

# The Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project



In partnership with  
the Pennsylvania Department of Education,  
the Bureau of Special Education, and the  
Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network

## Mission Statement

The mission of The Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project is to improve educational results for children and youth who are deaf-blind.

## Vision Statement

The vision of The Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project is to build the capacity of early intervention services, schools, and families using evidence-based practices for professional development and family engagement.

## What is Deaf-Blindness?

The term “deaf-blindness” is any combination of a vision and hearing loss, requiring specific instructional strategies that address the presence of both sensory impairments. In combination, the impact of these conditions, with or without additional disabilities, is educationally significant.

Many children and youth who are deaf-blind have varying degrees of vision and hearing loss. It is the combination of the vision and hearing loss that compounds the impact on how an individual interacts and learns. Deaf-blindness, especially if present from birth, affects natural opportunities to learn and communicate.

In the United States, deaf-blindness affects more than 10,000 children



between birth and 21 years of age, and has more than 70 known causes. Within each cause lies specific concerns that carry lifelong challenges. Appropriate education must address both the hearing and vision loss, as well as other disabilities that may be present.

**Which children and students should be considered deaf-blind and are, therefore, eligible to obtain educational services from the Deaf-Blind Project?**

- Infants, toddlers, preschoolers, and students up to age 21 with varying degrees and types of both vision and hearing loss both with or without additional disabilities
- Infants, toddlers, pre-schoolers, and students up to age 21 who are diagnosed with a progressive/degenerative syndrome or disease that will result in combined future vision and hearing loss

## Combinations of Vision and Hearing Loss

|                                  | Typical<br>20/20 | Visual<br>Acuity<br><20/200            | Visual<br>Acuity<br>20/200<br>to<br>20/400 | Visual<br>Field Loss<br><20<br>Degrees | Significant<br>Visual<br>Field<br>Loss >20<br>Degrees | Visual<br>Acuity<br>20/400 to<br>20/1000 | Light<br>Perception                  | Totally<br>Blind |
|----------------------------------|------------------|--|--|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| 0-25 dB<br>Normal                |                  |  |  |  |   |  |                                      |                  |
| 26-40 dB<br>Mild                 |                  | Low Vision and<br>Functional Hearing   |  |  | Minimal Vision and<br>Functional Hearing              |  | Blind and<br>Functional Hearing      |                  |
| 41-55 dB<br>Moderate             |                  |  |  |  |   |  |                                      |                  |
| 56-70 dB<br>Moderately<br>Severe |                  | Low Vision and<br>Hard-of-Hearing      |  |  | Minimal Vision and<br>Hard-of-Hearing                 |  | Blind and Hard-of-<br>Hearing        |                  |
| 71-90 dB<br>Severe               |                  | Low Vision and<br>Very Limited Hearing |  |  | Minimal Vision and<br>Very Limited Hearing            |  | Blind<br>and Very Limited<br>Hearing |                  |
| 91+ dB<br>Profound               |                  | Low Vision<br>and Deaf                 |  |  | Minimal Vision<br>and Deaf                            |  | Blind<br>and Deaf                    |                  |

Created by Suzanne Morgan Morrow MA, CI, CT – NYDBC Collaborative – Adapted with permission.

This chart shows examples of some common visual and hearing loss combinations. It is not reflective of every combination of vision and hearing loss.

## How can individuals utilize The Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project?

Through the PaTTAN system, The Deaf-Blind Project offers the following services for professionals who work with children and students who are deaf-blind, as well as their families:

- Consultation (also referred to as technical assistance or TA) via telephone, online, or face-to-face contact
- Trainings and in-services (statewide, online, and at local request)
  - Consultation and trainings may focus on an individual on the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Child Count or deaf-blindness in general
  - Topics may include:
    - Impact of deaf-blindness
    - Communication
    - Educational programming
    - Interveners
    - Secondary transition
    - Assistive technology
    - Resources
    - Family supports
    - Other topics as requested
- PaTTAN Publications



## How does The Deaf-Blind Project serve families?

A key component of success of the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project is family participation and engagement. The Project offers many family involvement activities, such as family-to-family networking, online support, an annual conference, and connection to PaTTAN's other low incidence initiatives.

Family Engagement Coordinators (FEC) play a large role in ensuring the success of the family engagement component. FECs are parents or family members of children and youth who are deaf-blind and are/have been served by the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project. FECs provide the following services:

- Individualized consultation to identify the most relevant information and resources to meet each family's unique needs



- Opportunities for families to connect and support one another
- Information and training on how families can most effectively advocate on behalf of their children

### What is the importance of the Deaf-Blind Child Count?

It is important for each early intervention program and local educational agency (LEA) to participate in the Deaf-Blind Child Count. This annual “count” is conducted **during the month of February**, with all information **verified by the last day of the month**. It is important for Pennsylvania to have an accurate Deaf-Blind Child Count as this information is tied to funding of research, training, and technical assistance for this population of children, not only in the commonwealth, but nationally.

LEAs are responsible for ensuring that every child who is deaf-blind and under their purview is entered into the Child Count. This includes school-age students who are attending Approved Private Schools (APS). This also includes infants and toddlers in an LEA's geographical area who are receiving services from an APS. All APSs must enter their students' data prior to the

## Every “Child Counts”

Pennsylvania is federally required to keep a record of every student in the state through the age of 21 who meets the criteria for deaf-blindness.



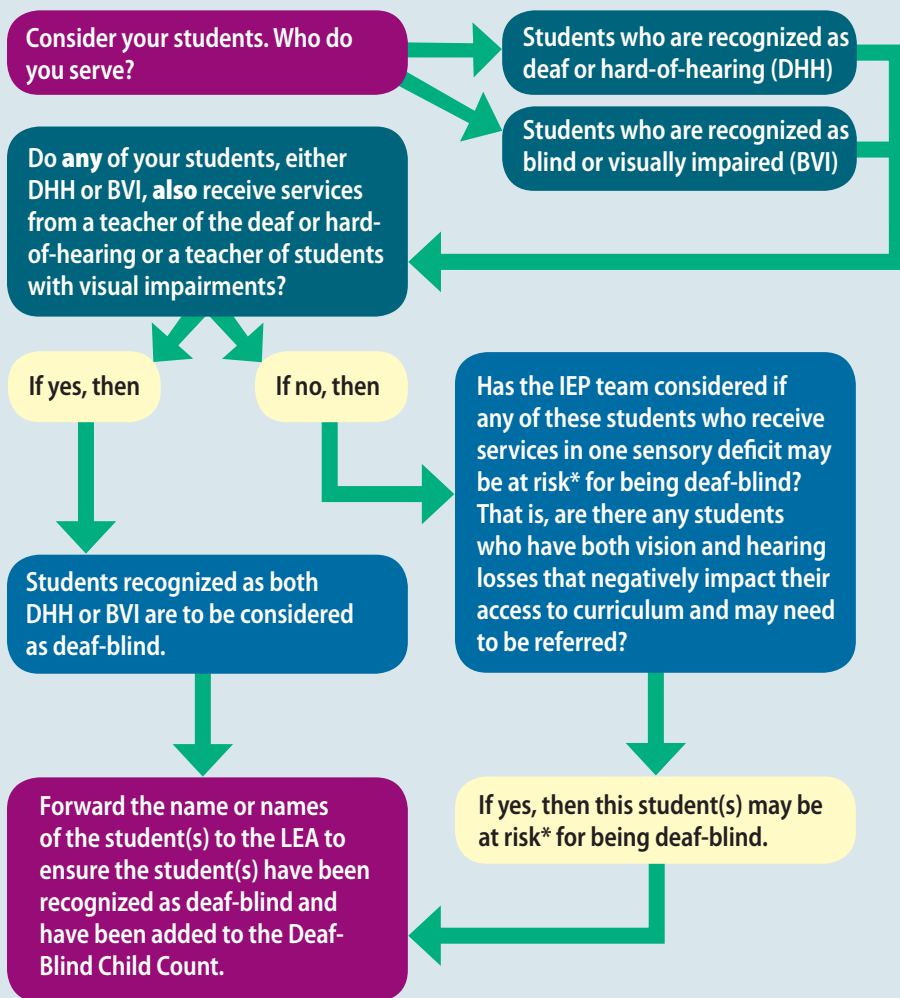
Adapted from the Virginia Project Children and Young Adults With Deaf-Blindness

opening of the Deaf-Blind Child Count for early intervention programs, school districts, and service providers.

LEAs and APSs should review the ***PennLink: Annual Deaf-Blind Child Count***, which is disseminated each year in early January. In this document, they will find explicit directions for successfully completing the Deaf-Blind Child Count for their school. Ensuring that all of these children or students are included on the Deaf-Blind Child Count assists us in providing information, training, and any other technical assistance needed, currently or in the future.

## Who should be referred to The Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project/Child Count?

The purpose of the following flow chart is to illustrate scenarios for which a student has yet to be recognized as deaf-blind, or at risk\* for deaf-blindness, and reported in the Child Count.



\*"at risk" – degenerative/progressive conditions



## How to connect with The Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project

To connect with the Pennsylvania Deaf-Blind Project visit our website at [www.pattan.net](http://www.pattan.net) or contact the appropriate area listed below:

### PaTTAN Regional Offices

- East - (800-441-3215)
- Harrisburg - (800-360-7282)
- Pittsburgh - (800-446-5607)

### Early Intervention

EITA - HBG - (800-360-7282)

### Family Engagement Consultants

East - (800-441-3215)

### DB Project Email

[padbproj@pattankop.net](mailto:padbproj@pattankop.net)

# Commonwealth of Pennsylvania

Tom Wolf, Governor

## Department of Education

Pedro A. Rivera, Secretary

Matthew Stem, Deputy Secretary, Elementary and Secondary Education

Ann Hinkson-Herrmann, Director, Bureau of Special Education



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OSEP Project Advisor: Susan Weigert

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**DEAF-BLIND NETWORK**  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE ACROSS THE NATION

