



Sensory Impairments: Deaf-Blindness

What is Deaf-Blindness?

Deaf-blindness is defined as children who have a degree of vision loss (blind) and a degree of hearing loss (deaf) that is determined by the age of onset, and varies to the extent, progression, and degree of loss.

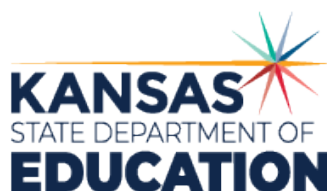
"Deaf-blindness" means the combination of hearing and visual impairments that causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for the hearing impaired or the visually impaired (K.A.R. 91-40-1(o)).

Children who are identified with deaf-blindness are in one disability category, not two. Vision and hearing are the primary senses used to gather information about environments, communication, and learning. Children who have both primary learning senses affected (even with correction), the secondary senses of tactile, kinesthetic, olfactory, proprioceptive, etc. are used to support or supplement information that cannot be obtained with vision losses and hearing losses alone.

Prevalence of Deaf-Blindness

According to the National Deaf-Blind Child Count (2019), 11,081 students' birth-21 were eligible to receive state deaf-blind project services from Part C Early Childhood (birth - 3) or services from Part B (students 3 to 21) as mandated by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004). According to the Kansas Deaf-Blind Census (2019), the number of children

identified with deaf-blindness is 132. The National Deaf-



Blind Census is the first and oldest record of children in the world (nationally and internationally).

Major Causes and Categories of Deaf-Blindness

Rubella (originally referred to as the German measles) was identified as a viral infection that reached epidemic proportions in the 1960s. During this time, rubella was considered as the major causes of deaf-blindness (often referred to as the rubella Bubble); nationally and internationally.

Woman who acquired rubella the during pregnancy (depending on the trimester in which they were infected) often had infants with deaf-blindness (in varying degrees), including, children with multiple disabilities. It was not until the late 1960's and early 1970's when a vaccination for rubella was developed resulting in a dramatic decrease in the number of children who were infected. In 2019, there has been a resurgence of rubella mainly in densely populated areas (e.g., New York, Oregon, Washington, etc.) and with individuals who have not been vaccinated (The Center for Disease Control, 2017; The World Health Organization, 2020).

There are four categories of deaf-blindness listed under the following categories, consisting of (1) hereditary or genetics, (2) prenatal, (3) postnatal, and (4) prematurity. The degree of severity often is based on whether or not the occurrence is congenital or adventitious. The following data pertain to the KS Deaf-Blind Child Count (2019).



Hereditary or Genetics

- Down Syndrome
- CHARGE Syndrome (formerly CHARGE Association)
- Usher Syndrome, Type I, II, or III

Prenatal

- Hydrocephaly
- Microcephaly

Postnatal

- Trauma
- Asphyxia
- Meningitis

Prematurity

The Kansas Deaf-Blind Fund

Kansas is the only state to have a special fund that was appropriated by the KS

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Legislature to offer the local education agencies (LEAs) support for children birth through 21 who have current certification on the KS Deaf-Blind Census. This fund also is applicable for children who have severe intellectual and multiple disabilities. LEA's can request up to \$3,000 per child until the fund has been encumbered. Applications covers three funding categories of; (1) assistive technology (e.g., software, computers, positioning devices, alternative communication systems, etc.), (2) Consultation (e.g., social interactions, communication interventions, assessment, etc.), and (3) Evaluations (e.g., hearing, vision, swallow studies, assistive technology, etc.).

Resources

Kansas Special Education Process Handbook <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=598>

KSDE Eligibility Indicators <https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/SES/misc/iep/EligibilityIndicators.pdf>

KSDE SETS <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=506>

The Kansas Deaf-Blind Census <https://www.kansasdeafblind.org/>

The Kansas Deaf-Blind Fund <https://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Special-Education/Sensory-Losses>

The Kansas Deaf-Blind Project <https://www.kansasdeafblind.org/>

American Association of the Deaf-Blind [AADB] www.aadb.org

Council for Exceptional Children www.cec.sped.org

The Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) <https://www.helenkeller.org/hknc>

HNKC Regional Office-Kansas Beth Jordan, MS Ed, Regional Representative beth.jordan@hknc.org

National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB) www.nfadb.org

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

The World Health Organization <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/rubella>

For more information, contact:

Special Education and Title Services Team
(785) 296-7454
specialeducation@ksde.org



Kansas State Department of Education
900 S.W. Jackson Street, Suite 102
Topeka, Kansas 66612-1212
(785) 296-3201
www.ksde.org

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