

Service Roles within a Diverse Texas DeafBlind Community

Deafblind adults want to navigate their environment, participate in the community, make autonomous decisions and live independently, with greater quality of life, safety, and community access.

There is a gap in existing services to the estimated 2,500 deafblind adult Texans who face barriers in addressing basic needs such as shopping, errands, reading mail and safely traveling to and attending public events, including voting, business, and health services. Professional **Support Service Providers (SSPs)** fill the gaps that sign language interpreters and interveners do not cover.

Deafblind people have a wide range of individualized needs, depending on the impact on hearing and vision, onset of deafblindness and communication modes used. Deafblind children receive services while in school, and those with an additional disability can receive lifelong intervener services through a Medicaid waiver program. Language-proficient autonomous deafblind adults living in their own homes are not eligible for these services.

Interpreters provide language access for certain scheduled events, but that alone does not create true access due to mobility and information-gathering barriers. SSPs cover a range of situations that sign language interpreters do not. The chart below highlights the roles of these three professions.

	SSP	Intervener	Interpreter
Works with autonomous deafblind individuals who do not need guardians.	✓		✓
As a primary job duty, describes visual environmental info, including area layout, non-verbal responses, movements and actions of people, to the autonomous deafblind person using his/her preferred mode of communication	✓	✓	
Offers professionally trained human guide services to deafblind individuals.	✓	✓	
Accompanies autonomous deafblind individuals to access basic services such as shopping, business errands and health services.	✓		
Briefly facilitates unscheduled communication needs (eg: cost of groceries, travel delays, inquiring the location for something).	✓	✓	

	SSP	Intervener	Interpreter
Interprets for autonomous deafblind individuals in scheduled community events (eg: religious, social, life events, public presentations, medical settings, appointments and meetings).			✓
Interprets in educational settings for deafblind individuals who use conventional* language.			✓
Provides customized services to deafblind individuals who have developmental delays and/or additional disabilities.		✓	
Facilitates learning and development of concepts, social skills, emotional awareness, sensory efficiency, self-determination, functional communication and independent living.		✓	
Is part of the IEP/ARD team, communicates with all team members, including parents, and provides input for IEP/ARD meetings.		✓	
Are paid for their services.	✓ (Not in Texas)	✓	✓
Keeps all information confidential according to laws, agency standards and ethics.	✓	✓	✓
National certification available for this professional role		✓	✓
Certification, licensure requirement for this professional role			✓

Compiled by Heather Pavey, Nancy Riley, Heather Withrow, and members of the Texas SSP Coalition, March 2019. www.txssp.info

Note: Conventional language includes spoken English, visual or tactile sign language.

References

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