understanding and Identifying the Causes of Challenging Behaviors in Students who are Deaf-Blind 14	
James K. Luiselli	
National Coalition on Deaf-Blindness	21

The specific nature of the challenges for meeting the needs of members of this population is reflected in the fact that deaf-blindness is one of the few disability categories with a separate authority under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (Part C, Section 622, Services for Children with Deaf-Blindness Program) and an individual budget of more than \$12.8 million for Fiscal Year 1994. Historically, it is one of the senior discretionary grant programs administered by Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP). It was first established in 1968 as the Centers and Services for Deaf-Blind Children Program in response to the magnitude of the 1964 and 1965 Rubella epidemic and the resulting number of children who were born deaf-blind (U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, 1969). This program served as the primary resource for direct services and personnel training for that period. However, with the full implementation of IDEA (formerly the Education for All Handicapped Children Act), which mandated special education and related services

