



## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

Dear Colleague:

As authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) funds State and Multi-State Technical Assistance Projects to Improve Services and Results for Children Who Are Deaf-Blind and the National Technical Assistance and Dissemination Center for Children Who Are Deaf-Blind CFDA 84.326T.

The state deaf-blind projects are funded specifically to increase the use of evidence-based practices with, and improve outcomes for, children who are deaf-blind; and to identify infants, toddlers, children, and youth who are deaf-blind (both with and without additional disabilities).

Your state deaf-blind technical assistance project is part of a larger National Deaf-Blind TA Network working to improve the educational infrastructure for children who are deaf-blind, improve early identification and intervention, facilitate family engagement, support successful transitions, and develop qualified personnel including interveners. This network includes other state deaf-blind projects, the National Center on Deaf-Blindness, the National Family Association for Deaf-Blind, the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation, personnel preparation programs, and youth and adults with deaf-blindness.

The National Center is funded to increase the ability of state and multi-state deaf-blind projects to assist personnel in SEAs, LEAs, LAs, and EIS providers to use evidence-based practices and products to improve outcomes for children who are deaf-blind. As part of that responsibility, the National Center is required to conduct an annual National Child Count of children who are deaf-blind, ensuring that accurate data to inform practice is presented in a way that is useful to States.

Children who are deaf-blind are among the most vulnerable, at-risk students because they have varying degrees of hearing and vision loss that is often complicated by other disabilities or health issues. The 2017 National Child Count of Children and Youth who are Deaf-Blind reports that nearly 90% of children who are Deaf-Blind have additional disabilities. If not specifically identified as deaf-blind, these children and youth risk not receiving the services they require.

We encourage you to work to make sure others in your state and in your school districts are aware of the importance of an accurate identification and registry listing and the importance of the linkage to the technical assistance that state projects have to offer families and service providers. Contact information for your state project can be found through the National Center on Deaf-Blindness website <https://nationaldb.org> under the "Connections" tab, or, by clicking on your state on the home page map.

Thank you for your continued interest in improving results for children with disabilities.

Sincerely,

*Susan Weigert*

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