

Engage for Change | **local**

a conversation in **Twin Cities, MN**

— May 4, 2019 —



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.

NDC uses the term *deaf* in an all-encompassing manner to include individuals who identify as Deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, hearing impaired, late deafened, and deafdisabled.

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 Twin Cities 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.

Consider forming workgroups to implement the strategies proposed at the event, connecting on an online platform, or starting an e-mail group.

Solutions and Strategies

TOP SIX RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

1. Identify and address financial and budgetary gaps for accommodations, services, and programs.
2. Raise expectations and attitudes of decision-makers through increasing deaf representation in leadership and professional roles.
3. Strengthen students' transition programming in schools by providing access to academic support services and out-of-school opportunities.
4. Identify intersectional gaps and advocate for stronger systems, policies, and legislation to provide equal opportunities for access.
5. Improve deaf youth self-determination and independent living skills through soft skills and self-advocacy training.
6. Establish a deaf mentorship program and connect students in kindergarten through the postsecondary grades to a variety of deaf mentors and role models.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Advocate for Stronger Systems, Policies, and Legislation

- Identify and address perceived gaps in policies, systems, and resources (i.e., state services, care management, housing, transportation).
- Strengthen statewide advocacy efforts for change through lobbying and increased accountability of decision-makers.
- Advocate for increased transparency and improvement of state services for the deaf.
- Lobby for increased funding for accommodation and state services.
- Hold schools and institutes of higher education increasingly accountable for quality, access, and resources.
- Increase deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing representation in leadership and professional roles.

Strengthen Transition Programming

- Establish a deaf mentor advocate for students' individualized education program (IEP) meetings.
- Improve partnership with and increase support from vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies through accountability, required check-ins, and retention of the same counselor throughout postsecondary transition.
- Include students in IEP planning, meetings, and postsecondary transition goal development and achievement.
- Increase awareness of postsecondary pathways through volunteerism, career days, transition fairs, and internship and job shadowing opportunities.

- Expose students to career goals, employment-seeking strategies, and workplace experiences to increase their employment readiness.
- Host retreats at college campuses to expose students to and increase their knowledge of college experiences.

Engage in System Change Strategies

- Be open to working with people who have a variety of backgrounds and belief systems.
- Dismantle intersectional oppressions by identifying and addressing privileges, favoritism, and ageism within the community.
- Demonstrate community support toward intersectional communities.
- Raise expectations through positive attitudes of community members.
- Work with employers to increase workplace accessibility.

Use Strategic and Long-Range Planning

- Use positive communication skills (e.g., honesty, openness), negotiation, and vision-sharing to bring people together to effect change.
- Collaborate to identify strengths and a common philosophy for change.
- Address funding issues for identified gaps (e.g., disability services, language deprivation, state programs, resources).
- Increase financial support and grants for college students.

Increase Accommodation Services

- Improve accommodation quality and availability within the community, schools, and higher education institutions (i.e., interpreter, Communication Access Real-Time Translation [CART], captioning).
- Increase the number of certified deaf interpreters.
- Require the use of certified interpreters in all educational systems.

Increase Awareness of Sign Language and Deaf Culture

- Host deaf awareness days in communities and schools.
- Provide community training programs on American Sign Language (ASL) and deaf culture.
- Use social media in outreach efforts to share stories about the deaf community.

Improve Access to Academic Programs and Services

- Provide and connect community members and students to mental health services and emotional support resources.
- Increase access to academic support services (i.e., tutoring) for improving math and reading literacy skills.
- Establish and involve students in student groups, clubs, and out-of-school programs (e.g., deaf camps).
- Increase awareness of educational options for students.

Strengthen Community Networking

- Grow and strengthen community connections through attendance and engagement during events.
- Foster connections, engagement, and collaboration with other community groups.
- Identify and strengthen partnerships with allies within the hearing community.
- Develop partnerships with resource providers and agencies to host community events.
- Host a variety of community events (i.e., statewide conference, teen night, forums) to bring people together to share ideas and network.
- Reach out to and include students, marginalized communities, and different generations.

Provide Professional Development

- Provide cultural responsiveness training for VR agencies and clarify their role for students' postsecondary transitions.
- Educate professionals on cultural variation and importance of empathy toward individual differences.
- Improve and strengthen audiologists' connection with the community through required ASL and deaf culture training.
- Educate teachers of the deaf and spread awareness of available resources.
- Train VR agencies and resource providers about deaf culture and sign language.

Build Communities of Support for Deaf Youth in Kindergarten Through Postsecondary Grades

- Connect students with resources for social, moral, and emotional support.
- Expose students early to a variety of deaf role models and youth leaders.
- Encourage and support peer connections across age groups.
- Develop a mentorship program to connect students to mentors and foster experience-sharing and support.
- Establish age-appropriate peer support groups for students to share updates, struggles, and successes.
- Reach out to and include mainstream students in programs.
- Recognize and provide resources and support for marginalized communities (i.e., deafblind, immigrants).

Strengthen Youth Skills

- Expose students to postsecondary access settings to increase knowledge of and strategies for access.
- Educate students on accommodation resources, the Americans with Disabilities Act, and self-advocacy for access rights.
- Strengthen independent living skills through soft skills training and exposure to postsecondary life settings.
- Strengthen self-determination skills through self-advocacy training and education.

Provide Early and Ongoing Outreach to Families

- Establish a parent support group and provide social support.
- Educate parents and family members early about postsecondary options and transitions.
- Reach out to and include parents and family members.
- Provide early language and communication access training for parents of deaf youth from newborn to 3 years old.

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 that not enough internships are available for deaf youth. Employers say they are unable to find and hire deaf applicants, and employers 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: _____

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?)*



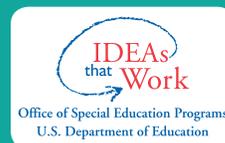
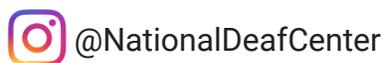
Resources

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/osers/osep/index.html



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