Engage for Change | local

a conversation in Spartanburg, SC

— September 6, 2018 —

NDC
National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes
Overview of the National Deaf Center

The National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes (NDC) is a federally funded project that works toward systemic change to increase the quality of services and access to meaningful postsecondary opportunities for all deaf individuals. Meaningful postsecondary experiences contribute greatly to deaf individuals’ quality of life. However, deaf individuals face a number of misconceptions and challenges that impede their ability to use their skills and talents in postsecondary settings and beyond. We believe that change is possible and that local communities can contribute to that change. We are here to provide support and guidance. E-mail help@nationaldeafcenter.org if you have any questions.

Purpose of Engage for Change | local

For change to be effective, a broad range of stakeholders must be involved in the process. Yet it can be challenging to bridge the gaps between individuals, the community, institutions, and policymakers. NDC is committed to bringing together all parties to create a successful model of how community involvement leads to improved postsecondary outcomes for all deaf individuals.

Conversations led by members of the community explore challenges and solutions on the local level. Discussion questions focus on brainstorming solutions to local-level challenges that community members can implement to strengthen postsecondary opportunities for deaf individuals in their community.

This Report

This report summarizes key solutions and strategies that emerged from the discussions at the event, and it is intended to help the Spartanburg community address important challenges. The report concludes with a list of action items for community members to consider as they connect with their networks to continue this important work.

NDC offers a platform for continued work on Canvas if the Spartanburg community chooses to take that route. Consider forming work groups to implement the strategies proposed at the event, on Canvas, or elsewhere.
Solutions and Strategies

TOP THREE COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

1. Provide mentorship opportunities for community members and students.

2. Host community events to encourage family involvement and support and to promote communication access.

3. Support a variety of postsecondary options for deaf students and adults.

TOP THREE STEPS FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

1. Create a centralized hub for community members and students to access resources and a shared calendar of upcoming events and workshops.

2. Establish a year-round mentorship program to connect students with community members, providing students with opportunities to learn how to navigate postsecondary transitions.

3. Invite families with deaf students and/or other deaf family members to community events to educate them on deaf culture and American Sign Language (ASL).

MORE SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Support Transition to Postsecondary Education

- Motivate students to continue on to higher education settings.
- Increase students’ awareness of and access to academic and financial resources.
- Provide tutoring services in identified low-retention areas, such as English and math.
- Provide opportunities for dual enrollment credit for high school students at local colleges and vocational schools.
- Develop a mentorship program to help deaf students navigate transition to their local college.
- Advocate for accessible GED courses to support students’ effort to complete their education.

Support Transition to Postsecondary Life

- Provide a Life 101 course that supports students’ soft-skill development and training, covering topics such as self-advocacy and life skills.
- Engage students earlier in planning for the future, sharing strategies for accessing services after high school and the range of postsecondary options available to them.
- Provide students with regular opportunities to visit colleges and job sites to increase their awareness of postsecondary options.
- Identify barriers to students’ postsecondary success and work with students to address barriers.
- Provide students with training on how to advocate for and work with access providers (i.e., interpreters).
Support Transition to Employment
- Provide job shadowing, apprenticeship, and co-op opportunities to give students experience in a variety of employment settings.
- Connect students with a variety of deaf professionals, including those who are retired, to share information.
- Invite businesses to speak to students about what they look for in new hires, such as education level and years of experience.
- Provide students with opportunities to gain work experience through employment at schools.
- Provide training on workplace communication skills for job retention and promotion.

Provide Summer Opportunities for Connection and Training
- Provide a vacation camp for families with deaf children to network and learn about resources.
- Collaborate with local and state agencies to provide summertime training for students on life and employment skills.
- Develop a mentorship program to connect students on summer break with deaf professionals to promote awareness about career options.
- Increase opportunities for students to connect with peers through a variety of camps.
- Provide ASL courses and camps to the public to increase communication access and cultural knowledge.
- Increase opportunities for students to take leadership roles during the summer.

Improve Schools’ Role in Postsecondary Transitions
- Collaborate with schools to streamline and improve the individualized education plan (IEP) process for students and parents.
- Provide ASL and communication access training for guidance counselors, teachers, and administrators of local day programs.
- Increase opportunities for students to identify individual postsecondary goals and train them to lead IEP meetings to advocate for reaching those goals.
- Improve college readiness training for students and provide information about necessary paperwork and procedures for applying to colleges.
- Collaborate with schools to host a job fair with deaf-owned and deaf-run businesses included.

Strengthen Family Involvement
- Increase outreach efforts to educate families on available resources to support and engage with their student.
- Include families in community events.
- Provide a community-led deaf culture and sign language workshop for parents to encourage them to have high expectations for their children and accept sign language as a language.
- Connect families with deaf role models to help them understand deaf ability.
- Collaborate with local medical offices to provide information and brochures to parents about deaf culture and communication resources in addition to medical resources.
Develop Connections With Role Models and Mentors

- Offer a mentorship program to connect students and young adults to a diverse pool of deaf role models in academic and life settings.
- Connect experienced, successful students or alumni with younger students to promote positive study habits and social development.
- Invite deaf role models to be guest speakers at schools and community events.

Outreach to Mainstream Programs

- Collaborate with mainstream programs to identify and improve accessibility gaps.
- Host events connecting deaf community members with mainstream students.
- Develop a centralized mainstream program consolidating regional day schools.
- Create a program to educate mainstream students on deaf culture, community, and ASL.
- Encourage access to education in sign language settings for mainstream students.

Community Connections and Awareness

- Reach out to schools, programs, and businesses to increase accessibility to resources and support.
- Connect students with out-of-state peers through video technology to facilitate knowledge and experience sharing.
- Host a literacy group for students and adults to improve reading skills and social opportunities.
- Establish community ASL clubs geared toward members of all ages and professions.
- Create a local deaf center with resources for community members.
- Host monthly and biannual events, such as silent dinners, athletic events, and fairs, to provide opportunities for socialization and networking.
- Establish a monthly story time event on Saturdays with ASL performances of popular books for students and families.
- Create a digital space for networking and sharing resources and upcoming events.
- Create and promote a shared calendar of events.
- Identify and address local transportation issues for community members.
Now What?

Consider taking the following steps to continue working with your local community members.

• Reconnect with your core team and attendees.
• Find out when everyone is available for a follow-up meeting.
• Review the action plan template and think about which strategies you could implement.
• Attend a follow-up meeting to discuss your notes and ideas.
• Form smaller work groups to focus on the action plan you are excited about.
• Think about how you can contribute to the action plan. Small contributions matter!
• Do your part!
• Be ready to support others in your work group or other groups.
• Observe the process and continue to meet with your group to discuss progress.
• If results motivate you, continue to the next goal!

**Note:** In 1 to 3 months after the follow-up meeting, NDC will send you a brief survey to learn more about your progress. We are excited to see the outcomes of your work! We believe that small changes can, and do, make a difference.

Drafting Your Action Plan

A good action plan is clear and specific, incorporates your community’s ideas, and takes advantage of available resources. A clearly articulated and specific action plan ensures that everyone on your team remains focused on the same goal, and it enables you to better evaluate your progress and support your efforts based on what you learn along the way. It can also help you communicate and engage with others.

In articulating your action plan, make sure to address the following.

• **What:** What problem do you want to solve?
• **Why:** Why is it important to solve this problem?
• **Who:** Who will benefit from the solution?
• **How:** How will you implement it?
• **Expected results:** What kind of change do you expect to see?
• **Action steps:** Who will be part of the solution, when, and how?

**Example**

Suppose your local community believes there are not enough internships available for deaf youth. Employers say they are unable to find and hire deaf applicants, and they lack knowledge of how to accommodate deaf interns. Here is an example of an action plan related to building skills for deaf youth and increasing their opportunities in your local community.
• **What:** Limited internship opportunities exist for deaf youth; employers lack knowledge about how to accommodate deaf interns; and deaf youth have little experience with finding internships, interviewing, and self-advocating.

• **Why:** It’s important for employers to become more aware of accommodations so that they can hire deaf applicants, and it’s important for deaf youth to grow more confident in self-advocating so that they can enjoy more social and professional opportunities.

• **Who:** Deaf youth, employers, and community networks

• **How:** Organize a day of training sessions and workshops, including the following:
  - Job coaching workshop for deaf youth
  - Accommodations 101 for employers
  - Testimonial panel for deaf youth, with employers in the audience
  - Networking opportunities

• **Expected results:**
  - Deaf youth will gain hands-on experience in finding internships, going through interviews, and advocating for their accommodation needs.
  - Employers will report increased knowledge of accommodation resources.
  - Networks between deaf individuals, teachers, parents, and employers will strengthen.

• **Action steps:**
  - Find partners for the event (e.g., local association for the deaf, vocational rehabilitation agency, transition specialists, deaf youth, families).
  - Choose a date and a venue (date, point person).
  - Develop an agenda (date, point person).
  - Invite stakeholders (date, point person).
  - Work with presenters (date, point person).

In putting together this series of workshops aimed at increasing internship opportunities in your local area, your goal might be to strengthen local networks, make local employers aware of how to recruit and retain deaf interns, and increase deaf youth’s experience in obtaining and retaining an internship.
# Action Plan Template

**Action Plan for:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>What</strong> <em>(What problem do you want to solve?)</em></th>
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**Expected Results** *(What kind of change do you expect to see?)*

**Action Steps** *(Who will be part of the solution, when, and how?)*


Resources

NDC: www.nationaldeafcenter.org

NDC Listerv: https://utlists.utexas.edu/sympa/info/nationaldeafcenter

NDC Help Desk: help@nationaldeafcenter.org

Office of Special Education Programs: www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html

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