



## National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness 2.0

### Family Experiences With Intervener Services

Experiences with intervener services vary considerably from family to family. They encompass whether a child has intervener services, the process of determining a need for those services and obtaining them if appropriate, and perceptions of the usefulness of the services for a particular child. This document summarizes some of the information gathered from NCDB's survey of parents and guardians.

#### ***Some Details About the Parent/Guardian Survey***

- ◆ 119 individuals completed the survey
- ◆ 81% have a child between the ages of 6 and 21
- ◆ 47% first learned about intervener services from their state deaf-blind project (the next most common source—22%—learned about these services from a parent organization)

The children of approximately half of the survey respondents either currently, or used to, have intervener services.

Child's Current Status Related to Interveners	Percent of Respondents
a. My child currently has an intervener	42%
b. My child used to have an intervener	6%
c. My child does not have an intervener but I would like him or her to have one	25%
d. I have attempted to acquire an intervener for my child, but have not been successful	7%
e. My child does not need an intervener	4%
f. My child has a one-on-one paraprofessional aide, but this person has not had training in deaf-blindness	14%
g. Don't know	3%

#### ***Additional Responses for Those Who Reported That Their Child Does Not Have Intervener Services (But They Would Like Him or Her to Have Them)***

Thirty-three percent of parents or guardians who chose "c" or "d" above, responded to this follow-up question, "To what extent do you agree or disagree that the following factors are reasons that your child does not have an intervener?" Below is the percentage who "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with each statement.

Possible Factors Influencing Provision of Intervener Services	Percent of Respondents Who Agreed or Strongly Agreed
My child's school says my child does not need an intervener	44%
My child's school says they cannot pay for an intervener	47%
Educators at my child's school do not understand what an intervener does	64%
My child's school would provide an intervener for my child but say they cannot find a qualified person to take the job	12%

**Relevant Comments:**

- ◆ *I don't believe our school knows what our son's needs really are as a deaf-blind student, so they just scrape by day after day.*
- ◆ *They offer him a person who knows sign language but he is not with [her] all the time. She does not know anything about his visual impairment and doesn't care to be trained.*
- ◆ *We have identified a person who has expressed an interest/commitment to becoming our son's intervener. She does not currently have intervener training, but wants to begin the training as soon as she can. In our state, interveners are practically unheard of, so educating the school district has been the biggest hurdle.*
- ◆ *I really need assistance in my attempts to get an intervener in place for my 6-year-old son so that he, too, can reach his fullest potential.*

**Results for Respondents Who Reported That Their Child Has (or Previously Had) Intervener Services**

The information in this section comes from the parents and guardians who told us that their child currently has an intervener (50 children) or used to have an intervener (7 children). For 82%, provision of an intervener was written into the child's IEP. Although the parents/guardians who took this survey described variation in the level of difficulty they encountered when obtaining intervener services for their child, more than half reported they found the process easy.

Level of Difficulty	Percent of Respondents
Very difficult	15%
Difficult	27%
Easy	40%
Very easy	18%

**Relevant Comments:**

- ◆ *Easy at first, but once the agency realized that the intervener would naturally need to communicate with all members of the team the process became very, very difficult. Around IEP time, I always got sick.*
- ◆ *To get an intervener was not as hard as getting a "trained" intervener. Our school district has been wonderful and supportive; it is just that we could not find a trained intervener to fill the position.*

Respondents were asked about a variety of situations that might occur during interactions with school or school district personnel when intervener services are considered. The responses indicate that many parents/guardians who took the survey had positive interactions related to intervener services, but more than half perceived that the educational personnel they encountered had limited knowledge of deaf-blindness and intervener services.

Interactions With Educational Personnel	Percent of Respondents who Agreed With Statement
School or school district personnel said my child did not need an intervener	15%
School or school district personnel said that training in deaf-blindness was not necessary for paraprofessionals who work with children who are deaf-blind	15%
School or school district personnel said the school could not afford an intervener for my child	17%
My child's school had difficulty finding a qualified person to be an intervener for my child	37%
There were educators and/or administrators at my child's school who understood deaf-blindness	42%
There were educators and/or administrators at my child's school who understood what an intervener does	46%
There were educators and/or administrators at my child's school who were willing to learn about interveners	73%
There were educators and/or administrators who were open to trying an intervener for my child	65%
My state deaf-blind project provided <b>information</b> about interveners to personnel at my child's school or school district	65%
My state deaf-blind project provided <b>training</b> about interveners to personnel at my child's school or school district	58%

The next two tables show the respondents' impressions of their child's level of improvement in communication, learning, and quality of life after obtaining intervener services. The majority indicated there was a great deal of improvement in most areas.

<b>Improvement in Communication Since Having Intervener Services</b>	<b>not at all</b>	<b>somewhat</b>	<b>a lot</b>	<b>don't know</b>
Overall ability to express his or her wants, needs, and feelings	3.7%	33.3%	61.1%	1.9%
Ability to express himself or herself using a method or methods of communication (e.g., objects, pictures, gestures, signs, speech)	5.6%	37.0%	57.4%	0.0%
Ability to understand others' communication (e.g., objects, pictures, gestures, signs, speech)	1.9%	37.0%	61.1%	0.0%

<b>Improvement in Other Areas</b>	<b>not at all</b>	<b>somewhat</b>	<b>a lot</b>	<b>don't know</b>
Participation in classroom activities	0.0%	24.1%	68.5%	7.4%
Awareness of what is going on around him or her in the classroom	3.7%	24.1%	63.0%	9.3%
Exploration of environment	0.0%	31.5%	63.0%	5.6%
Independent movement	3.7%	35.2%	53.7%	7.4%
Relationships with peers	3.8%	30.2%	62.3%	3.8%
Behavior	3.8%	22.6%	69.8%	3.8%
Happiness at school	1.9%	11.1%	83.3%	3.7%
Participation in social activities	3.7%	20.4%	70.4%	5.6%
Involvement in community (e.g., volunteering, a job, participation in community recreational activities)	26.9%	21.2%	32.7%	19.2%

**Relevant Comments:**

- *My son has been able to be integrated in a special classroom in his neighborhood school due to an intervener. Otherwise the district would insist on a special school setting due to his level of disabilities. Without his intervener he would not be able to be maintained in his classroom environment.*
- *Keeping an intervener on my child's IEP has been a fight every year. So far, we have prevailed even though they tried to remove it by substituting an interpreter. Intervener is, however, still on the IEP. I believe an intervener is the difference between success and failure for deaf-blind children.*

The next three tables show respondents ratings of a number of miscellaneous issues or needs that are sometimes associated with intervener services. They include experiences with intervener services in schools, supports related to intervener services, and the importance of parent advocacy.

Experiences with Intervener Services	disagree or strongly disagree	neutral	agree or strongly agree	don't know
My child is still isolated because the intervener is the only person he or she interacts with at school.	83.6%	7.3%	3.6%	5.5%
My child's intervener has not received adequate training.	74.1%	11.1%	9.3%	5.6%

Importance of Additional Supports	not at all important	somewhat important	very important
Getting training for myself that is similar to the training interveners receive, so that I can better support my child at home.	1.9%	31.5%	61.1%
Opportunities to communicate directly with my child's intervener.	1.9%	13.0%	81.5%
Having an intervener at home, in addition to at school.	13.0%	33.3%	48.1%

Importance of Parent Advocacy	Percent of Respondents
Not at all important	7%
Somewhat important	30%
Very important	63%

**Relevant Comments:**

- ◆ *I'm speechless, it is overwhelming at how important the parent advocating is!*
- ◆ *The school knew what my child needed and provided from the beginning. We didn't know what an intervener did.*
- ◆ *I did not even know I needed one (way back in early childhood), so I'm glad it was all done for me.*
- ◆ *Children are now getting interveners without parents having to request - IEP teams are making the suggestions more and more. I have seen the evolution of understanding/acceptance in my state over the past 20 years.*
- ◆ *At different stages my advocacy has been important in keeping the intervener full time, in educating new team members, and in working with the team to learn to work with an intervener.*
- ◆ *D/B children live in a world of snap shots that are all out of order. Nothing makes sense. An intervener arranges those snap shots into an album, in order, and labeled so our children can take their time, process the information and move on to the next page at their own pace. These children will simply not succeed without one. There is not a standard at present to measure the difference an intervener makes, and that may very well be intentional. I have been astonished at the resistance to this service by educators who should know better. We have lost sight of the child in all the bureaucracy.*

For details about the process used to gather this information, go to <http://interveners.nationaldb.org/developmentProcess.php>  
 For details about the Intervener Initiative Surveys, go to [http://www.nationaldb.org/documents/products/survey\\_details.pdf](http://www.nationaldb.org/documents/products/survey_details.pdf)