

Deaf-Blind Perspectives

Volume 9, Issue 1

Fall 2001

“What’s My Role?” A Comparison of the Responsibilities of Interpreters, Interveners, and Support Service Providers

Susanne Morgan, M.A., C.I., C.T.

Individuals who are deaf-blind access the world differently from their hearing-sighted peers. To ensure meaningful linkages to the environment and equal access to information, a variety of trained personnel and support persons are required. In recent years much attention has been given to the different roles that individuals play in providing this support.

The most familiar type of support is that provided by sign language interpreters. Formal interpreting services were established to meet the needs of deaf individuals. In recent years, these services have been expanded for persons with combined hearing and vision loss. This type of support, however, does not meet all of the unique communication needs of deaf-blind individuals.

Normal everyday life takes place in a variety of settings, including home, school, work, and recreation. For individuals who are deaf-blind, different settings require different types of communication supports. As the developmental, educational, and social needs of deaf-blind children and adults in these settings are better understood, the roles and responsibilities of support professionals evolve. Terms used to describe these roles, include interpreter, intervener, and support service provider (SSP). The following chart attempts to capture the current understanding of these roles and responsibilities.

Interpreter	Intervener	Support Service Provider
Someone who	Someone who	Someone who
Translates information from one mode or language to another (spoken language to sign language and vice versa)	Intercedes between a child and the environment, allowing access to information usually gained through vision and hearing	Provides support that enhances independence (e.g., facilitating communication, providing sighted guidance, and transportation to/from events)
Works with deaf-blind people of all ages	Primarily works with children and young adults	Provides services to deaf-blind youth and adults who are able to make independent decisions
Is a conduit through which information flows	Facilitates learning and the development of skills (e.g., receptive and expressive communication, interactive behavior)	Facilitates interaction between a deaf-blind person and the environment

In This Issue

“What’s My Role?” A Comparison of the Responsibilities of Interpreters, Interveners, and Support Service Providers.	1	Personal Perspectives.	11
A Support Service Provider Program in Utah.	4	National Parent Conference Report.	12
Valued Outcomes for Students Who Are Deaf-Blind and Their Families	5	For Your Library	13
Helping Children Cope With Grief	7	Announcements	14
		Conferences	15

