



IDEA: Categories of Disabilities -- Deaf-Blindness

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) defines **Deaf-Blindness** as:

concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for children with deafness or children with blindness.

What is Deaf-Blindness?

The term describes a person who has some degree of loss in both vision and hearing. The majority of children who are deaf-blind also have additional physical, medical and/or cognitive problems.

Children are considered to be deaf-blind when the combination of their hearing and vision loss causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they require significant and unique adaptations in their educational programs.

What causes Deaf-Blindness?

Some people are deafblind from birth. Others may be born deaf or hard-of-hearing and become blind or visually impaired later in life; or the reverse may be the case. Others are born with both sight and hearing but may lose some or all of these senses as a result of accident or illness.

About 50 percent of the people in the deaf-blind community have Usher Syndrome. This is a genetic condition where a person is born deaf or hard of hearing, or with a normal hearing, and loses his or her vision later in life from retinitis pigmentosa. Other common causes include birth trauma, optic nerve atrophy, cataracts, glaucoma, or diabetic retinopathy.

Resources:

Oklahoma - Oklahoma Deaf-Blind Technical Assistance Project
<http://www.ou.edu/education/edpy/special-education/deaf-blind-project>

National - National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB)
<http://www.nationaldb.org>

This information is not meant to diagnose any child and should not take the place of consultation with a qualified healthcare professional.

Where to call for a free evaluation from the state depends on your child's age:

Under Three (3) Years Old

Contact SoonerStart Early Intervention Services at 405-521-3351

<http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/2013%20Referral%20Guide%20back.pdf>

Three (3) Years Old and Older

Contact your local public school system.

www.ok.gov/sde/state-school-directory

Even if your child is not yet old enough for kindergarten or enrolled in a public school, call your local elementary school and ask to speak with someone who can help you have your child evaluated.

If you're not sure who to contact, call the **Oklahoma Parents Center** toll-free at 877-553-4332 and we can help you!


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Source:

Deaf-Blindness, Oklahoma State Department of Education.

What is Deaf-Blindness, National Center on Deaf-Blindness.

Frequently Asked Questions About Deaf-Blindness, American Association of the Deaf Blind.

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