

Providing and Receiving Support Services:

Comprehensive Training for Deaf-Blind Persons and Their Support Service Providers

Jelica Nuccio and Theresa B. Smith

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Edited by Robert I. Roth

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¹ Because this curriculum is focused on the training of non-deaf-blind people to work as SSPs and for deaf-blind people to more effectively use SSPs regardless of their cultural affiliation or primary language, we have chosen to use the lower-case term deaf-blind throughout. (See the chart in the SSP track: Module One, Lesson One.)

² Her preference is to set the letters of her name in lower case.

³ This school operated from 1989 to 2007. The director, Theresa B. Smith, is one of the primary authors of this curriculum.

ASL and the interpreting curriculum. All three continue teaching aspiring interpreters how to communicate effectively with deaf-blind people.

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⁴ Seattle was the first place in the U.S. to regularly provide such service.

including the outreach to isolated deaf-blind people in rural areas of the state. She has guided and supported project staff on every level. Without her knowledge, insights, passion, and skill as well as dedication, this curriculum would not be the major step forward that it is.

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Project Staff

Project Director: Jelica Nuccio, M.P.H.; Executive Director, Deaf-Blind Service Center; Seattle, WA

Curriculum Specialist: Theresa B. Smith, Ph.D.

Project Coordinator: Robert Roth, M.A.

Project Assistant: Terra Edwards

Instructors: Jelica Nuccio, Theresa Smith, and aj granda

SSP and Interpreter Coordinator: Jackie Matthews

Bookkeeper: Waylon Mathern

Clerical Support: Kelly Ballard

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Glossary

Terms of art used in this curriculum are defined below.

American Sign Language (ASL)

ASL is a distinct language that has evolved in the United States and large parts of Canada among culturally Deaf¹ people. The lexicon or vocabulary, and the grammar or syntax of ASL, as well as its discourse, are independent of English or of any spoken language. That is, ASL is not a code for English. It is a fully developed language in its own right.

Assistive-Listening Devices

This is a general or cover term used to refer to various technological devices used to “assist listening” for people with impaired hearing. These could include devices intended for use by an individual such as an infrared signal to a headset, which amplifies sound coming from a microphone or speaker, or devices (such as a “loop system”) intended for an audience that includes several individuals who are hard-of-hearing or hearing impaired.²

Blind, Partially Sighted, or Visually Impaired

The terms partially sighted or visually impaired are broader terms than blind. They imply reduced but not a total loss of vision (significantly less acuity and/or field than normal vision). (See the term impaired below.)

Communication Facilitator

A one-way interpreter who repeats what a VRS operator-interpreter

¹ The terms Deaf and Deaf-Blind are capitalized to reflect this sociolinguistic or cultural affiliation as distinct from the disability of being unable to hear and/or see.

² The terms hard-of-hearing and hearing impaired carry political connotations. See below.

(see below) says. The function is to make the videophone (see below), which is used visually, accessible to a deaf-blind person who communicates tactually, thus making real-time telephone communication possible.

Connected Speech

Connected speech is a term used to distinguish conversation from single-word utterances. The ability to comprehend connected speech is more difficult than understanding single words. It is a term primarily used by people in the hearing sciences of audiology, or speech therapy. (See below, deaf and hard-of-hearing.)

Deaf-Blind Service Center (DBSC)

The Seattle agency that first offered paid SSP services³ and which received the federal grant to develop this curriculum. See the Web site: www.seattledbsc.org for more information on this agency.

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

The medical term deaf refers to a significant hearing loss in which the sense of hearing is not useful for the ordinary purposes of life. The medical term hard-of-hearing identifies a hearing loss significant enough to require support through the use of hearing aids and other assistive-listening devices (See above) along with speech reading (lip-reading) and other uses of the visual context (See below). Cues received from the visual context are necessary in order to understand connected speech (See above). The label deaf is not always medical; it is sometimes socio-linguistic or cultural (See below).

Deaf vs. deaf; Deaf-Blind vs. deaf-blind (On the Use of Capitals and Hyphens)

In the sociolinguistic literature on ASL and/or deaf people, it is commonly accepted practice to distinguish between people who are med-

³ To our knowledge this was the first agency in the country to offer regular, paid SSP services to deaf-blind people.

ically or audilogically deaf (indicated with a lower-case ‘d’), not all of whom are also culturally and ideologically Deaf (indicated with an upper-case ‘D’).⁴ Many deaf-blind people carry over this tradition in capitalizing the term Deaf-Blind. This is because most deaf-blind people are deaf-blind as a result of Usher syndrome (See below), which causes deafness early in life, a factor that may lead them to identify first as members of the Deaf Community, i.e. culturally and ideologically Deaf.⁵ For this reason, many people capitalize the term “Deaf-Blind.”

Others (who are themselves deaf-blind) have promoted the practice of writing the term deafblind as a single word to emphasize the fact that while deaf people use their vision to compensate for a lack of hearing and blind people use their hearing to compensate for a lack of vision, these strategies are not available to deaf-blind people and therefore the impact of deaf-blindness is greater than a sum of its parts.

Because this curriculum is focused on the training of non-deaf-blind people to work as SSPs and for deaf-blind people to more effectively use SSPs regardless of their cultural affiliation or primary language, we have chosen to use the lower-case term deaf-blind throughout. (See the chart in the SSP track: Module One, Lesson One.)

Discourse

Discourse is a very broad term that can superficially be identified as the level of language above the sentence. The study of discourse includes the study of “chunks” of language such as turn taking, asking questions, and so on (structure, style, and content).

In this curriculum, discourse is used to refer primarily to the most effective structure or organization of descriptions (by an SSP) and what might be called “marking” of the discourse (chunk) so that the purpose (e.g., asking a question, giving a warning) is clear.

⁴ In actual practice this distinction is less clear, and the factors involved are more complex than the black-and-white distinction made in the literature would make it seem.

⁵ The question of whether someone is “sufficiently acculturated” to be considered culturally deaf is far beyond the scope of this work.

“Impaired”

“Impaired” in the context of “hearing impaired” or “vision impaired” has the same meaning as in common speech, and unfortunately, the same connotations of one being “damaged.” The original intent of coining the terms hearing/vision impaired was to lessen the stigma attached to “being handicapped” or having a “disability”⁶ by implying the hearing/vision is impaired but not necessarily entirely gone, i.e., the person is not totally blind or deaf but has merely impaired vision/hearing, and the disability ranges from a “mild impairment” to a “severe to profound impairment.” Ironically, however, this very change in terminology, by trying to emphasize its partial nature, assumes and even emphasizes the underlying negative connotation.⁷

Culturally speaking, deaf people reject this term as focusing on the sense of hearing (as impaired), as opposed to the whole person and an entire way of life (primary language and cultural affiliation).⁸ Culturally Deaf people, regardless of their “hearing status” (audiologically deaf or hard-of-hearing) preferred to be identified as Deaf.⁹

Given the focus of this curriculum, and in an effort to be as broad as possible, we have chosen to use ‘deaf-blind people’ or ‘hard-of-hearing or partially-sighted deaf-blind people’ without capitalization throughout. (See the chart in the SSP track, Module One, Lesson One.)

⁶ The term “disability” really has little non-social meaning. What is the relationship between being unable to see clearly and using prostheses to walk? The only connection is a social one to distinguish people who are perceived to vary from a socially established “norm.”

⁷ At about the same time, the “full inclusion” movement adopted the “people first” terminology (i.e., “people with disabilities” versus “disabled people”). Some called this the “people-first” movement.

⁸ All this is not to say deaf people never strategically use the term “hearing impaired.”

⁹ There are parallels with tactics used by other late twentieth century civil rights movements to take back the language and positively assert the very quality being disparaged. The black power movement, for example, reclaimed the word “black” as a positive label rather than a negative one. The women’s movement rejected the euphemism “girl” for a female regardless of age.

Interpreter

A certified¹⁰ professional who is fluent in at least two languages: in this case, English and ASL.¹¹ SSPs sometimes interpret, but the roles of SSP and interpreter are distinct. See the Introduction for a discussion of these distinctions.

Intervenor

A term sometimes used to refer to tasks done by SSPs and/or interpreters. See Chapter One, Introduction to the Curriculum.

Large Print

Large print is a term of art used to identify print that is easy to read. It is contrasted with the term regular print (which is usually 12-point font).

The term large print implies a particular type and size of font and the use of contrasting, low glare paper. The font generally preferred is Arial in at least a 16-point size and bold.¹² It is important the typeface be bold and not simply large. To provide maximum contrast with minimum glare, the most often-used colored paper is a light buff, with bold, black print.

Legally Blind

Functional vision includes both acuity (sharpness) of vision and field (or breadth) of vision. To be legally blind is to have very, very blurry vision, defined as having acuity of less than 20/400¹³ with corrective lenses

¹⁰ Certification is awarded by examination. Currently, this is done by the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID).

¹¹ Because the demand for interpreters significantly outstrips the supply of qualified interpreters, there are many people employed to interpret and who may even identify themselves as such, who are not actually certified.

¹² That is, regular Arial font modified by the bold command, not the font “Arial Bold.”

¹³ What the blind person sees at 20 feet is equivalent to what the person with “normal vision” sees at 400 feet.

(glasses) or to have a very, very narrow range or field of vision of less than 20 degrees¹⁴, sometimes called tunnel vision. Usher syndrome (see below) is the most common cause of deaf-blindness, and the loss of vision is often first identified as tunnel vision. Both very poor acuity and tunnel vision have implications for light perception. That is, a person who is legally, but not totally blind will probably need accommodations vis-à-vis lighting (See Chapter 2: Accommodations).

Sign Language and MCE

Sign language is a cover term to include all the varieties¹⁵ of ASL but does not include invented manual or signed codes representing English. There has been ongoing tension for at least two hundred years between the value of speech on the one hand and that of a natural signed language (such as ASL) on the other, framed in a false dichotomy. Deaf people have continued to value both a natural sign language and access to the wider society that includes but is not limited to the use of a spoken/written language. Within education, the emphasis on English coupled with the recognition that speech reading was impractical for many purposes led to the creation of Manual Codes for English.¹⁶ The use of these codes remains controversial and has been limited primarily to educational settings.¹⁷ Virtually all deaf and deaf-blind adults use sign language or speech and not a manual code for daily communication.

Support Service Provider (SSP)

A trained worker who has appropriate communication skills (typically this means at least a minimum level of fluency in sign language) and the

¹⁴ Normal vision is a range/field of 180 degrees.

¹⁵ American Sign Language varies somewhat by geographic location and other factors (as does spoken language) in what we used to think of as accents or dialects. The problem with these older terms is the implication that there was a ‘standard’ that was somehow more correct.

¹⁶ These are generically identified as “manually coded English” or MCE.

¹⁷ Codes, by their nature, are less efficient than natural languages; their benefit lies elsewhere.

ability to guide a blind person safely as well as skill in providing information about the visual environment. (See Chapter One, Introduction to the Curriculum.)

Tactile and Tactual

Tactile and tactual both refer to the use of the sense of touch. Tactile is an adjective describing an object or activity that is able to be sensed or perceived through touch and is parallel to the terms “visible” and “audible.” Tactual or tactually is an adverb describing the manner in which something is sensed or perceived through touch and is parallel to the terms visual, visually and auditory or auditorily. In practice, the term Tactile ASL is the most common (See below).

TASL: Tactile/Tactual ASL; TSL: Tactile/Tactual Sign Language

TASL is literally Tactile ASL. The majority of people, who become deaf-blind and participate in the Deaf-Blind Community, do so as a result of Usher syndrome (see below).¹⁸ This means that they have been deaf or hard-of-hearing from a young age and that most have a) learned sign language as young children and/or b) been grouped educationally with other children similarly deaf or hard-of-hearing and thus used some visual-gestural form of communication among themselves.

This curriculum assumes both instructors and trainees will be sufficiently familiar with the range of signing used in the deaf community to avoid a treatise on the subject here. The label TASL is used to emphasize the channel or modality (i.e., that the signing is done tactually).

Universal Access

Universal access is a design principle that asks architects and city and program planners to make buildings and programs accessible to all, regardless of disability. It is based on the principle of a barrier-free society in which all citizens can participate fully.

¹⁸ There is not yet accurate data on the incidence and etiologies of deaf-blindness (see Appendix C, *Demographics*).

Usher Syndrome

Usher syndrome is a rare syndrome first identified by a British ophthalmologist Charles Usher. It is an inherited set of traits, including early deafness and gradual blindness, resulting from retinitis pigmentosa. There are three primary clinical types:¹⁹

1. Profoundly deaf at birth with relatively rapid increasing tunnel vision, leading to legal blindness and poor balance.
2. Profoundly deaf or hard-of-hearing at birth with relatively slower increasing tunnel vision, leading eventually to legal blindness and possible loss of balance.
3. Relatively slighter or no hearing loss at or near birth with an even slower increase of tunnel vision, and decrease of useful hearing leading to eventual legal blindness, deafness and possible loss of balance.

The amount of hearing loss and vision loss as well as the rate of onset varies significantly from individual to individual. These three loosely categorized clinical types come from a larger number of genetic mutations.²⁰ For the SSP, the focus is not on the medical aspects but on the best way to communicate. The amount of hearing a child has will most often have led to specific educational approaches which have significant implications for primary language (ASL or English). The remaining amount of hearing a deaf-blind adult has will have significant implications for current preferred channel or modality.

Videophone (VP)

The videophone is an electronic device (computer + camera) that can be used as a telephone. When it is connected through a high-speed Internet connection, the people on either end of this connection can talk vi-

¹⁹ 'Clinical types' refers to effects that are apparent in the doctor's clinic, i.e. without any genetic testing. There are several (many?) genes that result in each clinical type.

²⁰ Medical research into Usher syndrome's cause, cure, and treatment is ongoing; discoveries and clarifications are being made virtually every year.

sually (i.e., through sign language) just as others talk through the telephone (an audio device). (See Video Relay Service below.)

Video Relay Service (VRS)

The video relay service is a system through which deaf signers can make phone calls to non-deaf non-signers using a “relay” or third person who is an interpreter. A deaf caller first dials an operator-interpreter using a videophone. The deaf caller and operator-interpreter can see one another (see the description of a videophone above). The deaf caller then gives the operator-interpreter the number of the non-deaf person they want to call. The operator-interpreter dials that number and proceeds to “relay” (i.e., interpret) the conversation remotely. Alternatively, a non-deaf person can call a deaf person by the reverse process, calling a “voice number” for the operator-interpreter to then call the deaf person through a videophone.

For deaf-blind people unable to see the operator-interpreter on the video screen, a further intervention is necessary. An in-person tactile signer (see ‘Communication Facilitator’ above) relays the information from the operator-interpreter to the deaf-blind caller. The deaf-blind person can, however, sign directly to the VRS operator-interpreter.

Visual Aids

This is a general or cover term used to mean anything that helps a person with limited vision see better or to visually identify things better. Visual aids might include such various things as magnifiers, software that enlarges print and reverses text-background colors, brighter or non-glare lighting, yellow paint strips on curbs.

Visual Context

Use of context in speech reading includes prediction skills based on the setting and timing. For example, the first time a wait staff member approaches your table in a restaurant there is a limited set of phrases she or he will probably use. This use of visual context in speech-reading includes the skill of reading facial expressions, eye gaze, pauses, breathing patterns

and the use of gestures as well as lip movements.

For deaf-blind people, only the general context (we're in a restaurant) and not the visual context is available. The deaf-blind person may know s/he is in a Mexican restaurant but not whether it is an upscale Mexican restaurant or a neighborhood place.²¹ (See Appendix A, *Visual Information*.)

²¹ Of course, there are other cues such as the flooring, presence, or lack of table cloths and so on.

Chapter 1:

Introduction to the Curriculum

Genesis and Purposes of This Curriculum

While technology is helpful, mechanical aids cannot replace human intervention; therefore, the need for SSP service is among the most critical and essential for deaf-blind persons. Members of the AADB, and deaf-blind people in metropolitan areas such as Washington, D.C.; Boston, Mass.; Austin, Texas; Minneapolis, Minn., and San Francisco, Calif.; have all strongly expressed their desire to have paid SSP service in their areas. When deaf-blind people in rural areas learn about the possibility of SSP services, they too eagerly request them.

Seattle has long been a leader in services to deaf-blind people, having begun SSP service in 1986 with the establishment of the Seattle Deaf-Blind Service Center (DBSC). Working together with leaders from other metropolitan areas and the AADB, DBSC won an award from the federal government to devise a curriculum. While this curriculum was designed specifically for Washington state (in both urban and rural areas), we hope that it will be useful to those providing service to deaf-blind people across the country.

The Growing Deaf-Blind Community

The deaf-blind community is growing. (See Appendix C Demograph-

ics) This is largely the result of the mutual and reciprocal factors of:

- increased identity as “deaf-blind”,
- increased access to appropriate services and employment, and
- self-advocacy.

Prior to the 1970s there was no organization of deaf-blind people, no regional camps or retreats at which deaf-blind people could gather, no specialized training of interpreters to work with deaf-blind people (indeed no formal interpreter training at all) and no SSPs. Today, access to information about the causes of deaf-blindness and awareness of others who share the same concerns has led to an increasing number of people adopting the identity of deaf-blind. Through the American Association of the Deaf-Blind, e-mail lists and agency-sponsored retreats, deaf-blind people are able to share their lives and build community. Indeed, there are newly emerging groups of deaf-blind people focused on recreation and excursions. Deaf-blind people who used to become more and more isolated and dependent on family are able to find gainful employment and live independently. Yet, with the exception of e-mail lists, all these connections and opportunities require the use of specially trained interpreters and SSPs.

Philosophy

It is our belief that SSPs provide a foundational service without which deaf-blind people are isolated in the extreme, an isolation that compounds over the years, making it harder and harder to participate in the wider society in a meaningful way even when other services such as skilled interpreters are provided.¹

We believe that mutual respect between deaf-blind people and SSPs, a solid ethical practice, and well-developed skills are all equally important. Without the SSP being grounded in ethics, a deaf-blind person is made

¹ Context provides a great deal of the meaning that we merely reference with language. Without SSP service, deaf-blind people miss the daily access to information that gradually becomes background or contextual information most of us have, information with which we later understand what is said in the moment. Eventually this gap becomes so great that even an aware interpreter cannot fill it in.

even more vulnerable rather than less so. Without skills, an SSP cannot properly do the job, and without respect for the deaf-blind person, the relationship is demeaning regardless of the technical skill of the SSP.² If the deaf-blind person shows genuine respect for the SSP, the SSP will feel even more motivated and want to do his or her best and continue learning how to improve.

While the service is foundational, it is not easy or simple. To be a good SSP takes training and experience. It is also a uniquely intimate relationship. Like that of any professional (accountant, attorney), the SSP learns personal and private details about the life of the deaf-blind person. Like any long-time companion, the deaf-blind person and SSP spend many hours together, in close proximity and physical contact, and negotiating details of being together to the satisfaction of both. Because of this intimacy, a strong sense of ethics and a clear definition of appropriate boundaries are crucial.

Boundaries

Thus, training in how to serve as an SSP, or how to use an SSP, is valuable³ and should include self-awareness and clear communication (and assertiveness) on the part of both SSPs and deaf-blind people. In the interviews we did of SSPs and deaf-blind people, “boundaries” was the most common challenge mentioned. SSPs sometimes over-identify with the deaf-blind person with whom they are working and/or are tempted to “take over” actions and responsibilities. Deaf-blind people, on the other hand, are sometimes overwhelmed with their unmet needs and tempted to ask SSPs to go beyond their roles. Knowing about these inclinations and talking about them as part of the relationship development will help both deaf-blind people and SSPs protect against overstepped boundaries and ethical violations. It is for this reason we did not stop with skills in guiding and communicating, or even skills in relaying visual information,

² Ethics, respect, and manners are covered in this curriculum.

³ The deaf-blind person can learn to resist this “taking-over” and how to ask for the kind of information they want.

but included the topics of assertiveness and self-awareness. We hope this curriculum can move the service provided by SSPs beyond simply an efficient means of grocery shopping toward truly being a bridge to the wider society through a healthy working relationship. (See Appendix D Guidelines for a Quality SSP Program)

Roles

Most people today are familiar with the term **interpreter** and how sign language or American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters work with those who use their services.⁴ The term **support service provider** is less familiar, and there is still quite a bit of confusion over the difference between **interpreters**, support service providers, **intervenors**, and **communication facilitators**. To begin, we offer definition and clarification of these roles and their respective differences.

Support Service Provider: A History of the Term

As deaf-blind people began to gather and meet regularly in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it became clear that they needed more support for these meetings than can be provided by interpreters alone. Conventions or conferences of the American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) specifically needed drivers, sighted guides, and people to help carry luggage, convert print to large print and Braille format, etc. In the early years, there were two major categories of people who attended these meetings: deaf-blind people who registered and paid their own expenses and others who attended without charge but who worked as interpreters, drivers, and so on. They were labeled as “delegates” or “volunteers.”

However, interpreters who were volunteering had worked hard to establish themselves as a profession and wanted to make it clear that they

⁴ The term “sign language” refers to the modality or channel, (e.g., signing). American Sign Language (ASL) refers to the language itself. Not all deaf people use ASL as their primary language; hence, the modality is sometimes used to sign other than ASL, although certified interpreters are (or should be) able to do both and are usually referred to as “ASL interpreters.”

were volunteering professional services, not simply carrying luggage or cafeteria trays. In other words, their work was “pro-bono,” not “volunteering” in the usual sense. Yet, these were the two major categories⁵, and the AADB officers did not want to be too specific; they needed one cover term. Consequently, then-President Roderick Macdonald coined the term **support service provider** (SSP), and it has proven so useful that it has gained wide acceptance throughout the U.S.

However, given the term’s vagueness in describing a kind of non-participant worker, it should not be surprising that it soon took on different connotations in different parts of the country. The Deaf-Blind Service Center in Seattle used it to distinguish between paid work and volunteer work. They established categories of support, some of which would be paid-for and some for which they would recruit unpaid volunteers (often the same people or other people with the same skills). Here as with the AADB, the major distinction was financial or budgetary except that in this case SSPs were paid, not volunteer. In other parts of the country, the term was broadly applied to identify anyone working with a deaf-blind person; thus, certified interpreters working with deaf-blind people might be called “SSPs” to distinguish them from the platform interpreters at meetings⁶.

The term **SSP** has evolved to mean one who is trained in communication (typically ASL) and sighted-guide skills who accompanies a deaf-blind person, providing visual information and casual interpreting in

- the performance of personal responsibilities or errands (e.g., shopping, banking),
- social situations (e.g., times between meetings or appointments), and
- during travel.

⁵ The AADB subsequently developed two other categories: “observers,” who came to participate but who were not deaf-blind and therefore did not have full voting rights but who paid full price; and “family members,” who similarly came to participate (not volunteer to work) and who paid a reduced fee.

⁶ Unfortunately, this was often an attempt to reduce their status and pay them less.

Intervenor⁷

Canada, meanwhile, had come up with its own term—**intervenor**—that had its own genesis and referents. In Canada there were a significant number of school-aged children who were congenitally deaf or hard-of-hearing and blind or visually impaired. These children often had multiple disabilities (including limited cognitive function and medical fragility). Whether or not deaf-blind children have additional cognitive or health impairments, the lack of vision and hearing puts congenitally deaf-blind children (or those deaf-blind at a very young age) at a significant disadvantage vis-à-vis learning language and accessing information about their world. To distinguish between interpreters who provided only linguistic access for deaf children, the term **intervenor** was used to indicate the added sense of mediating the visual, intellectual, and social environments as well as the auditory environment. This practice was adopted in several states in the U.S.

Communication Facilitator

Finally, a newer, fourth role has emerged, that of **communication facilitator**. It is an adjunct to the role of interpreter for video relay calls made by deaf people through the video relay service (VRS).⁸ Given a visual impairment, deaf-blind people are often unable to use the VRS service, so a person fluent in sign language sits with the deaf-blind person to copy what the interpreter (on the video screen) says. The deaf-blind person is then able to sign his or her own part of the message and can be seen by the on-screen interpreter, who then relays the message to the person on the other end of the line. The person copying the signs of the interpreter is called a **communication facilitator** (CF). The major differences between what the CF does and what the interpreter does are:

⁷ Some American groups have adopted the spelling 'intervener' replacing the 'o' with 'e'.

⁸ Deaf people use a videophone to call an interpreter at a video relay service (VRS) center who then relays the call – dials the number of a non-signing hearing person and interprets what is said between the two. Alternatively, of course, a non-signing hearing person can call the service to reach a deaf person. Thus the people working in these centers are both interpreters (fluent in ASL and English/Spanish) and operators of specialized telephonic-video equipment.

- The interpreting is only one-way (visual sign to tactual sign).⁹
- It is exclusively for telephonic communication.

Interpreters, SSPs, intervenors, and CFs are variations on a theme. In each case, the provider forms a link between the deaf-blind person and the environment.

SSP, the Role: A Matter of Emphasis

These roles diverge based on the specific *emphasis* of each, while some overlap has remained. For **interpreters**, the emphasis is on translating or interpreting *language*. Interpreters must first and foremost be experts in the two (or more) languages being used and how to interpret what is being said in a particular transaction. Interpreters for deaf-blind people definitely include some visual information about the gestures, facial expressions, and so on of others in the room, as this, too, informs meaning, but the focus is on the verbal exchange.

For **intervenors**, the emphasis is on acting as an *aide* to the congenitally deaf-blind person. As such, the intervenor may give direction and instruction to the deaf-blind person as well as use modified forms of communication, which may include sign language.

The term “volunteer” is still sometimes used in its traditional sense: those working *without pay* because they support the objectives of the institution for which they are giving their time. Here the emphasis is, of course, on pay vs. no pay. As such, it is a cover term *not identifying the tasks performed*.

The skills of **SSPs** include fluency in the use of sign language (whether or not the deaf-blind people with whom they are working use sign language as their primary means of communication) so that they can help connect deaf-blind people to their environment, which includes other people. The focus of the SSP is on providing *visual information* about the people and situations in which they are working. Just as the interpreter includes visual information in their interpretation, the SSP provides

⁹ Thus both deaf and hearing CFs are used.

auditory information (including casual interpreting) in the context of providing visual information. For example, at the grocery store, the SSP will interpret what the clerks and deaf-blind customers say to one another, but the emphasis is on relaying product information and description. In other settings, the descriptions will focus on décor, setting, ambiance, and descriptions of people, including clothing style, visual displays of personality, and mood. (See Appendix B “Sample SSP Job Description”)

SSPs, Access and Technology

Technological advances proceed rapidly and no set description within a curriculum could remain current. While technology is very helpful, it cannot replace human intervention (SSPs and interpreters).

Print/Text

Access to print is sometimes made possible for deaf-blind people who are partially sighted. Various devices have been made or used to convert regular print to large print (e.g., a bulky unit called a “closed-circuit TV”). This is useful for reading mail, and newspapers as well as books. Software has been created to convert electronic print to a more readable display. This might include enlarging the font, converting the color of font and background, and keystroke commands to replace the use of a mouse.

While software has been created to convert electronic text¹⁰ to hard copy Braille, this software and especially the hardware (printer) remain very expensive. The system is extremely cumbersome, requiring a sighted person to first modify the original print text electronically, the printer takes up much more space than an ordinary printer, and it breaks down more often than a regular printer. A ‘refreshable Braille display’ on the keyboard itself is a more versatile and less cumbersome way for a Braille reader to access electronic text.¹¹ As more and more paper text is converted to electronic text (e.g., e-mail and e-books) the written word becomes more

¹⁰ The text must first be formatted appropriately for Braille.

¹¹ Again, the cost is prohibitive for most deaf-blind people and durability is a problem.

and more accessible to Braille readers. This conversion is not yet complete, however, and access to print media remains, to some extent, a task accomplished via an SSP.

Real Time Communication

Face to face communication with non-signers or real time communication telephonically is a huge, remaining challenge for people who are fully deaf and blind. While partially sighted deaf people can write and read notes with members of the public and access a videophone call directly, these are not yet mediated effectively by technology for a fully deaf-blind person.

Additionally, *context* is as much a part of real-time communication as the language being spoken/signed. Imagine shopping for clothes. Beyond simply locating and purchasing items it is important to be able to evaluate them. What is the price? Where are the sales? What is in style? What are my choices? It is this visual information (context) that is provided by SSPs.¹²

Orientation and Mobility

Moving safely and surely about the environment, especially navigating traffic, remains another major challenge. Various signalers have been made to convert audio signals to tactile ones (e.g., vibrating pagers, alarms, and doorbells) and this includes traffic signals installed on posts, in *a few* parts of *some* cities, to signal changes in direction of traffic flow. It does not, of course, account for drivers turning corners or other unseen hazards. There has been some experimentation with hand-held devices that send a variable vibrating signal to indicate the distance of objects at which the device is pointed, such as buildings, trees, other pedestrians, or loading boxes left on the sidewalk but these remain crude in their application. Some hand-held GPS (or global positioning system) devices can be made to have a Braille display, but again cost, availability, and durability

¹² Visual context is equally important for meetings: Who is looking at their watch, taking notes or making eye contact with whom? Specially trained interpreters provide this visual information.

remain huge challenges. Special public transport, with door-to-door service, is available in most cities. Scheduling and availability for this transport is challenging. It is not always possible to carry all one's groceries for the week in one trip. Again, SSPs remain the most effective and efficient "mobility device" for errands.

Incidental Information

As we go about our day to day business we gather thousands of pieces of information almost unconsciously. We see old buildings coming down and new ones going up; we see new businesses replace old ones; we see hairstyles change and the population of the city grow. These may not mean much at the time but they provide context with which to understand we do hear about. When we hear about the cost over-run on the new transportation project we have a mental image of its scale, having passed the huge hole dug to build its station, a hole filled with water. When a friend tells us about increasing problems with obesity we can refer to the size of people we have seen lately and the number of fast food places around town.

While we gain some of this information from conversations with companions the visual information provided by SSPs plays a key role. Companions do not give us a 'blow by blow' description of what they saw as they drove into town or what they saw as they walked the aisle of the department store while there to buy a new coat but this is exactly the kind of incidental information we gather with our vision and this is what the SSP conveys.

Recreation and Pastimes

Many of the activities we do for relaxation, exercise or socializing with friends are 'accessible' but not really designed for deaf-blind people; they've been adapted and thus may not be as much fun. Scrabble pieces, for example, can be marked with Braille but part of playing the game is being able to scan the board for opportunities. Swimming is a pleasure for blind and sighted people alike but going to the pool alone, negotiating the dressing room and crowds might be a challenge for a deaf-blind person without an SSP. Beyond the logistics, going to the pool and home without

seeing who is there, interactions of other people, changes in the décor (or additional diving boards etc.) is a qualitatively different experience. SSPs make the experience much richer.

Aesthetics

Finally, aesthetics (access to beauty) is reduced as the senses fade. SSPs can inform the deaf-blind person of nearby opportunities for pleasant sensory experiences whether they be touch, smell or taste. SSPs make direct experience much more available as the role of providing visual information lets the deaf-blind person know what is there in a way technology can not yet do.

SSP Adaptability of the Duties

Using good judgment, we can determine the proper boundaries of each role and the necessary duties, given the situation. For an all-day meeting, for example, it might make sense financially and practically to hire a team of interpreters who are also skilled SSPs, their duties shifting with the meeting or conference schedule. Other times it might make sense to hire a team of interpreters and a team of SSPs so the interpreters get a break and the SSPs, who provide visual information will be fresh—for example, at a week-long conference at which many participants are also signers. Similarly, the age and interests of the deaf-blind individual and his or her background experiences and other social supports will all influence the tasks of the SSP.

This SSP role will vary somewhat by situation. What is the goal of the deaf-blind person in using an SSP? Is the goal to get as much shopping accomplished in the limited time allowed, or is the goal to learn more about what this store offers? Is the goal on a trip to get there and through the airport as quickly and efficiently as possible or to do some people-watching along the way? For a social event with signers is the goal to meet new people or observe the interactions of others? The deaf-blind person (as this curriculum teaches) can make priorities clear to the SSP. The environmental (visual) information supplied will vary accordingly.

Finally, of course, there is great variation among deaf-blind people in terms of amount and usefulness of the vision and hearing they have (both of which might fluctuate day-to-day and change over time). The information from the SSP can augment this perception making what is seen and/or heard more meaningful.

Variation within the Deaf-Blind Community and Between Communities and Use of this Curriculum

Anyone who has spent time in the national Deaf-Blind Community or a moderate to large size community knows that deaf-blind people may have very little in common with one another. Individuals vary in education, experience, tastes and personalities as well as the amount of vision/hearing they have. This variation posed a challenge to us in writing this curriculum. We pilot tested these lessons in three different places (a small town in rural Washington, a medium sized city and the metropolitan city of Seattle). Participants in each varied considerably and not always in ways that we predicted. This resulted in two tracks in the Deaf-Blind modules but this does not really resolve the issue. Instructors using this curriculum will have to take it as a basis and add to it, adjust it and modify it to suit the community and participants you have.

Each of the Lessons is designed to be roughly two to three hours long. How long they actually take will depend on how many participants you have, their experience, the amount of discussion they want, and so on. As you the instructor use this curriculum, we hope you will develop alternative and enrichment exercises to be able to fine tune its use. We too hope to receive further funding to develop materials to be used with this curriculum and to incorporate feedback we receive from you as you use it.

Chapter 2:

Accommodations

Accommodations are for deaf-blind instructors, deaf-blind trainees, and for SSPs with partial vision or hearing. It is helpful to start thinking of accommodations right at the beginning when thinking of choosing a site and scheduling the training.

Accessing Communication

Language choice: Choosing which language to use is a political choice as well as a practical one. Think carefully about which language you will use for instruction and why. Simply going with the majority of participants is not a good enough reason. Hearing people are virtually always in the majority and thus privileged to have their primary language used in virtually all situations.

Sign language is the better choice even if some participants might miss some information. Information can always be presented in writing through handouts and displayed on PowerPoint slides. The goal of the early lessons is skill development, skill at communicating with deaf-blind people. Presenting in ASL will provide much-needed practice in receptive understanding, which SSPs need. Indeed, one of our consultants reported that many deaf-blind individuals with progressive vision and/or hearing loss have reported the value of working with signing SSPs as a means to ease their adjustment to the changes.

Using ASL will also model respect for the deaf-blind community and therefore a valuing of sign language—the common modality of the Community.

Assistive Listening Devices: Find out how participants prefer to listen; this may mean providing assistive listening devices (ALDs) with sign-to-voice interpreters or tactile interpreters.

Interpreters and SSPs: Hiring an interpreter coordinator is recommended to ensure clear communication during the training. The deaf-blind participants should have SSPs to support them during breaks. This is particularly important to provide the opportunity for all participants to feel comfortable in the new space and to become acquainted with one another during the trainings.

Timing

Ask participants to arrive 20 to 30 minutes early so chairs can be moved, sightlines adjusted, and so on, and training can still begin on time. People should expect that this would take a minimum of 30 minutes. Often everyone arrives on time, but it takes at least 15 minutes to settle down while accommodations such as lighting, reflection, sightlines, etc., are worked out and the training is delayed.

Training Location and Environment

The training should be offered in a place that is accessible by bus, has parking, and is safe for pedestrian traffic. This makes it comfortable for all. It is helpful if it is also within walking distance to the site chosen for the lab portion of the training.

Classroom Location

The site chosen for instruction needs to be large enough to allow seating in a semi-circle so that all participants can see one another as well as the instructor. Chairs should be spaced far enough apart to allow for comfortable use of sign language without bumping into one another or un-

comfortably craning one's neck to see the person closest. As a rule of thumb, the room should be at least 30 feet by 30 feet for 10 participants. When counting participants to determine the needed space, remember to include interpreters in the count. If equipment were used, such as a computer and projector, there would again need to be enough room for the equipment itself but also for participants to see around it.

Given the need for various exercises, the location should have moveable chairs so trainees can reconfigure them, and for guiding practice there should be doors, hallways, stairs with handrails, short steps (with no handrails), ramps, and various surfaces (carpeted, tile/wood, paved, gravel, grass). Ideally, the location would also have revolving doors, elevators, and drinking fountains for practice, but this is not necessary. For all the reasons given above, college campuses (large classrooms, stairs, and walkways, etc.) are often a good choice.

There should also be an area for refreshments (see below). This can simply be a table or two set up on the side of the room. In general, the space should be comfortable. Consider temperature, comfort of sitting in these chairs for extended periods, lighting, and acoustics, all so that participants are able to focus on learning.

Lighting

The room, hallways, stairs, and so on should be lit well enough to read by. Natural light is best, but windows should not cause glare, which would interfere with seeing one another (i.e., looking at those seated near or in front of the windows makes it hard to see them). Window light may also make it difficult to see the projected PowerPoint presentations, DVDs, etc.

Bright light focused downward on paper or directly at the speaker is often helpful for people with partial vision. The important thing is to not have light shining (or reflecting) into the deaf-blind person's eyes. Ask at the beginning of training to make sure everyone is comfortable and make adjustments before proceeding.

The background behind speakers should be dark and non-reflective. One relatively inexpensive solution is dark-colored sheets hung on the wall

or over tall, large objects such as movable chalkboards. White or light-colored table tops are too reflective and may, along with windows, also need to be covered with dark sheets.

Pathways

Participants should be able to easily walk from their seats to the door and to refreshments without obstacles such as empty chairs or cords in the way. If there are cords crossing any pathways or close, they should be taped down with a bright-colored tape. Even better, they should be taped along a wall so as to be out of the way.

Lab Location

The purpose of the lab (as described in the units) is to give participants an opportunity to apply what they have learned. Thus for Modules One and Two, participants should have an opportunity to practice the role, communication (including a description of the visual environment as useful), guiding, and use of touch. For Module Three, the lab sites should provide an opportunity to describe the visual environment “as interesting” (in addition to review skills learned in Modules One and Two).

Appropriate sites for labs for Modules One and Two include shopping malls, a large variety store, a supermarket, and restaurants providing meals at a modest cost. The criteria include many objects for sale representing both a variety and things of interest to the general public (as opposed to specialty shops such as antique stores, recreation equipment, or drug stores).

Refreshments and Snacks

Healthy snacks are recommended throughout the day. It is best to avoid too much sugar, as the rush of energy they give does not last. Fruits, vegetables, nuts, and cheese are examples of snacks that provide energy and promote sustained attention throughout the day. Beyond this, some participants may have diabetes or other health reasons for avoiding processed sugar.

Chapter 3:

Curriculum Overview

Modules

The curriculum is designed in two tracks: one for SSPs and one for deaf-blind people. Each track is then divided into modules. There are three modules for SSPs and two modules for deaf-blind people. Each module is then divided into lessons. There are more modules for SSPs than for deaf-blind people, and more lessons in each module for SSPs than for deaf-blind people.

Variations

The initial modules for deaf-blind people are further divided into Tracks A and B. These (A and B) are different versions of the same lessons, with slightly different emphases. For example, some deaf-blind people who have been very isolated for a number of years might find it more difficult to participate in group discussions and or follow more complex rules of games (e.g., Pictionary™ in the tactile form), so we have modified that exercise in Track A. Conversely, some deaf-blind people who retain some useful vision may be more averse to touch, so we have expanded the section discussing the value of touch even while vision remains in Track B. Dif-

| | SSP Track | Deaf-Blind Track A | Deaf-Blind Track B |
|---|---|---|---|
| Module One | Communication and Guiding, Power Relations, and Manners | SSP Role and Using Touch and Vision/Visual Information Together | The Deaf-Blind Community, Using Touch and the Role of an SSP |
| Module Two | The Role, Ethics, Discourse, and Internship | Theory of Visual Information, Assertiveness, and Clear Communication with the SSP | Theory of Visual Information, Assertiveness, and Clear Communication with the SSP |
| Module Three | Visual Information, Theory of Visual Information, and Healthy Communication | XXX | XXX |
| Additional Modules Yet to be Developed | XXX | XXX | XXX |

ferent groups/individuals will have different starting places in terms of background knowledge and social sophistication, including assertiveness, self-advocacy, and so on.

We also found variation in terms of the experience SSP trainees had. Some had met only one deaf-blind person before; whereas, others had met many deaf-blind people but only within a limited setting. Some deaf-blind people had attended numerous gatherings of deaf-blind people and had deaf-blind friends with whom they regularly socialized; whereas, others were much more isolated, having only met a few other deaf-blind people or attended a single community event. Thus the level of readiness to learn skills will not be consistent from city to town or from region to region. For these reasons, instructors will have to tailor the training to the people who attend.

We have chosen the modules format in hopes that it provides for maximum flexibility on the part of trainers. We recognize that this curriculum

may be adopted within colleges and universities having interpreter training programs, within service agencies such as the “Deaf-Blind Service Center,” within work places such as various “Lighthouses” or even within various state vocational rehabilitation departments so counselors can learn how to guide, convey visual information, how to hire SSPs to support their clients, and so on. We also recognize that there is variation throughout the country in terms of formal organizations and the composition and style of various local or regional communities. For all these reasons, we have tried to make the curriculum as flexible as possible, one strategy being the use of specialized tracks.

Combining Trainings

The tracks for SSPs and deaf-blind people are designed to be complementary and to be offered at the same time and place (but in different rooms) so that both sets of trainees (those learning how to be SSPs and those learning how to best use SSPs) can work together during specific parts of the training. This will become clear as you see the various lessons (labs).

Using trainee SSPs to work with trainee deaf-blind people has its advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, it is easier logistically. On the other hand, both the deaf-blind trainees and SSPs are trying to learn parallel and complementary skills at the same time. While the instructors can give feedback and instruction to each and all, this system lacks modeling. A better but more complicated approach would be to use experienced, skilled SSPs to work with deaf-blind trainees and experienced, skilled deaf-blind people to work with SSP trainees.

Qualifications for Instructors

There is an age-old debate within academic institutions between formal credentials (degrees) and informal credentials, sometimes called “street cred.” While there are a few deaf-blind individuals who qualify in both instances, the temptation is often to discount the importance of having a deaf-blind instructor with street cred in favor of non-deaf-blind in-

structors with formal credentials. Administrators will be concerned with budget considerations (paying for the support of interpreters and SSPs during the training) as well as formal credentials, and even more so when two deaf-blind instructors are hired. The value, however, of witnessing and learning from deaf-blind instructors is more than worth the flexibility and expense.

Even subtler than the issue of skill and first-hand knowledge is the factor of deaf-blind instructors being in a position of authority. Part of the “un-written” curriculum here is for SSPs and deaf-blind people to learn to view deaf-blind people as authorities regarding what makes a good SSP.

All this is not, however, meant to encourage tokenism. Instructors should be capable as teachers. If there are no deaf-blind people in your area who have the necessary organizational and communication skills to be teachers, then employ them as panel members, as people who can speak authoritatively regarding tactile communication or as employers of SSPs.

Instructors (both deaf-blind and non-deaf-blind) should also have experience being involved in the deaf-blind community. By this we mean regular participation in a group(s) of deaf-blind people in a variety of settings such as meetings, picnics, camps, and holiday parties. Experience socializing in a deaf-blind community as opposed to simply having worked as an SSP is where one can learn the manners and mores of the deaf-blind community in addition to skills. Experience socializing in a deaf-blind community as opposed to simply having worked as an SSP is also important so the instructor(s) understand that to be deaf-blind does not mean just one thing but means many things within the context of different lives.¹

Not all deaf-blind instructors or experienced SSPs are members of such a community, and this does limit their understanding and expertise. It is human nature to think everyone is like us (if we are ourselves deaf-blind)

¹ It is very different, for example, to be a deaf-blind person who grew up hard-of-hearing and learned Sign Language late in life as vision failed, whose primary language is English, and who lives alone than to be a deaf-blind person who grew up deaf, whose primary language is ASL, and who shares a house with two other deaf people. It is different to be thirty years old and legally deaf-blind than to be seventy years old and have been deaf-blind for more than thirty years.

or to attribute personal characteristics of the one or few deaf-blind people we know to all deaf-blind people (if we only know one or a few deaf-blind people). Having a wide base of experience will therefore give the instructor(s) a better foundation upon which to base answers to trainee questions as well as a more open and flexible sense of what is valid.

A related qualification is fluency in sign language (and its various forms in the deaf-blind community). First, fluency facilitates socializing in a deaf-blind community, as mentioned above, an asset for any SSP. Second, many of the trainees will themselves be deaf (deaf SSP trainees and deaf-blind trainees for that track). Instructors should be able to communicate directly with signing trainees. Indeed, all trainees should themselves be fluent enough to use sign language conversationally. While not all deaf-blind people use sign language themselves, many, if not most, deaf-blind people find it is useful even when they are hard-of-hearing and can usually understand modified speech.² This also makes an SSP qualified to work with deaf-blind people who do use sign language or ASL as their primary language. Finally, the SSPs, too, should be encouraged to learn by socializing in the deaf-blind community both locally and nationally.

Summary

In order to teach this curriculum satisfactorily, the instructional team must have the following qualifications:

- Experience and training as a teacher (preparing lessons, performing evaluations, giving feedback, etc.)
- Be themselves deaf-blind³
- Have experience as an SSP⁴

² This is because as a *deaf-blind* person, they often have difficulty hearing in noisy areas such as restaurants and many public places. Rather than be isolated, they can switch to using sign (tactual or visual).

³ This qualification (being deaf-blind) and the next (experience as an SSP) need not be qualifications of each individual but rather of the team.

⁴ While experience as a professional in another role (e.g., interpreter) is valuable, it is important that at least one of the instructors be an experienced SSP specifically.

- Be fluent signers
- Have at least five years of involvement in a deaf-blind community⁵

Instructional Team

It is recommended that the curriculum be taught by a team of instructors, a team including experienced deaf-blind people and experienced SSPs. This is because the instructors must have (collectively) a great deal of skill and experience, and it is more likely to find all the needed skills in a group or team than in a single individual. As stated above, we have attempted to develop this curriculum to be flexible so that teachers can use the pieces that fit their own situation.⁶ Furthermore, we have found that one-on-one instruction within a group setting is often the most effective for deaf-blind people. That is, hold class with a small group of deaf-blind trainees and a team of instructors who can tailor the instruction to each individual, but then have opportunities for these individuals to discuss with one another what they have been learning. The class can also participate in lab sessions as a group. In this way, deaf-blind trainees benefit from both individual instruction and group support.

Spiraling or Scaffolding within the Curriculum

While the modules are discrete, they are related to one another in a logical, step-by-step manner. The first modules are the foundation for the later modules, and the later lessons within a module build on the earlier lessons. In adapting the curriculum, instructors should review the whole to see which parts are needed and begin with the lowest module applicable.

⁵ There are very few deaf-blind communities in the U.S., perhaps fewer than a dozen.

⁶ It is clear that deaf-blind people from upstate New York, downtown Los Angeles, and the Cajun Triangle of Louisiana will vary greatly in the kinds and amount of family support, local public resources, and experience using interpreters and SSPs. Similarly, potential SSPs will vary greatly from location to location in their professional support, training opportunities, and access to a deaf-blind community.

Instructional Context

The size of the group, the group composition, and the location for the training will all affect the success of the instruction.

Group Size and Composition

The size of the group admitted for SSP training should be determined by the number of deaf-blind people available to participate in the lab portions of the training (see Units).

The size of the group admitted for deaf-blind (DB) training should be determined by the number of trainers available as 1:1 training is a significant part of the DB track, and by the number of SSPs available to participate in the lab portions of the training. The ratio of SSPs to DB trainees should be 2:1 (two SSP trainees for each one DB person). In some instances, 3:1 may be acceptable if there is concern that some of the SSPs may drop out before applying their training or other extenuating circumstances.

Participants

The curriculum is for participants who are adults, able to make their own (independent) decisions. SSP trainees should be fluent in sign language.⁷

The instructional team should decide whether and how to screen participants in the training. If there are forms to fill out, the team should decide when this would best be done and how to handle the forms (whether they are to be mailed in or handed in, and to whom, etc.).

Reference and Materials

The single reference used consistently throughout this curriculum is *Guidelines: Practical Tips for Working and Socializing with Deaf-Blind People*

⁷ There may be exceptions. It makes it easier to train in a group if all are fluent in Sign Language, and this can be the language of instruction. It is also useful for SSPs to be fluent in Sign Language even if they are matched with non-signing (hard-of-hearing) deaf-blind people as they may want to learn some signs or talk with a deaf person whose primary language is Sign Language.

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Regular classroom materials are not always mentioned (e.g., note paper and pens). It is assumed instructors and trainees will come prepared with these.

There are several exercises for SSPs that involve using blindfolds or goggles. Blindfolds can be easily made by cutting up a sheet of fleece from a fabric store. They are comfortable, easy to store, easy to wash, and durable. To avoid contagious eye diseases or just to be sanitary, trainees should keep their own blindfold throughout a single training, and it should be washed between lessons.

Some trainees will probably wear glasses, and this is sometimes a problem for practicing with goggles. Without glasses, the trainee may not be able to see. Instructors should think about this question before beginning the lesson.

There are numerous references to PowerPoint presentations or handouts that are not yet commercially (or otherwise) available. They are, therefore, instructor created.

Support Service Provider Track

These SSP modules may be adapted to fit the primary language and culture of the participants or trainees, their level of experience vis-à-vis the topic, the site, length, and depth of the training, the communication (language, modality, and techniques) used by the deaf-blind people to be served, and finally, the composition and size of the local community and its resources.

This track has three modules:

- Module One: Beginner
- Module Two: Advanced Beginner
- Module Three: Intermediate

Module One is the beginning and focuses on learning how to com-

municate with deaf-blind people and how to act as sighted guides. Participants at this level will be introduced to the variety of communication modes and techniques used by deaf-blind people and to the role of SSP. Trainees at this level may have little experience with deaf-blind people and few frameworks with which to understand the material. Alternatively, they may have fairly extensive experience but with only one or two deaf-blind people and hence not be familiar with the range and variety among deaf-blind people and how this affects communication, guiding, or other SSP services and requisite skills. Where there are few local resources, it is highly recommended the trainees take the opportunity to visit areas with large deaf-blind communities and/or regional or national gatherings such as regional retreats or conferences of the American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB) along with this training.

Module Two is for participants who have some experience socializing with deaf-blind people, are able to communicate and guide at a basic level (and perhaps have had some previous formal training in this area), and are familiar with the role of SSP. This module moves on to focus on professional practice, ethics, and tactics for providing visual information. It introduces the concept of power dynamics within the SSP-client relationship.

Module Three is for experienced SSPs. Here the emphasis is on the skill of providing visual information with a more sophisticated understanding of the theory of “visual information” and the linguistic resources of ASL and English as well as a deepening awareness of power relations, personal and professional boundaries, and the skill of assertiveness.

Module One: Beginner

- 1.0 Overview
- 1.1 Orientation and Introduction
- 1.2 Communication
- 1.3 Lab: Welcoming Reception and Games
- 1.4 Power Relations
- 1.5 Communication II and Guiding

- 1.6 Tactile Communication
- 1.7 Community Reception and Games

Module Two: Advanced Beginner

It is expected that trainees will be doing an internship in SSP work during this training and be supervised by trainers collaborating with this classroom training. See *Module 2.8: Internship: Exit Interview* below.

- 2.0 Overview
- 2.1 SSP Role and System
- 2.2 SSP Role and Ethics
- 2.3 Internship
- 2.4 Visual-Tactual Connection to the Environment
- 2.5 Lab: Visual-Tactual Shopping Center
- 2.6 Assertiveness I
- 2.7 Figure-Ground Distinctions in Discourse
- 2.8 Internship: Exit Interview

Module Three: Intermediate

It is expected that trainees will be providing SSP work during this training either regularly as employees of an agency or incidentally as members of the deaf-blind community.

- 3.0 Overview
- 3.1 Vision, Attention, and Meaning
- 3.2 Establishing Perspectives
- 3.3 Seeing People
- 3.4 People Watching
- 3.5 Metaphor and Metonymy
- 3.6 Conversational Discourse
- 3.7 Assertiveness II

Deaf-Blind Participant Track

These Deaf-Blind modules may have to be adapted to fit the primary language and culture of the participants or trainees, their comfort with using touch to communicate, their level of experience vis-à-vis the topic of SSPs, the site, length, and depth of the training, the primary source of SSPs (the deaf community, a local community college ASL or interpreter training program, etc.) and finally, the composition and size of the local community and its resources.

This track has two modules:

- Module One: Touch and Communication
- Module Two: SSPs, the Service and System

Module One A is for participants who are able to communicate effectively and have some positive association with other deaf-blind people but are new to working with an SSP. Both deaf-blind people and SSPs in rural areas will need support from a local champion and a community. The focus for Module One A is the role of an SSP, providing visual information, and how this is significantly different from a family helper role or that of a buddy.

Module One B is focused on learning more communication techniques and strategies, specifically, the power of sign language and the power of touch. Participants at this level will be introduced to the variety of communication modes and techniques used by deaf-blind people, as well as local resources. Trainees at this level may have little experience with a deaf-blind community and feel they must conform or try their best to fit into the non-deaf-blind world.

Both Modules One A and One B introduce the role of SSPs, ethics, and boundaries.

Module Two is for participants who are experienced using SSPs. Here the emphasis is on: 1) the techniques of using touch together with information from an SSP (and visual information) and 2) the skill of eliciting particular kinds of visual information from SSPs. Participants are given a more sophisticated understanding of the theory of “visual information.” Module Two, beyond a discussion of ethics, leads to a deepening aware-

ness of power relations and the skills of assertiveness and negotiation.

Module One: Deaf-Blind Beginner

- 1.0 Overview
- 1.1A Welcoming Reception
- 1.2A SSP Role and Touch
- 1.3A Ethics and Assertiveness
- 1.1B “Ice Breaker” Activity
- 1.2B Touch as Information
- 1.3B Ethics and Assertiveness
- 1.4 Lab: Lunch
- 1.5 Lab: Shopping
- 1.6 Lab: Restaurant
- 1.7 Review and Preparation for Internship
- 1.8 Exit Interview and Reception

Module Two: Deaf-Blind Advanced Beginner

- 1.0 Overview
- 2.1 Analyzing Touch and Vision
- 2.2 Lab: The Environment
- 2.3 Lab: People Watching
- 2.4 Communication

Templates

Module Template

Each module is arranged in the format listed below. Each begins with an overview, prerequisites, and qualifications for participants (including instructors), objectives, and preparation.

At the beginning of each of the five modules, there is an overview including the following information.

- A. Module Description (including number of sessions and topic outline)
- B. Prerequisites for Participants
- C. Instructor Qualifications
- D. Module Objectives

Lesson Template (for each lesson)

Each lesson is arranged in the format listed below. It begins with an overview, objectives, and activities, followed by key questions and preparation, including a list of necessary materials, handouts, student evaluation, and follow up (assignments or homework).

- A. Lesson Number, Title, and Overview

This helps orient the instructor as to where this lesson appears within the larger curriculum

- B. Goals (including identification of emphasis: knowledge, skills, and attitude/values)
- C. References

The reference text for the entire curriculum is *Guidelines: Practical Tips for Working and Socializing with Deaf-Blind People* by Theresa B. Smith, Ph.D., published by Sign Media Inc., Silver Spring, Md. This book can be ordered from Sign Media in either large print or Braille.

There are also two older videotapes made to go with the first edition of this text. Old-fashioned as the look of them is, the tapes offer both a model of tactual and close visual signing and reception of signing as well as sighted-guide techniques. They also demonstrate interaction as an SSP (grocery shopping) and eating out at a restaurant.

- D. Activities with Specific Objectives
- E. Key Questions

These are to promote participant's use of critical thinking. The consistent use of key questions throughout the lessons develops the habit so that participants will begin to spontaneously ask this type of question of themselves as they progress.

F. Lesson Preparation (instructor and student)

G. Materials

H. Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

This curriculum is intended to be as flexible as possible, (i.e., for use within an institution of higher learning such as an ASL college program, and within agencies serving deaf-blind people such as those providing or wishing to provide SSP services).

I. Follow-Up: Independent Assignments or Intersession Homework

J. Other Considerations

These are considerations outside the immediate lesson that may affect the lesson or how the instructor approaches the lesson.

Chapter 4

SSP Modules

1.0 SSP Module One

SSP Beginner: Overview

Description

Module One is entry-level training. It provides a crash course for the new SSP. The person completing this training has the knowledge and skills to communicate visual information effectively when there is little or no confusion/distraction and little or no time pressure and the task is both relatively simple and familiar to the SSP and to the DB person.

Examples of post-Module One assignments include: accompanying a deaf-blind person to do grocery shopping, getting a haircut, having lunch at a café or diner. Here the SSP would be able to communicate the general layout of the store or restaurant, describe the overall sense of the place (e.g., diner vs. fine dining), and read a menu (see discourse below).

Prerequisites for Trainees

Trainees should be fluent in conversational level sign language.

Instructor Qualifications

Instructors for this module should be a team of one (or more) deaf-blind instructor(s) who knows about and uses SSPs, and one experienced SSP. Instructors should have teaching skills, be active and respected members of the deaf-blind community and have attended at least one AADB conference and preferably other statewide events as well.

The instructional team should be able to communicate effectively with all trainees whether directly or through an interpreter.¹ The instructor(s) should have a working understanding of the theory of visual information such as distinctions between information that is useful/interesting, between being passive or active, and comfort in the role of “employer” (i.e., assertively giving direction to SSPs).

If there are no qualified deaf-blind instructors available, then it is even more important that the non-DB teacher have the respect of local deaf-blind community members. This instructor should make sure to host panels of deaf-blind people, show quality video material, invite deaf-blind guest speakers to the class, and otherwise endeavor to have the deaf-blind perspective well represented.

Module Objectives

At the successful completion of this module, trainee SSPs will be able to:

- converse effectively with deaf-blind people having tunnel vision
- converse effectively with deaf-blind people tactually
- safely guide a deaf-blind person through the ordinary buildings, pathways, and obstacles found in urban areas
- explain the role of SSP and how it is distinct from that of friend, advocate, or interpreter

¹ We are speaking here of the communication skill (beyond language) to quickly recognize the best approach to meet the trainee “where he is at” linguistically, culturally, educationally, and experientially to explain the concepts in this lesson. It is expected that deaf-blind trainees will vary greatly in such background.

At the successful completion of this module, trainee SSPs will know the following principles of the role:

- a. Safety first
- b. Deaf-blind person makes all decisions as to what to do, where to go, when, etc., within the assignment
- c. Decisions by the deaf-blind person are based on information, some of which must be received through the SSP
- d. SSPs participate in an activity only to the extent necessary for the DB person to participate (e.g., tandem bike-riding vs. playing tactile-Pictionary but do not decide where to bike or compete to win the game)
- e. SSPs should make sure deaf-blind people are not left out while SSPs chat, shop, or take care of their own chores or interests
- f. SSPs should maintain a respect for the privacy of all DB persons
- g. Self-knowledge is an ongoing process

1.1 SSP Module One

Lesson One: Orientation and Introduction

All faculty present (each team should ideally have at least two deaf-blind faculty members)

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to introduce the lives and communication of people we call deaf-blind. It includes an introduction to communication modes and techniques, the deaf-blind community and its major resources, and Usher syndrome and its effect on communication.

This lesson focuses equally on knowledge, skill, and attitude.

Goals: Participants will learn the basics for interacting with deaf-blind people.

1. Trainees will learn basic communication skills with a variety of deaf-blind people.
2. Trainees will learn the major causes of deaf-blindness, specifically Usher syndrome and its relationship to communication and guiding.
3. Trainees will understand the connection between vision/hearing status and modes of communication.
4. Trainees will become comfortable using tactile² communication.

Activities

1. Introduction to Faculty and Students

Lead instructor (deaf-blind) introduces him or herself to the students,

² The word tactile means able to be felt or perceived by touch. It is parallel to the term visible. The word tactual means having the quality of (using) touch and is parallel to the term visual.

and relates the purpose of the training. Instructors ask those new to one another to introduce themselves. (It is very common for most of the participants to be known to each other. Introductions at this time are simple: name and where from.) Instructors then move around the room to greet each trainee personally, touching hands and having trainees identify themselves by name, where they are from, and why they are taking the training (see Appendix E, *Touch, Culture, and Power*).

Objectives:

- Establish mode of touch as primary
- Establish direct connection with deaf-blind instructors who do not see trainees
- Engage the students directly with the process as well as the topics

2. Instructor then gives an overview of the day's lesson

- Agency or institutions sponsoring the training, including the agency who manages SSP services (if different from that sponsoring the training); other agencies, organizations composed of deaf-blind people (e.g., the Washington State Deaf-Blind Citizens and the American Association of the Deaf-Blind) or working with deaf-blind people in a highly visible way (e.g., the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind).
- Communication and deaf-blind people.
- Introduction to major causes of deaf-blindness and implications for communication and guiding.

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview
- Encourage distinctions (more detailed knowledge of local and national resources and the role of each, how they are different and how they fit together)

3. Provide background – Who is deaf-blind?

Who are the deaf-blind people in your community? Instructor describes the community of deaf-blind people (Coppersmith Matrix)

| | Hearing | Hard-of-Hearing | Deaf |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Sighted | Not Deaf-Blind | Not Deaf-Blind | Not Deaf-Blind |
| Partially Sighted | Not Deaf-Blind | DEAF-BLIND | DEAF-BLIND |
| Blind | Not Deaf-Blind | DEAF-BLIND | DEAF-BLIND |

Describe the most common causes of deaf-blindness (Usher syndrome) and implications for communication and mobility of the two/ three basic types. This section of the module should be adjusted to fit the local population (i.e., if most deaf-blind people in the local area are deaf-blind from Usher I, then the training should focus on communicating with people who were born deaf and lose their vision, but if most deaf-blind people in the local area are deaf-blind from Usher II or III, then the training should focus on communicating with people who were born hard-of-hearing or hearing and then become blind.)³

A. Usher Syndrome Type I

1. Modified ASL⁴
2. Tactile ASL

³ Further research is ongoing, so instructors should make sure to check on any updates regarding, for example, descriptions of the clinical types of Usher.

⁴ Modified ASL includes signing in a small space near the neck, slower fingerspelling, and so on to accommodate limited or poor vision.

B. Usher Syndrome Types II and III

1. Modified spoken English
2. Modified signed English-influenced-ASL

Instructor emphasizes:

1. Low/dim light blindness and glare
2. Loss of contrast
3. Blurry vision or poor acuity, loss of color
4. Restricted field or tunnel vision

It is useful at this point to have participants look through a rolled-up piece of paper to form a “tunnel,” watching the instructor sign, while walking around the room, moving closer to each participant in turn.

Objectives:

- Satisfy curiosity and give trainees a sense of the population of deaf-blind people (similar to the history section of a guidebook for first-time visitors to a new area) as a grounding experience
- Establish key concepts: a) the connection between educational background and language, and b) partial sight/vision
- Preparation for the skills portion of the curriculum below (communication and guiding).

4. Having Tunnel Vision

The following activities simulate communicating with sign language or participating in activities while having tunnel vision.

A. Conversation

Instructor distributes simulation goggles (see other considerations below) and earplugs to participants for the following exercises. The group is divided into conversation groups of at least four people and no more than eight people each. Half the participants are asked to put on the goggles while the other half do not. They are then asked to have a conversation for 15 to 20 minutes. Suggested topics: the upcoming election, recent changes at the deaf center, current controversial issues, etc. The topic should be

rich enough and emotionally engaging enough to stimulate a sustained discussion but not so controversial or personal as to create tension in the group. After 15 to 20 minutes, regroup and discuss the experience.

B. Ball Toss

Participants retain the goggles and the other half are asked to put them on while the first half removes them. Participants stand in a circle (again, at least four people and no more than eight). The instructor then gives each group a soft, rubber, squishy ball (preferably one that bounces) and instructs them to play catch, tossing the ball back and forth randomly to one another. After the 15-20 minutes, regroup and discuss the experience.

Instructor reviews the day's major points.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Send out pre-training assignments to the students with clear instructions

Student Preparation

Read Chapters 1-4 in reference text (Introduction, Daily Life, Themes and Manners)

List of Materials

- a. DVD showing guiding
- b. media (PowerPoint)
- c. blindfolds
- d. goggles
- e. earplugs

Handouts

- handout on local and national resources

- handout on Usher I, II, III⁵
- handout on other common causes of deaf-blindness
- PowerPoint presentation on types of hearing/vision loss, including visual demonstrations of tunnel vision (different degrees), loss of contrast, loss of acuity, loss of light perception

Key Questions⁶

- What is the relationship between being deaf-blind and being isolated?
- What is the relationship between isolation and information?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent assignments or homework

Read Chapters 7 through 10 in the text (see above) on Communication, Tactile Communication, Tactile Language, and Modifying Tactile Language respectively. Read Chapter 6 on Guiding.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Instructor-prepared quiz on the material

Other Considerations

1. Goggles: Simulation goggles can be purchased or made by the instructor (See Appendix F, *Simulation Goggle Kit*). To make

⁵ This handout should distinguish between clinical types (the usual description of what we know without going to the lab: born deaf, gradual loss of vision from RP) versus genetic types (which we only know from an analysis of genes). Some trainees may be interested in learning more about inheritance patterns and genetics. The handout can refer them to resources, but training to be an SSP should not get sidetracked into a discussion of genetics.

⁶ These are to promote participant's use of critical thinking. The consistent use of key questions throughout the lessons develops the habit so that participants will begin to spontaneously ask this type of question of themselves as they progress.

goggles, use eye-protection such as that worn by welders.

- a. Remove the eyepieces on some of the goggles and replace with funnels to simulate tunnel vision of varying degrees (recommended two degrees, four degrees).

Funnels should be painted black to prevent light penetration.

- b. On others, coat with a semi-opaque material such as glue to simulate optic atrophy (the entire lens), or macular degeneration (the middle of the lens).



1.2 SSP Module One

Lesson Two: Communication (using tunnel vision, partial hearing)

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to expand communication skills and introduce sighted-guide techniques.

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goals: Participants will learn the basics for interacting with deaf-blind people.

1. Trainees will learn some of the implications of impaired vision (lighting, glare, background).
2. Trainees will learn communication skills (for hard-of-hearing deaf-blind people).⁷
3. Trainees will understand the connection between vision/hearing status and the continuum of modes of communication.

Activities

1. Instructor reviews the first lesson.

- Who is considered deaf-blind? (i.e., includes people with partial vision and partial hearing).
- Techniques for communicating with a person who has tunnel vision and uses sign language (signing in a small space near the face).

⁷ This chapter focuses on communicating with deaf-blind people who have partial vision or partial hearing. Communication using Sign Language tactually is covered in lesson 1.6.

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

- Implications of impaired vision (light, glare).
- Implications for impaired hearing for communication (deaf-blind-hard-of-hearing).

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview
- Encourage distinctions (people who use sign language, those who do not, reading sign language with tunnel vision vs. with closer to normal vision)

3. Using Tunnel Vision: Communication

Instructor reminds trainees of the progress of Usher syndrome (night-blindness, tunnel vision, etc.). Instructors then lead trainees in the following exercises.

A. Conversation

Instructor distributes simulation goggles and earplugs to participants for the following exercises. The group is divided into conversation groups of at least four people and no more than eight people each. Half the participants are asked to put on the goggles while the other half do not. They are then asked to have a conversation for 15 to 20 minutes. Suggested topics: the upcoming election, recent changes at the deaf center, current controversial issues, etc. The topic should be rich enough and emotionally engaging enough to stimulate a sustained discussion but not so controversial or personal as to create tension in the group. After 15 to 20 minutes, regroup and discuss the experience.

B. Ball Toss

Participants retain the goggles and the other half are asked to put them on while the first half removes them. Participants stand in a circle (again, at least four people and no more than eight). The instructor then gives each group a soft, rubber, squishy ball (preferably one that bounces) and instructs them to play catch, tossing the ball back and forth randomly to

one another. After 15 to 20 minutes, regroup and discuss the experience.

Objectives:

- Awareness and empathy
- Techniques for making communication more clear

4. Light, Contrast, Glare, Acuity, and Field

Instructor asks trainees to recall their experiences from Lesson One when using goggles, specifically to talk about the effects on light perception, the ability to see contrast, see clearly and, of course, field of vision. The instructor then talks about the need for positioning (sitting with light on one's face, not on the face of the deaf-blind person) and clothing (wearing plain, contrasting colored tops), accessories (nothing that might create glare such as white pants, silver earrings, etc.), and background (preferably dark, non-glare).

Exploration

All participants are then asked to wear the goggles and earplugs to explore the area for 20 minutes, pausing to chat with others if desired. Canes⁸ should be available for all who want to use one. They should also be cautioned to be safe (i.e., watch carefully for stairs and overhanging objects). They are asked to note the effect of lighting. After 15 to 20 minutes, regroup and discuss the experience.

Objectives:

- Awareness and empathy
- Techniques for making communication more clear

⁸ The canes used by blind people are sometimes identified as "white canes" or "long canes." Places serving blind people may have extras that can be used in training. Alternatively, instructors can make mock long canes from medium dowels purchased from a lumber store and wrapped on one end with electric tape, capped on the floor end with a plastic or metal glider so as not to stick on rugs or mar wooden floors. Canes should come close to the mid-breast-line for use but because this is practice it is not that important. It will, however, give the person cutting the dowels a general guide in terms of length.

Henceforth, trainees will be asked to wear such tops to class for all subsequent lessons, and to be aware of positioning, background, etc. They are urged to watch deaf-blind people closely to see what seems to be irritating or comfortable and so on.

5. Hard-of-Hearing People and Communication Principles

There are several techniques that help promote clear communication regardless of vision and hearing. The instructor writes these on the board and checks for understanding.

1. Be clear about the addressee (to whom you are talking).
2. Be clear about the topic before making comments.
3. Pause between major points to get a response.
4. Give responses (back-channeling).

For hard-of-hearing people, these principles are very helpful. Make sure you are in a relatively quiet area with little echo.

Exercise (for hearing participants only)

Instructor distributes blindfolds and earplugs. Trainees are asked to carry on an aural conversation while the instructor increases the noise level (using a radio with a talk radio show or fast music). They are then asked (with blindfolds still on) to switch partners and begin another conversation with a different person. After three such conversations, remove blindfolds and earplugs and discuss.

Objectives:

- Awareness and empathy
- Techniques for making communication more clear

Review and Synthesis

Instructor summarizes the points made and asks students to draw any conclusions about communicating with deaf-blind people with tunnel vision or who are hard-of-hearing.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Send out pre-training assignments to the students with clear instructions

Student Preparation

Read Chapter 7 in text (Communication)

List of Materials

- a. blindfolds
- b. simulation goggles
- c. earplugs
- d. radio or other “noise maker”

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What is the relationship between being deaf-blind and being isolated?
- What is the relationship between isolation and information?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Instructor-prepared quiz on the material

Observation of trainee participation

Other Considerations

1. There are commercially produced recordings that simulate hearing loss, but they tend to be quite expensive. Check with your local library to see if they have one or would be willing to purchase one. Alternatively, a local hospital ENT clinic or audiologist might have a recording to loan.

1.3 SSP Module One

Lesson Three: Lab: Welcoming Reception and Games

All faculty members present (at least two deaf-blind members).

Lesson Overview

This lesson gives trainees an opportunity to meet with deaf-blind people in a relaxed but structured environment and to observe experienced, skilled people (SSPs, interpreters) interacting and socializing with them. It includes the use of communication (modes and techniques) learned in the first two lessons and guiding, to be learned in lesson six.

This lesson focuses on knowledge, skill, and attitude equally.

Goals: Participants will learn the basics for interacting with deaf-blind people.

1. Trainees will increase fluency in communication skills (communicating to accommodate tunnel vision, blurry vision, or partial hearing).
2. Trainees will understand the connection between vision/hearing status and modes of communication.
3. Trainees will become increasingly comfortable using touch as an important part of communication and getting feedback as correction in a naturalistic setting.

Activities

1. Introductions

Instructors personally greet and welcome each deaf-blind person.

Instructors then gather the group (deaf-blind and SSPs) and welcome all, followed by an overview of the evening's activities.

Objectives:

- Warm up

2. Ice-Breaker Exercise

Trainees are asked to form two lines facing one another, with deaf-blind people on one side and SSPs in training forming the other line and balancing the shorter deaf-blind line. People facing each other (deaf-blind person facing SSP trainee) introduce themselves to one another and chat for approximately three minutes. One of the instructors signals a time to change/shift lines (one line shifts down while the other line remains in place). The person at the end of the shifting line moves to the other end. Introductions begin anew, again for approximately three minutes. Lines alternate in taking turns being the one to shift and the exercise continues until all deaf-blind participants have met all SSP trainees.

Objectives:

- Provide practice in communication techniques
- Provide exposure to different types of communication used by the deaf-blind people who will be using the SSP service
- Provide structure for 1:1 introductions
- Instructors can assess communication skills and styles, which information will later be used to give feedback to participants and to make “match-ups” with deaf-blind participants for the internship part of the course.

3. Play-Doh™ Exercise

Trainees are divided into pairs (deaf-blind trainees with SSP trainees, remaining SSP trainees with one another). Blindfolds are distributed to sighted and partially sighted trainees, and Play-Doh is distributed to all teams. One member of the team models an object, then passes it to their partner who attempts to guess what the object represents (see Appendix F, *Play-Doh Pictionary*).

Instructors may make up two separate lists of suggested objects (see

Appendix G for suggestions) for trainees who want one.

Objectives:

- Increase tactile awareness and focus for SSP trainees
- Have fun while learning
- Provide practice in tactile communication (seeking attention, asking questions, concluding a conversation)

4. Spice Activity

Participants make a game of trying to identify common spices and scents by smell and touch. Each container⁹ is labeled with large print and Braille. Participants are divided into groups of three or four. Each group is given an identical set of containers containing spices, herbs, etc. One person is the monitor (this might be an SSP or a deaf-blind person). The others are blindfolded. The monitor hands the others a container one at a time to see if they can agree on the identification of the spice or herb within. Once they have reached consensus or given a best guess, the monitor puts it to one side and makes a note (on paper or mentally) as to whether they are correct or not, and hands them the next one. When the group has gone through all the containers, the groups compare their answers and the number correct.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of avenues to information other than sight and hearing
- Put participants on a roughly equal playing field (possibly deaf-blind people will have more skills in identifying smells)

5. Refreshments and Socializing

The evening concludes with “thank yous” and directions for the next lesson (when and where) for all trainees.

⁹ These containers should be difficult to break. Examples are old (empty, used) spice jars made of glass or small, new, plastic containers such as can be found at health food stores or others selling liquids in bulk.

Objectives:

- Build better understanding across the two groups of trainees
- Provide guidance for next lessons and allow for any questions
- Have fun while learning
- Provide practice in tactile communication (seeking attention, asking questions, concluding a conversation)
- Closure

Enrichment Activities

1. Participants volunteer to guide for a deaf-blind person who would like to go to a local gathering of signers (e.g., coffee-house night, silent games) and introduce the deaf-blind person to others there.
2. Participants create another tactile game and try it out with one another.

Objectives:

- Fluency
- An opportunity to use skills in a real-life situation
- An opportunity to recruit sighted friends to become SSPs, thus increasing the pool of SSPs to do the work, as well as with whom to discuss the work and improve.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. blindfolds

- b. simulation goggles
- c. Play-Doh™
- d. directions for the Play-Doh game
- e. Containers of scented objects/liquids (suggestions: lavender, cinnamon, fennel, pepper, paprika, rosemary, garlic, and allspice)
- f. Refreshments

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What did you notice most about touch and smell?
- How did it feel to communicate by touch?
- When did you feel frustrated and why?
- How could the communication have been clearer?
- What gave you a sense of who the other person is?
- How did the deaf-blind trainees use touch differently than you are used to?
- How can touch be used to communicate other than language?
- What did you like the best about the class?
- What was most interesting?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

1. Review Chapters 2 through 4 (Daily Life, Themes and Manners). Read Chapter 5 Recreation in the reference text.
2. Spend some time socializing with deaf-blind people Attend a local community event with deaf-blind people. The goal is to both socialize with people at the event and facilitate the social participation of the deaf-blind people.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Instructor-observed activities (communication and guiding)

Amount and quality of participation in exercises

Journaling about the experience

Other Considerations:

1. Structure: Instructors must help structure the follow up to this lesson (socializing with deaf-blind people). For example, the instructor can inform trainees of known social opportunities if there is a deaf-blind club in the area. If there are no such planned activities, the instructor can organize one at a local coffee shop, setting the place, day, and time and giving trainees instructions as to how to invite deaf-blind individuals and give an overview of what to do/not do.
2. Without support and structure, it is likely that the training will not get the needed reinforcement; trainees will feel shy of taking the initiative to invite deaf-blind people to join them, unsure of what to do if the deaf-blind person does join them and so on. At the very least, the instructor should check in with trainees a few times to see how they are doing.

1.4 SSP Module One

Lesson Four: Power Relations

Two faculty members present (at least one deaf-blind member)

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to introduce the issue of power in relations between deaf-blind and sighted or hearing people.

It focuses on both knowledge and attitude.

Goals: Participants will become aware of power dynamics when interacting with deaf-blind people.

1. Trainees will learn the concept of oppression as a set of systemic barriers vs. direct behavior.
2. Trainees will learn the major barriers for deaf-blind people and how, as people who are aware, they can help to remove some of them, some of the time.
3. Trainees will understand the connection between information and power.

Activities

1. Review

Instructors open by eliciting further thoughts on Lesson Three, the Ice-Breaker/Social Lab experience and comments as appropriate.

Instructors briefly

- Review Lesson Two, Communication and Guiding
- Relate it to Lesson Three, Lab/Reception and Games and
- Lead in to Lesson Four, Power Relations.

Objectives:

- Answer questions and refresh recent learning on communication
- Reinforce an attitude of respect for DB people
- Develop the habit of looking for connections between/among learning units
- Set the foundation for the current lesson on power relations
- Engage trainees by directly questioning them and positively reinforcing their knowledge and ability to articulate it
- Promotion of self reflection at each step of the learning process

2. Discussion of Authority, Power, and Control

Instructors lead discussion of homework from the reference text: Chapter 19 Authority, Power, and Control. Trainees are encouraged to make connections between the reading and the previous lab/social experience.

(See Key Questions below.)

Objectives:

- Practice critical thinking (analysis, synthesis) and application
- Help trainees digest and apply the material to their own situations
- Help trainees reflect on their past experiences that relate to this material
- Lead students to a more sophisticated understanding of the role of SSP as it relates to power and privilege
- Lead students to a greater awareness of the dark and often hidden side of helping others

3. Discussion

Instructor leads trainees in a discussion of power

- How manners (in our everyday life) relate to power
- How community (presence or absence) relates to power

- The concept of privilege
- The concept of social role

Trainees are encouraged to give practical examples of situations in which they personally have experienced or witnessed these concepts realized.

Objectives:

- Practice critical thinking (analysis, synthesis) and application
- Help trainees digest and articulate specific ways in which the material they are learning (e.g., adjusting their signing space, wearing plain tops of contrasting colors⁹) relates to power dynamics
- Help trainees reflect on and perhaps re-interpret¹⁰ their past experiences in terms of power dynamics
- Lead trainees to a greater awareness of the dark and often hidden side of helping others (See reference text: Chapter 19)

4. Exercise: Art Project

Participants are paired up to complete two simple art projects. The goal is not art but communication. One person in each pair is assigned the role

⁹ Tops (shirts, blouses) worn by SSPs should be such that they provide a good background for signing. Plaids, polka dots and stripes are especially bad backgrounds for reading Sign Language even for people with vision within the normal range. Colors for tops should offer a contrast to skin color. (e.g. black or navy blue tops for people with light colored skin, mustard yellow or pale blue for people with dark colored skin). White is not good as it reflects too much light and thereby creates glare, which also makes reading Sign Language difficult.

¹⁰ An action that may have been interpreted as rude and insulting can now be seen as a reaction to an assumption. For example, a new signer may have assumed that deaf people would be grateful for her/him learning Sign Language and expect extra attention when she or he uses Sign Language to communicate. “Normal treatment” may then have been interpreted as rude and ungrateful. Now that the signer recognizes the power dynamics behind this assumption, the signer can recognize it for what it really was (i.e., respectful within the norm). Thus the meaning the new signer ascribed to the behavior was incorrect in the first instance and needs to be re-interpreted.

of being a deaf-blind person, and is blindfolded. The SSP then receives a set of instructions for making the project and explains to the deaf-blind person what the project is and what the materials are. The specific goal here is that the SSP provides information and does not take over or do things for the deaf-blind person. Once the project is completed, the group discusses the experience.

The projects:

1. Pipe cleaner and bead project. “Make an insect.” It can be make-believe, of course. Use your imagination.
2. Beaded necklace. Use the wire and beads to make a necklace. See how it feels.

Materials: Pipe cleaners, beads and wire, sufficient for all participants.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Student Preparation

Read reference text: Chapters 17 Assertiveness and Authority; and 19 Authority, Power, and Control

List of Materials

- a. Flipchart or white board on which to write key points of the discussions
- b. Pipe cleaners, wire and beads
- c. Handouts for homework

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- The text says “The effects of privilege are cumulative?” What does this mean?
- How does this relate to the role of guest in the community?
- What is a “social role”?
- What are some important considerations regarding boundaries?

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Amount and quality of participation in discussions
Reflective paper on vision as privilege

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Read Chapter 6 Guiding

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Amount and quality of participation in discussions
Reflective paper on vision as privilege

1.5 SSP Module One

Lesson Five: Communication II and Guiding

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to expand communication skills and introduce those of sighted-guides.

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goals: Participants will learn the basics for interacting with deaf-blind people.

1. Trainees will learn some of the implications of impaired vision (lighting, glare, background)
2. Trainees will learn communication skills (for hard-of-hearing deaf-blind people).
3. Trainees will understand the connection between vision/hearing status and the continuum of modes of communication.

Activities

1. Instructor reviews the first lesson.

- Who is considered deaf-blind (i.e., includes people with partial vision and partial hearing)
- Techniques for communicating with a person who has tunnel vision and uses sign language (signing in a small space near the face).

Instructor asks trainees to recall their experiences from Lesson One when using goggles, specifically to talk about the effects on light perception, the ability to see contrast, see clearly and, of course, field of vision.

The instructor then talks about the need for positioning (sitting with light on one's face—not on the face of the deaf-blind person) and cloth-

ing (wearing plain, contrasting colored tops), accessories (nothing that might create glare such as white pants, silver earrings, etc.), and background (preferably dark, non-glare).

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

1. Implications of impaired vision (light, glare)
2. Implications for impaired hearing for communication (background noise, background surfaces)
3. Implications of continuous change

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview
- Encourage distinctions (people who use sign language, those who do not, reading sign language with tunnel vision vs. with closer to normal vision)

3. Guiding

Instructor demonstrates the basic guiding position and explains the reasons (comfort, control, tactile information). Instructor then shows film (an instructor-created DVD) of guiding in a variety of settings. The instructor now demonstrates guiding techniques (to be followed below by a discussion and demonstration of communication techniques). (See reference text Chapter 6)

- a. walking position
- b. turning corners
- c. going through narrow spaces
- d. doors
- e. stairs
- f. up to a chair or seat

While the instructor is demonstrating, it is useful to remind the participants of the four effects of reduced vision (light, contrast, acuity, and field). For example, walking towards a bright doorway into a dimly lit stair-

way creates temporary blindness.

Practice

Participants are then paired up, given blindfolds and asked to guide one another through the environment. They should be cautioned to be safe but experience as many of the situations (chairs, stairs, doorways) as possible. They are asked to make mental notes of the experience. After 15 to 20 minutes, partners should switch (the guide becomes the deaf-blind person, and the deaf-blind person becomes the guide). After a total 40 minutes, the entire group reconvenes to discuss the experience.

Objectives:

- Reinforce awareness and empathy
- Enhance techniques for making communication more clear

Henceforth, trainees will be asked to wear contrasting, non-glare tops to class for all subsequent lessons, and to be aware of positioning and background. They are urged to watch deaf-blind people closely to see what seems to be irritating or comfortable and so on.

4. Communication Principles (Review from Lesson 2.2)

There are several techniques that help promote clear communication regardless of vision and hearing. The instructor writes these on the board and checks for understanding.

1. Be clear about the addressee (to whom you are talking).
2. Be clear about the topic before making comments.
3. Pause between major points to get a response.
4. Give responses (back-channeling).

For hard-of-hearing people, these principles are very helpful. Make sure you are in a relatively quiet area with little echo.

5. Adjustment

The instructor explains that deaf-blind people sometimes struggle

with identifying as deaf-blind, noting that the attitudes of family and former teachers is a powerful factor. With time and positive experience, including working with SSPs and meeting other deaf-blind people, many come to see the benefit of identifying as deaf-blind and participating in a deaf-blind community.

Objectives:

- Develop empathy
- Develop a more clear understanding of “resistance” to using an SSP, specifically that it is often not personal
- Develop a sense of the key role played by SSPs in the lives of deaf-blind people.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Send out pre-training assignments to the students with clear instructions

Student Preparation

Read Chapters 1 through 4 in the reference text (Introduction, Daily Life, Themes and Manners)

List of Materials

- a. DVD showing guiding
- b. blindfolds
- c. goggles
- d. earplugs
- e. radio or other “noise maker”

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What are key elements of keeping both the deaf-blind person and the SSP safe while guiding?
- What is the relationship between guiding and information?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Read Chapters 7 through 10 in the reference text (see above) on Communication, Tactile Communication, Tactile Language, and Modifying Tactile Language respectively. Read Chapter 6 on Guiding.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Instructor-prepared quiz on the material

Observation of trainee participation

Other Considerations

None

1.6 SSP Module One

Lesson Six: Tactile Communication

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to add tactual communication skills.

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goals: Participants will learn the basics of tactile signing.

1. Tactile fingerspelling
2. Modified signing space when signing tactually
3. The importance of context to communication
4. Conversational manners

Activities

1. Instructor reviews the previous lessons on communication.

- Instructor asks what participants remember most about using signlanguage with people who have tunnel vision
- Instructor reminds trainees of the continuum of communication from signing visually to signing tactually

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and review

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

- Tactile Communication
- Tactile Signing

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview

3. “Electric Message” Game/Exercise

Trainees stand in a circle holding hands. One person is designated “conductor” who squeezes the hand of the person on the right (or left; it does not matter). That person passes the squeeze on to the next one (hence the metaphor of electric current). Once the “current” goes all the way around the circle, the conductor initiates a new pattern (e.g., a double squeeze, or a tickle), and this goes around the circle again.

As the game progresses, the conductor sends different “signals” going in opposite directions.

Finally, in the most complex form, more, and more “conductors” are identified who initiate signals going in both directions.

Objectives:

- Desensitize touch with “strangers” for SSP trainees
- Increase tactile awareness and focus for SSP trainees
- Have fun while learning
- Provide human contact and permission to touch for DB trainees¹¹

4. Tactile Signing Positions

Instructor demonstrates communication techniques.

- Two-handed manual
- One-handed manual
- Small area signing
- Special considerations for tactile fingerspelling

Instructor adds information on the importance of a community for fluency and extra-linguistic knowledge (ELK).

¹¹ People who have been isolated for a long time may have lost an accurate way to judge the meaning of touch with other human beings. This is deliberately a non-sexual way to engage with others.

Instructor demonstrates various sitting and standing positions, commenting on *ergonomics* (see reference text Chapter 7).

Objectives:

- Provide a concrete, 3-D demonstration of the techniques used to communicate

5. Tactile Conversation

Trainees pair up for a conversation. They both put on blindfolds and put in earplugs and position themselves where they can communicate tactually. They are to practice talking with one another tactually for 15 minutes. The instructor may provide structure by giving trainees questions to ask one another and to get the answer (e.g., How did you get to class today? What are you reading now? Do you have a favorite restaurant in town?) or a topic to focus on or simply let it happen, free form.

Discussion: After 15 minutes, re-group and discuss the exercise. What was frustrating? What worked? How did you feel? Did you get better as you practiced? What helped? Did you invent any additional cues? Did you give/get feedback (back-channel cues)?

The instructor then demonstrates the position for the listening hand: left hand for right-handed people is the primary listening hand. The listening hand is placed roughly perpendicular to the signing hand so that the little finger can monitor the thumb, the first two fingers monitor the first two fingers of the signer's hand while the ring finger *of the listener* can "hook over the palm" while the thumb monitors the ring and little fingers.

It is important that the signer *not* hold the listener's hand or pull it around.

Objectives:

- Gain comfort with tactile signing
- Gain awareness of ergonomics
- Learn hand-positioning
- Learn tactile manners

6. “Telephone”

Trainees arrange chairs in two lines. Instructor(s) explain the game—a single sign is given to the first person in line who turns to the next person in line, taps them on the shoulder, and passes the sign on to them. The sign is then relayed to the last person in line who tells the instructor what it is. Trainees should all be wearing blindfolds. Instructors can give trainees single signs or sentences. Each line should be given the same sign/sentence, making it a slight competition.

Objectives:

- Fluency
- Fun and motivation

7. Interruptions

Instructor explains how to:

Initiate a conversation: Get a person’s attention by placing your signing hand under their listening hand or by touching the back of their forearm. Identify yourself.

Interrupt a tactile conversation: Place your hand on the shoulder of the person you want to talk with and wait to be acknowledged. If you must interrupt more urgently, use the system above for initiating a conversation. The more urgent the interruption, the closer the touch is to the hand.

End a conversation: The usual social skills apply, but be sure not to leave a deaf-blind person without an anchor—a chair or some other object by which to orient themselves. Also, be sure that if you are leaving for more than a few minutes that they are not standing unprotected in the weather (hot sun, cold wind, etc.).

See reference text Chapters 9 through 11.

Objectives:

- Introduce Tactile ASL (TASL) discourse and manners

Enrichment Activities

1. Have a mock party in the classroom. Offer refreshments and have conversations. One hour is a good length of time.
2. Give each student a blindfold. Using a pack of index cards, create different instructions. Sample instructions might include: count the change in your pocket; go get a drink of water; sit quietly for 15 minutes; use the restroom; throw away this card.

Objective:

- Develop empathy

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather Materials

Student Preparation

Read Chapters 8 through 10 in the reference text

List of Materials

- a. blindfolds
- b. earplugs

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What would you guess the manners to be about where one touches and where one does not touch?
- What other manners do you think a deaf-blind community would develop?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Read Chapter 21 in the reference text (Why I Volunteer).

Participants pair up and with one person as the sighted guide, the other as a deaf-blind person, go to the mall. As before, after a period of time, the pairs reverse roles. This often works best if the trainees decide what they want to do before beginning, such as buy a pair of socks or buy a cup of coffee or cup of soda. Trainees journal their experiences, insights, and feelings.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Instructor-prepared quiz on the material

Observation of trainee participation

Other Considerations

1. Instructors must help structure a follow-up to this lesson. Without support and structure, it is likely that the training will not get the needed reinforcement; trainees will feel shy about taking the initiative to invite deaf-blind people to join them, unsure of what to do if the deaf-blind person does join them, and so on. At the very least, the instructor should check in with trainees a few times to see how they are doing and any opportunities to use the skills.

1.7 SSP Module One

Lesson Seven: Community Reception and Games

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to add fluency to all skills, provide closure to the module, and transition to the next module. Members of both classes, the SSP track and DB track, are participants, as well as any community members (deaf-blind people, SSPs, interpreters, etc.) the instructor or class members wish to invite.

This lesson focuses on skill.

Goal: Participants will develop confidence and have their interest maintained.

This Community Reception is similar to the Welcoming Reception (Module 1.3) in structure. By this time, however, trainees have more skills and more confidence in communicating and guiding. If it is summer, this could be held outdoors and turned into a picnic. If it is during the winter, tactile decorations could be created and so on. Make it a party.

Activities

1. Introductions

Instructors make sure everyone knows everyone, perhaps having a circle round-robin of introductions if enough of the attendees are new.

Objectives:

- Make sure everyone knows who is there and feels comfortable
- Establish primary ways of communicating with deaf-blind participants

2. Clothespin Game

The instructor has a hanger with 20 clothespins on it. Each person will try in turn to hold the hanger in one hand and take the clothespins off with the other. The trick is to hold all the removed clothespins while continuing to remove more. Clipping or pinning them to one's clothes, putting them in pockets, etc., is not allowed. On the signal, the first trainee begins. The turn ends when either the three minutes is up, the person successfully gets all 20 pins off the hanger or one of the clothespins is dropped. If a clothespin is dropped, the person has to stop and count how many they have in one hand and that ends the turn.

The goal is to get as many clothespins off the hanger as possible. While waiting, the sighted trainees keep the deaf-blind people informed as to what is going on, including funny facial expressions, gestures, actions, and so on.

Objectives:

- Awareness of the need to relay visual information to keep deaf-blind people involved

3. Gift Grab

Best if there are not more than 15 players.

For a holiday party this is especially nice, but it does not have to be a holiday. Place a pile of nice but inexpensive gifts on a table. All gifts should be appropriate for deaf-blind people (i.e., no music, etc.) Everyone should get a chance to explore the pile before the game begins. Everyone draws a number. Once everyone has a number and has looked at the gifts, each approaches the table and takes a gift in order. Person number one goes first, followed by person number two, and so on.

Person number two has a choice to keep the gift or trade with number one. Person number three has a choice to keep the gift or trade with either number one or two and so on. The last person to draw has the choice of all, but then person number one becomes the actual last person who then has the choice of all the other gifts or keeping his or her own.

Objectives:

- Stimulate thinking about appropriate gifts for deaf-blind people
- Reinforce permission to touch and explore tactually
- Socializing

4. Refreshments

All trainees and instructors then have time to snack and socialize. (See comments in *Accommodations* regarding refreshments.)

Objectives:

- Fluency in communication
- Skill in guiding
- Encouraging personal relationships with one another

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather Materials

Student Preparation

Re-read Chapter 4 in reference text (Manners)

List of Materials

- a. blindfolds
- b. earplugs
- c. hangers and clothespins
- d. gifts
- e. refreshments

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What did you notice?
- What activities might be fun for both deaf-blind people and non-deaf-blind people?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Observation of trainee participation.

Other Considerations

1. Instructors must help structure a follow-up to this lesson.
Without support and structure, it is likely that the training will not get the needed reinforcement; trainees will feel shy about taking the initiative to invite deaf-blind people to join them, unsure of what to do if the deaf-blind person does join them, and so on. At the very least, the instructor should check in with trainees a few times to see how they are doing and any opportunities to use the skills.

Module Two

2.0 SSP Advanced Beginner: Overview

Description

Module Two prepares a somewhat experienced but still novice SSP to do work at the next level. The SSP has the knowledge and skill to communicate effectively when there is little confusion/distraction and minimal time pressure, but the task or situation can now be relatively more complex or unfamiliar to the SSP and to the DB person.

Advanced Beginners are distinguished from new, entry-level beginners by

- their existing relationships within the DB community,
- awareness of the function of visual-orientational information in decision making,
- awareness of the function of visual information beyond the useful, and
- clarity about the role (as distinct from buddy, advocate, or generalized “helper”).

Examples of post-Module Two SSP assignments include: shopping for a gift, reading mail, and taking someone to the airport.

Prerequisites for Trainees

Trainees should

- be fluent in conversational level sign language and consultative register and
- have at least one year of experience working regularly as SSPs.

Instructor Qualifications

Instructors for this module should be a team of one (or more) deaf-

blind instructor(s) who knows about and uses SSPs, and one experienced SSP. Instructors should have teaching skills, be active and respected members of the deaf-blind community and have attended at least one AADB conference and preferably other statewide events as well.

The instructional team should be able to communicate effectively with all trainees whether directly or through an interpreter.¹² The instructor(s) should have a working understanding of the theory of visual information such as distinctions between information that is useful/interesting, between being passive or active, and comfort in the role of “employer” (i.e., assertively giving direction to SSPs).

If there are no qualified deaf-blind instructors available, then it is even more important that the non-DB teacher have the respect of local deaf-blind community members. This instructor should make sure to host panels of deaf-blind people, show quality video material, invite deaf-blind guest speakers to the class, and otherwise endeavor to have the deaf-blind perspective well represented.

Module Objectives

At the successful completion of this module, trainee SSPs will be able to:

- describe the environment, read menus, etc., using “top-down” or topic-comment discourse,
- apply beginning-level strategies for prioritizing information and
- focus on the task despite distractions.

At the successful completion of this module, trainee SSPs will be aware of the following:

- The “DB Way” is not the mainstream way but is equally valid; non-DB people are sometimes annoyed with the difference (especially differences in time and pace or the use of touch); the SSP needs to

¹² We are speaking here of the communication skill (beyond language) to quickly recognize the best approach to meet the trainee “where he is at” linguistically, culturally, educationally, and experientially to explain the concepts in this lesson. It is expected that deaf-blind trainees will vary greatly in such background.

be respectful of both ways and not add pressure to the DB person to conform.

- Touch is one of the best ways for a DB person to gain information; the SSP is becoming more and more comfortable with the use of touch in the “DB way” as opposed to the dominant-culture way.
- DB people vary in personality, sophistication, interests and so on; flexibility, a non-judgmental, and pro-diversity attitude are key.
- Self-knowledge is an ongoing process.
- Trust is an essential part of any professional relationship; trust is built up over time.

2.1 SSP Module Two

Lesson One: SSP Role and System

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to introduce the role of SSP and explain the system whereby SSPs are employed.

This lesson focuses on knowledge.

Goals: Participants will learn the role of SSP and how and where SSPs are employed.

1. Escorting, guiding
2. Providing visual environmental information

Activities

1. Instructor welcomes trainees.

It is assumed participants are members of the local deaf-blind community and known to one another and to the instructors, but the instructors should check to make sure all have met.

2. Instructor reviews the previous lessons on communication, guiding, and power relations.

Instructor asks what participants remember regarding

- using sign language with people who have tunnel vision
- communicating with hard-of-hearing deaf-blind people
- the continuum of communication from Signing visually to Signing tactually
- guiding
- communicating tactually

- manners

Objectives:

- Review and refresh
- Fill gaps in memory

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

- Role of the SSP
- The SSP system

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview

3. The Role

The instructor outlines the history of the SSP role—the history of the term (from the AADB as a substitute for “volunteer”) and within the local area. SSPs work with independent, autonomous adults, people who can direct their own lives and make independent decisions.¹³

The instructor explains the differences in roles between SSPs, interpreters, advocates, and others who may work with deaf-blind people.¹⁴

Bilingual

The SSP may be bilingual or monolingual in the primary language of the deaf-blind person. The value of being bilingual depends on the situa-

¹³ Canada developed services for deaf-blind people (primarily children) along a slightly different line and uses the term “intervenor.” Some schools in the United States have followed suit, changing the spelling to “intervener.” As deaf-blind children age out of school, parents and families are advocating for continuing services. Roles, labels, and sphere of work (e.g., school to community, state to state) are still in flux, along with the community itself.

¹⁴ Interpreters working one way (i.e., copying signs from a Video Relay Service (VRS) interpreter for a deaf-blind person receiving signs tactually, a deaf-blind person who then signs for themselves back to the VRS operator-interpreter) have been called “communication facilitators.” Whether this role will remain distinct or will be rolled into the broader role of “interpreter” remains to be seen.

| | SSP | Interpreter | Advocate |
|---|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Bilingual | In most cases | Yes | ? |
| Communicates well with the DB person | Yes | Yes | Yes |
| Provides sighted-guide services | Yes | In most cases | No |
| Acts as Escort | Yes | No | No |
| Provides transportation | Often ¹⁵ | No ¹⁶ | No |
| Provides visual information | Yes | Yes | ? |
| Makes suggestions | No | No | Yes |
| Makes decisions for the DB person | No | No | No |
| Interprets | No | Yes | No |
| Requires a college degree | No | Yes ¹⁷ | Yes |
| Professionals are Certified | No ¹⁸ | Yes | ? |

¹⁵ Driving or providing transportation is not an essential function of the role just as providing sighted guide is not an essential function of an interpreter working with a deaf-blind person.

¹⁶ Individual interpreters may agree to carpool with or provide a ride for a client, but this would be an exception.

¹⁷ The profession of interpreting is in transition. Certification will require a B.A. degree or higher by the year 2012.

¹⁸ Some have this as a long-term goal.

tion. For example, if a hard-of-hearing deaf-blind person, who does not know sign language, is attending a deaf function, then it makes sense that the SSP should be bilingual in order to communicate effectively with all present, including the hard-of-hearing deaf-blind person. On the other hand, if the deaf-blind person is fluent in ASL and he or she is attending a deaf function, then being bilingual is not significant. The SSP coordinator can respond to the needs of the deaf-blind person given the situation.

Communicates well with the deaf-blind person

This will include the necessary language skills but also the ability to take the perspective of the deaf-blind person. The SSP will understand (through communication) what is important and/or interesting to this individual, his or her overall energy level, etc. Further, the SSP will be skilled at conveying visual information (as taught in the more advanced sessions of this curriculum).

Provides sighted-guide service

Guiding operates on a continuum from simply offering an elbow to a deaf-blind person to guide from one room to the next through a relatively uncluttered avenue to being a full-blown guide-escort. Being a sighted guide implies having some skill at going through doors, up escalators and so on, smoothly and safely. Being an escort includes a little more “looking out for” so it involves “being with” in a way that being a sighted-guide does not. Thus, an escort is on duty whether or not actively guiding at the moment. An SSP is on duty whether actively guiding or not, providing visual information and/or simply standing by.

Provides transportation

This is negotiated between the SSP, the coordinating agency, and the deaf-blind person. An SSP working on a shopping assignment might be asked if the deaf-blind person can have a ride while the SSP at a community meeting might be asked to meet the deaf-blind person at the meeting site.¹⁹

¹⁹ Factors include heavy or bulky things to carry, who else is going to the same place and could offer a ride, availability of bus service or other public transportation and so on.

Provides visual information

Providing visual information and guiding are key tasks in the work of an SSP. Guiding skills can be learned quickly and easily (certainly within a few days of instruction and practice). Providing visual information is both subtler and more complex. Visual information surrounds us; it is impossible to relay it all. The question of selection is one of skill, but it is not a static skill that follows a particular recipe. It is a choice motivated in the moment. The choice of which visual information and how much to convey will depend on the goal of the SSP assignment and the individual with whom one is working. Visual information is chosen and prioritized. These decisions are made based on what is happening (a friend appears, a stranger asks to pet the guide-dog), the purpose of the assignment (shopping vs. attending a social) and the individual deaf-blind person (interested in style, wants to know the age of people, the mood and so on). Even the questions of when to convey this information and how to chunk it require judgment.

SSPs will learn much more about this as they progress through the curriculum, as this is a key skill. What is important for now is that the SSP provides visual information so that the deaf-blind person can make autonomous decisions based on available knowledge.

Makes suggestions

While the SSP provides visual information, the SSP does not make suggestions, so while the SSP will report color and style of clothes, she does not make comments about whether it looks good or costs too much, is too flimsy for long-term wear, or offer any other such opinion. An SSP may ask a deaf-blind client to not smoke while they are together, or agree to leave while the client does so, but may not say to the deaf-blind client, “Smoking is bad for you.”

Facilitates communication

The distinction between facilitating and interpreting is also subtle. It, too, is a continuum. There are clearly brief exchanges that do not rise to the level of interpreting. For example, facilitating the ordering of food in a restaurant or paying for merchandise in a store, while requiring the special skills needed to communicate effectively with a deaf-blind person, do

not require the linguistic fluency or memory needed by interpreters. On the other hand, there are occasions when a deaf-blind person is attending a function that requires both skills (providing visual information, guiding and interpreting). There is no real conflict of interest or conflict of activity, but it is a higher level than simply working as an SSP or interpreting.

The role of interpreter for a deaf-blind person similarly requires providing some visual information such as who is talking and people's visual responses to the discourse (nodding, taking notes, staring out the window). The focus is on what is being said in ASL or English. The distinction between interpreting for a deaf-blind person and being an SSP for a deaf-blind person is one of focus or emphasis. It is also a question of skill. The interpreter may be able to interpret successfully but not have the skills of an SSP and vice versa.

When a deaf-blind person will want to use an SSP, when she will want to use an interpreter, and when she will want to have someone who does both well will depend on the situation.

Degrees and Certification

Finally, interpreting is a recognized profession offering a professional certificate and soon to require a college degree. Advocacy is typically done by a social worker, caseworker, or professional advocate, again, someone with a college degree and special training. SSP is a new career, not yet recognized as a profession. Indeed, this curriculum is to our knowledge the first formal curriculum developed for SSPs.²⁰

Tasks

Due to limited budgets, SSPs are typically limited to assisting deaf-blind clients to do grocery shopping, banking, reading mail, and doing errands. This is not policy but is the current priority. If a deaf-blind client is able to accomplish these things without using SSP hours to do so and would prefer to use SSP time for other things (e.g., going downtown to see what's new, going to a city festival), this would fit both the role and agency policies. The SSP in all instances would be providing sighted-guide service and visual information.

²⁰ Canada has developed a program for intervenors at George Brown College in Toronto, Ontario.

While accompanying the deaf-blind client to a deaf event would fit the role, interpreting for a meeting of the same organization would not, because the primary task of interpreting is outside the role of SSP. Attending a family gathering where everyone signs would fit the role, but interpreting for family conference would be beyond the scope of the role of the SSP. Just as SSPs are not interpreters, they are not child care workers, cooks or housecleaners. Helping a deaf-blind client to supervise a child or grandchild would not fit the role of SSP because supervision is more than providing visual information.

Objectives:

- Introduce and clarify the role
- Introduce and clarify the distinctions between similar or related roles

4. Visual Information

Instructor outlines types of visual information

- safety
- useful
- interesting

Information for safety includes an approach to stairs, overhanging obstacles, or other objects in the environment that may cause a deaf-blind person to trip, fall, bump, or bang into it.

Useful information includes the location of a coat rack or chair to sit down and rest, prices on products, how many people are in line waiting to check out, refreshments available at the social, and so on.

Interesting information includes changes (e.g., new styles, new buildings going up), the ambiance of a room or odd, unusual things (e.g., an odd-shaped tree, a car covered in bumper stickers of a particular political persuasion). It also includes “news” in general, which we will discuss later.²¹

²¹ In the next module we discuss what is seen versus what is understood, what is seen versus the interpretation of it (e.g., shaking, looking around, rubbing an arm versus “nervous”).

Practice

Trainees are paired up. Together they walk around the campus or area of training, but during this time, they do not talk with one another. They should simply look and observe. At the end of 15 minutes, all return to the classroom to discuss the experience. They report first, what safety information they would have reported, what useful information they would have reported and thirdly, what interesting information they would have reported. Those who went in pairs or threes compare notes. Did they agree as to what should be reported and why?

Finally, trainees are asked to describe the area. If they were “setting the scene,” what would they have said? Which descriptions work best? Why?

Objectives:

- Provide an analysis of “visual information”
- Provide a concrete experience of the concept and how to label or communicate it

5. The System

The instructor explains the system of providing SSPs to deaf-blind people in the area and distributes a copy of the agency policies. SSPs are recruited and signed up to begin working with select deaf-blind people.

There are several ways of moving forward from here:

1. Assign new SSP-interns to experienced deaf-blind people who act as mentors, helping interns learn the role and more effective ways of providing visual information. (See Appendix H: *Sample SSP Program Policies*)
2. Assign new SSP-interns to experienced SSPs who supervise and mentor them.
3. For trainees in a rural location or other setting where there are no experienced mentors, arrange internships or intensive training at a more distant location where such resources exist.

Objectives:

- Recruit SSPs
- Facilitate people signing up and filling out any necessary paperwork to obtain a certificate of completion for the training.

Review and Synthesis

Trainees ask questions, then fill out and turn in paperwork. They are then assigned to match-ups along with the continuing coursework.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather Materials

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Materials to write trainee observations (flip chart, chalk board, etc.)

Handouts

Role comparison grid

Key Questions

- When and why would there be a need for SSP services?
- What would be the biggest ethical challenges to SSPs in doing the work?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Read agency policies

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

None

Other Considerations

None

2.2 SSP Module Two

Lesson Two: Role and Ethics

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to elicit ethical concerns for the role of SSP.

This lesson focuses on knowledge and attitude.

Goals: Participants will develop an awareness of ethical concerns for the role of SSP

1. Conflict of interest
2. The importance of continuing education
3. The pressures and tensions that affect ethical choices

Activities

1. Instructor reviews the previous lesson on role and system.

Specifically, the instructor answers any remaining questions regarding the role or system.

Objectives:

- Review and refresh
- Fill gaps in memory

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

- Ethical principles

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview

3. The Role

The instructor guides trainees in developing a set of ethical principles and practices. It is recommended that the instructor elicit these from the trainees rather than simply present them as a list of do's and don'ts. The instructor should, however, be prepared to:

1. fill in the gaps with any ethical principles and practices that trainees miss,
2. help trainees draw distinctions (between behaviors and principles), and
3. emphasize the deaf-blind person's autonomy.²²

Respect

Respect is at the core of all ethical practices, respect for the autonomy, privacy, and situation of the deaf-blind person. Breaking down the idea of respect, we see its roots in the idea of really seeing the person with whom we are working.²³ A behavior, such as walking slowly, may be respectful for a companion with a bad ankle, or disrespectful for a companion in a hurry. It is not the behavior itself but the behavior in context that has the quality of being respectful or disrespectful.

Power Difference

The need for a code of ethical behavior (code of ethics, professional responsibility, professional conduct, etc.) grows out of the power of a person working in a professional capacity with another. The superior knowledge or access to information gives the professional greater power and often greater control, and so in this regard, greater responsibility. The SSP may have access to private information about the deaf-blind client, such as their banking information. Even information about a penchant for junk food is information that should not be shared. Clearly then, confidential-

²² SSPs should not "preach" about behavior, such as telling a DB person to stop smoking, save money, or eat healthily.

²³ Re- (again) -spect (look at as in spectacles, spectator).

ity is an issue. On the other hand, the SSPs greater access to both visual and linguistic information makes *withholding* of this information a question of exercising power inappropriately.

A related issue is that of *including* the deaf-blind person in conversations and what is going on. A typical scenario is that of a new SSP working with a deaf-blind client when a friend or acquaintance of the SSP appears and begins chatting, asking questions and so on. The new SSP, unaccustomed to the role and perhaps not yet quite comfortable communicating easily with the deaf-blind client will engage with their friend to the exclusion of the deaf-blind client. Judgment will determine whether it is more appropriate to make introductions and then quickly move on or to simply say something like, “I’m working now. See you later.”

Make sure to discuss the following:

- Access to information
- Conflict of interest
- Physical space and touch
- Other issues of the use of power that may not be immediately obvious in this discussion (e.g., issues of time, reliability, manners)

Objectives:

- Lay the foundation for ethical practices
- Exercise analytical thinking

4. Scenarios

Below are a list of scenarios that raise ethical and professional issues and/or issues of boundaries. To come to a good conclusion, the SSP must exercise judgment and consider the following:

- What are the issues?
- How do they implicate power relations?
- Is there a problem?
- If so, who “owns” the problem?
- What are the choices?

These may be used for in-class discussion, small group discussion, or homework.

1. The DB person for whom you serve as SSP keeps going over your allotted time—they regularly have more to do than can be reasonably accomplished in the scheduled timeframe. What should you do and why?
2. The DB person for whom you SSP is shopping for a new winter coat and wants your opinion about what to buy. What are the issues?
3. A new SSP wants to come with you on your assignment. What are the issues? What would you decide and why?
4. The DB person for whom you SSP wants to go to a gay bar during his SSP time. What are the issues? Is there a problem, and if so, who owns the problem? What to do?
5. The DB person for whom you SSP wants to use the SSP time to attend church and wants you to interpret. Problem?
6. The DB person for whom you SSP wants to bring his young son (aged four) with him to do errands. Problem?
7. You notice that the DB person for whom you SSP is charging lots of merchandise on her credit card, but you know she lives on a very small income. Problem?
8. You have been doing SSP work with person A for about three months. The two of you enjoy each other's company and decide to go away for a weekend with a group of people. It turns out badly since you and the DB person had an argument about money. Issues? Problem? Choices? Decisions?

Objectives:

- Lay the foundation for ethical practices
- Exercise analytical thinking

5. Review and Synthesis

Instructor reviews points made during the discussions.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Review ethical guidelines with this curriculum

Student Preparation

Review agency policies for SSPs

List of Materials

- a. Materials for writing notes on the class discussions (flip chart, chalkboard, etc.)

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What would be the biggest ethical challenges to SSP work?
- When and why would you be tempted to cross the line into unethical or unprofessional conduct? How will you protect yourself against this?
- What issues would you think give rise to the biggest problem for the greatest number of people (i.e., what do you think is the biggest challenge for most SSPs)?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Teacher-created essay test

Other Considerations

Depending on the experience and previous training/roles of the trainees, this lesson might have different emphases. For example, people who have already worked in a profession with a code of ethics may find some of this too familiar to be interesting but will need to focus on the subtleties of power relations and how this would apply to the SSP role. Others may have little or no experience with a professional code of ethics and need more time to absorb the basics in all the different ways they apply.

People in positions of authority, such as managers, teachers, and counselors, may have difficulty simply providing information without overtly or covertly, explicitly or subtly, trying to influence both choices and use of time.

2.3 SSP Module Two

Lesson Three: Internship

Lesson Overview

Supervised internship

This lesson focuses on overall professionalism and judgment, i.e. attitude.

Goal: Trainees will learn top-down discourse when describing something

Activities

This internship is designed to be offered at the same time and in tandem with all Module Two classes.

Internships in urban, well-established areas, with an experienced coordinator, can be managed under this system (see Appendix H, *Sample SSP Coordinator Job Description*). Internships in more rural areas where both SSPs and deaf-blind people are on their own, with only intermittent, distant supervision will be more challenging. It is not the skill development that is most challenging. The biggest issues are:

- Structure. A local coordinator is needed to schedule match-ups of times deaf-blind people want/need SSPs with the times SSPs have available.
- Support. Encouraging both deaf-blind people and SSPs to be assertive and supporting them in their negotiations toward a mutually satisfactory and beneficial working relationship.
- Role. Knowing how to be helpful without “doing for” or taking over is itself a skill that must be emphasized and developed for SSPs. Problems will inevitably arise. Without a local person to monitor, coach, and guide, the system falls apart.

Internship without supervision is not an internship. Unfortunately,

in a rural area, having enough people with the knowledge and skill to provide internships becomes a bit of a chicken-and-egg problem. Training is needed to develop the expertise, but expertise is assumed for there to be training. It is therefore important that an area new to these services have the support of people from an area experienced in providing services. It becomes a step-by-step process in which the coordinators/supervisors are trained in tandem with the SSPs and the deaf-blind people using the services.

1. Structure

The intern supervisor explains the match-ups and the schedule and follows up to see that it is working well for both the SSP and deaf-blind interns. Times can be somewhat flexible to accommodate holidays, illness, and so on, but the arrangement should begin with a regular schedule.

Times should be scheduled

1. To work,
2. To be observed, and
3. To debrief with one another and with the supervisor.

Objectives:

- Stability and predictability
- Maintenance of the system
- Good habits
- Trainee support as they grow
- Service development

2. Initial Interview

To begin the internship well, both trainees and supervisor(s) should have a clear (mutual) understanding of the time commitment, roles of all involved, and of expectations for performance.

Replacements and Substitutes

All trainees (SSP trainees and DB trainees) would ideally have the desire and opportunity to participate. It is clear, however, that after the initial training some participants will decide that while the information and skills were interesting and useful, the role is not one that suits them either for personal reasons or due to schedule difficulties.

As with coordination and supervision of interns, it is also necessary to plan for change, as in substitutions and recruitment of future SSPs.

Objectives:

- Stability and predictability
- Maintenance of the system

3. Local Resources

As mentioned above, one of the challenges is role boundaries. One of the issues is the need for skilled **interpreters** who know how to interpret for deaf-blind people. This becomes an issue because SSPs who know how to communicate effectively are sometimes inappropriately asked to interpret (either by the deaf-blind person or by others). It is therefore strongly recommended that interpreter training (to work with deaf-blind people) be a part of an overall plan; in other words, that the use of this curriculum be only one part of a larger overall plan to support and accommodate deaf-blind people in an area.

Social-recreational activities and access to them is another important resource. Deaf club activities (picnics, fund-raisers, sporting events) where there will be large numbers of deaf participants are often a good way for SSPs to get practical experience and also an opportunity to expose other members of the community who might be interested in becoming SSPs or simply socializing with deaf-blind people.

College faculty in ASL or Interpreter Training Programs can both help recruit people to be a part of the wider social network for deaf-blind people (e.g., at the ASL social hour at the local coffee shop) and as future SSPs and interpreters.

Objectives:

- Build a system that is mutually supportive (interpreters support SSPs, SSPs support interpreters, etc.)
- Promote a quality of life for deaf-blind people

Lesson Objectives: Application of knowledge, skills, and values/attitude

1. Ethics
2. Communication skills (modified ASL or English)
3. Communication with supervisor
4. Guiding skills
5. Focus, concentration
6. Understanding of the role
7. Reliability
8. Motivation and creativity

4. Review and Synthesis

At the conclusion of the internship, supervisors should conduct an exit interview to review the experience, bring closure, offer an opportunity for appreciation, and plan for the next steps.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

1. Arrange match-ups and budget
2. Coordinate with participants
3. Determine how interns will document their experiences

Student Preparation

Review skills, knowledge, and attitude learned

List of Materials

- a. Internship forms (see forms)

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What do you predict will be the biggest challenge?
- What do you predict you will enjoy the most?
- How will you manage your schedule (time)?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Journal the experience.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Meeting internship expectations (see forms)

Other Considerations

None

2.4 SSP Module Two

Lesson Four: Visual-Tactual Connection to the Environment

Lesson Overview

Using vision (of the SSP) and touch together

This lesson focuses on knowledge and the skill of critical thinking.

Goal: Participants will develop an awareness of how and when to provide a tactual experience/information along with the visual

Activities

1. Instructor briefly reviews the previous lesson on role and ethics.

Specifically, the instructor answers any remaining questions

Objectives:

- Review and refresh

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

1. “Where am I?”—Describing the environment
2. Touch and boundaries
3. The role of redundancy

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview

3. “Where am I?”

Visual information is

- For safety,
- Useful, and
- Interesting

These were outlined in the first lesson in this module describing the role of the SSP. Now we look more closely at both why we provide information and how.

Interesting

Interesting information includes setting the scene and supporting the deaf-blind person in making a connection with the environment.

What constitutes an environment?

- People (the social environment)
- Ambiance: lighting (dim, bright, mellow, filtered...), colors (bright, muted, beige or neutral, striking, contrasting, clashing...)
- Sense of space (open, crowded, cluttered, sparse...)
- Style and organization (formal, cozy, random, squared, circular...)

People are especially interesting to us all.

- Who is here?
- What are they doing?
- How are they acting (feelings, emotions, tone...)

Instructor plays a short, five-minute film clip (instructor chosen) and asks trainees what they saw. She then asks them to categorize what they say into safety issues, useful information, and interesting, and tell why.

Instructor then plays a second short, five-minute clip and repeats the exercise.

What strikes your eye? These might be unusual objects, such as pieces of art, hand-made chairs or objects that tell you something about the per-

son (such as their jewelry), mannerisms, or specifics about the space, such as the size and number of windows.

Objectives:

- Expand and refine the concept of “visual information”
- Exercise analytical thinking

4. A Film

Instructor divides the group into three groups for the viewing of a film (drama or documentary) roughly 20 to 30 minutes long (a TV program). The groups are then each assigned an analytical role. They will be asked to report out at the end.

1. Group one watches to see how the plot is developed—what happens and how do you know it?
2. Group two watches to see how the characters are manifested and developed—how is character established?
3. Group three watches to see how the mood or tone is set.

At the completion of the film, each group has about 10 minutes to confer with one another and to exchange notes, observations, and analysis. At the end of this time, each group is asked to report out to the others what they noticed.

Objectives:

- Expand and refine the concept of “visual information” and how it is used in telling a story or understanding what is said
- Exercise analytical thinking
- Encourage group learning and use of the resource of one’s colleagues

5. A Second Film

Trainees are shown one more short clip from a travelogue. Groups are asked the following:

1. Group one—What in this film would you like to touch or taste, and why?
2. Group two—How do the people in the film use touch? Why (your guess)?
3. Group three—Think about what you would like to touch in the film, and why?

6. Review and Synthesis

Instructor reviews points made during the discussions and briefly asks participants how this will apply to their work as SSPs.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Select and prepare film clips

Student Preparation

Review agency policies for SSPs

List of Materials

- a. Materials for writing notes on the class discussions (flip chart, chalkboard, etc.)

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What is the difference in the way each of the senses works? Compare and contrast hearing and vision, vision and touch, hearing and smell, and so on.
- What is the role of music in drama?
- What is the effect of the film being 2-D?

- How do you “see” the characters (clothes, gestures)?
- How and when would touch augment visual description?
- How can you use parallels or metaphors to make your descriptions more clear?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Keep a log of what you touch as opposed to “handle” everyday. That is other than to use it (keys, coat), manipulate it (utensils for cooking, eating), or direct it (door handle, car steering wheel). What do you touch? Note how this is related to what you see or look at. Why do you touch?

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Class participation

Other Considerations

1. The kind and amount of touch used is highly influenced by culture. Clearly people in some cultures touch each other more/less than people in other cultures and indeed touch things more or less. Participants in the class may come from backgrounds where this is relevant. If so, be sure to raise this question and discuss their perceptions (thoughts, ideas on the subject).

2.5 SSP Module Two

Lesson Five: Lab: Visual-Tactual Shopping Center

Lesson Overview

Using vision (of the SSP) and touch together

This lesson focuses on skill. It gives trainees an opportunity to practice skill without affecting a real deaf-blind client, and it gives them an opportunity to experience “being” a deaf-blind client.

Goal: Participants will develop an awareness of how and when to provide a tactual experience/information along with the visual

Activities

This lesson takes place in a busy city or town area where participants have a comfortable place to sit—perhaps in a coffee shop, a farmer’s market, a busy mall, or a museum—with a good view of the public both inside and outside and an interesting place to move around in to describe. The instructor should choose a good place where participants can do the exercise described below and gather together for a group discussion (these may be different places).

1. Instructor briefly reviews the previous lesson on vision and touch.

Specifically, the instructor answers any remaining questions and reminds trainees of the principles of providing access to information through reporting what is seen and by giving an opportunity to touch.

Objectives:

- Review and refresh
- Prepare for the current lesson

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

- Application of theory (re: vision and touch)

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview
- Stimulate making connections between the last lesson and this one

3. At the City Center

All participants gather at a central place in town, and the instructor pairs up the trainees. Trainees are to practice providing visual information that sets the scene and piques interest and to combine this with the use of touch.

Half use blindfolds and earplugs while the other half act as SSPs. They do this for about forty-five minutes and then switch roles. At the end of the hour and a half, all re-group to discuss the experience.

Objectives:

- Practice and refine skills

4. Review and Synthesis

Instructor leads the discussion (see Key Questions below). In closing, ask the trainees what they will do next to improve their skills; do they have questions of one another; plans or suggestions to share?

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Find or choose a location for the class

Student Preparation

Review handout from previous lesson

List of Materials

- a. blindfolds and earplugs

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What was your experience as a “deaf-blind” person?
- What was most challenging to you in the role of SSP?
- What did you learn?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

None

2.6 SSP Module Two

Lesson Six: Assertiveness I

Lesson Overview

Assertiveness vs. non-assertive communication

This lesson focuses on knowledge (concepts), skill (recognizing non-assertive communication), and attitude (respect as reflected in communication).

Goal: Trainees will be able to distinguish assertiveness from other kinds of self-expression.

Activities

1. Review: “Any questions?”

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

The concept of “assertiveness” as distinct from other kinds of self-assertion.

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview

3. Definitions

The instructor explains the concept of “assertiveness” and contrasts it with other forms of social interactions. Assertiveness is self-assured, clear communication that respects one’s self and others. It is problem-oriented (not hurtful or punishing). It is confident and not defensive. It is present and open: clear and attentive to responses. It is honest.

Communication that is not assertive can be said to be passive (detached, uninvolved), hostile and aggressive, cold and withdrawing, or

meek and submissive. It can also be “passive-aggressive,” masking hostility in seemingly innocent communication.

Objectives:

- Explain the concept

Discussion: Trainees are then asked to reflect on their own experience and to provide examples and analyses of these communications. The goal in this discussion is not to come up with right/wrong answers or “correct labels” but to collectively improve trainees’ awareness of healthy communication.

The instructor reminds trainees that communication includes behavior as well as words or language.

Objective:

- Refine trainees’ understanding of these terms

4. Motivation

Instructor identifies the SSP-to-client relationship as a relationship between individuals, individuals with very different world experiences and thus communication—both clear self-expression and open, honest listening—is paramount.

After being cautioned that what is discussed in the training session is to remain confidential, trainees are asked to identify instances in their internship where and how communication could/should have been improved by a more open, clear communication.

Objectives:

- Encourage application and generalization of the concept

5. Scenarios

Trainees are divided into groups of three or four, given a handout with five scenarios each, and asked to identify the dysfunctional versus more healthy communication in these scenes. How could these interactions

have been improved? They are given 30 minutes to read and discuss the scenarios.²⁴ At the end of the 30 minutes, they are asked to report back to the larger group, identifying the following for each scenario:

- The group's collective characterization of the communication in them,
- Their rationale, and
- Their suggestion for how the communication could/should have been improved.

See teacher notes after each scenario below.

Scenario 1:

Mike is deaf-blind. Mary is his SSP. They work together once every two weeks and sometimes communicate in between assignments using e-mail. Sometimes this is relevant to their work; for example, Mike gives Mary a preview of what he wants to do during their next assignment. Other times he simply sends a chatty e-mail or forwards something interesting he has gotten himself. Lately, Mike has begun e-mailing Mary more and more often. Mary has been responding about once a week, regardless of how often Mike e-mails her.

The instructor should be aware that we are inferring feelings on the part of both Mike and Mary. We have no information about why Mike is sending more e-mail or his expectations of Mary. We also have no information about Mary's feelings about receiving these e-mails. His sending the e-mail and her response cannot be characterized accurately without this additional information. Trainee's interpretations of these scenarios are therefore somewhat of a Rorschach test.

This is an important part of this lesson (i.e., assertive communication is clear, not based on guesswork). Mary needs to first be clear with herself about her own perceptions (the guesses she is making about Mike's motivations or intentions) and her own feelings and intentions. She can then

²⁴ Depending on the group, the instructor may ask the trainees to discuss all five or may divide up scenarios among small groups of trainees.

communicate either directly or indirectly about them. Assertiveness does not require “directness.” It only requires clarity.

Scenario 2:

Claire is deaf-blind. Carla is her SSP. They are scheduled to work together once every two weeks. Claire is elderly and is often ill. Because of this, their schedule is often disrupted. Carla has reported this by e-mail to the SSP coordinator who replies by asking Carla if this is all right or if this is a problem. Carla has mixed feelings; she recognizes that Claire cannot control when she becomes ill, but she is annoyed that her own schedule is disrupted by it. She talks with Patty, who is also an SSP (but not with Claire), and asks Patty what she should do. It has been two weeks, and Carla has not replied to the coordinator.

The instructor should draw out that we do not know much about Claire’s illness. It might be a passive-aggressive way of manipulating an SSP. On the other hand, it might be a self-destructive submission to an illness she need not have, or finally, a real illness over which she has no control. The point is, we don’t know and without real knowledge, it is not relevant to Carla’s communication. On the other hand, it’s possible that if this is manipulative behavior, it may be something of which Carla is only subconsciously aware, in which case she still needs to do more self-examination to bring these feelings or intuitions to consciousness and then evaluate what to do about it.

Ask what we know about Carla’s feelings, about the coordinator’s feelings, and how this relates to trainees’ characterizations of each of their communications. Finally, ask what Patty’s possible responses are and how trainees would evaluate each and why.

Scenario 3:

Jason is deaf-blind, and Judy is his SSP. Jason is losing his hearing, and while he can still hear enough to carry on one-to-one conversations in quiet places, he cannot follow a group conversation, and he cannot hear in a noisy environment. Judy has been his SSP for four months now, and she is

concerned that he misses so much and thinks that Jason's knowing sign language would be very useful to him. Judy talks to him during one of their assignments and tells him how much he would benefit. Jason does not respond. He continues to focus on the task of shopping for groceries, but he is more quiet than usual.

Ask: "What do we know about Judy's motives?" Note that a positive motivation (to be helpful) does not exonerate the "preaching" behavior. Kind as it may seem on the surface, and regardless of whether what she says is true, the instructor should help students to see that it is in reality outside the bounds of acceptable SSP behavior. Talk about why communication is an especially personal topic for deaf-blind people. Ask trainees which factors may change the nature of the behavior; for example, if Jason and Judy had been working together for four years instead of four months and had a friend relationship outside the SSP relationship. Raise the issue of context, when and where the topic was raised (not while they were out for coffee as friends when there would have been time to really listen to Jason's feelings and have a conversation).

Ask trainees what we know about Jason's feelings (and how). What can we infer, and why? How would you characterize Judy's communication (and why)? How would you characterize Jason's response (and why)? Again, the goal is not to get a right/wrong answer but to complicate trainees' understandings of these concepts and how they apply to work as SSPs.

Scenario 4:

Bill is deaf-blind and Bonnie, who is sighted, is not his SSP, but she often helps him by giving him rides or giving him visual information when they are together at different community events. Bill is beginning to ask Bonnie for help more and more often. Bonnie likes Bill and does not mind being helpful (indeed, she enjoys it), but it is becoming a bit too much. Bonnie tells Bill she notices he has been asking her to help out more often and that it is becoming a bit too much for her. She suggests some kind of gauge, such as two or three

times a month, and then they can do whatever he wants, whatever seems priority to him. Bill says okay, and he keeps track of how often he asks for help from Bonnie. Once in a while he starts to ask Jeremy for help, too.

This is intended to be an example of assertiveness on the part of both Bill and Bonnie. See if the trainees try to make up something to make it non-assertive. See if they can explain why they think it is assertive or not. The reasoning of the trainees will be the most valuable and instructive part of the lesson.

Scenario 5:

Bob is deaf-blind, and Bruce is his SSP. They work together once a week. Given that Bruce's schedule is very flexible and that he likes Bob's company, Bruce does not mind that they go over their allotted time once in a while without being concerned about money. Bruce does not bill for this overtime.

Bruce often tells Bob news of the community while they are working together and also often complains about other SSPs. He notices that many are new and not really very good signers. He says sometimes they are late or take a break for a cigarette. It bothers Bruce that they are not skilled and professional.

This scenario is intended to illustrate that aggressive behavior can be indirect. That is, Bruce's negative feelings are toward other SSPs, not directed towards Bob. It is also intended to be used as an opportunity for trainees to hypothesize about what Bob may be thinking and feeling. Perhaps he especially likes working with Bruce because of his willingness to work overtime without objection or pay, his skills (we may infer that Bruce is a good signer), and because he is interesting (bringing news of the community). Perhaps the gossip makes Bob leery of using other SSPs, maybe afraid that at some point Bruce will not want to work with him, and then he'd be stuck with bad SSPs. All this may deter Bob from confronting Bruce about his critical gossiping. Bob may even be concerned that Bruce gossips about him (about Bob) when he is with others since he gossips so freely about others to Bob.

Objectives:

- Help trainees recognize aggressive, passive-submissive, and passive-aggressive behavior in themselves and others
- Lead to more clear, honest communication between SSPs and deaf-blind people
- Encourage analytical thinking

6. Review and Synthesis

Ask trainees to think about their own communication and behavior that may be motivated by factors outside the situation, yet cause problems (for example, chronic lateness or making excuses for not improving one's skill in sign language). Ask them to be more aware of healthy communication for the next week and see what they notice. Are there patterns?

Lesson Preparation**Instructor Preparation**

Review scenarios, perhaps create a few more or different ones

Student Preparation

None, or teacher-assigned reading on assertiveness

List of Materials

- a. Something for the instructor to write on as participants report out of discussion groups to note main points

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What patterns do you have that could be called passive-aggressive?

- Have you ever given someone help and had him react negatively? What do you think their reaction was about?
- Have you ever been the recipient of help that was not wanted? How did you react, and why? If you were to do it again, would you react in the same way or if differently, how and why?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Apply to internship. The types, availability, and relative formality of internships will vary by situation in which this curriculum is applied or used. Some internships will be informal in which case trainees need only sign up. Others will be more formal and require filling out paperwork, consulting with potential site coordinators or supervisors and so on. In any case, the process should begin at this time.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation

Teacher-created quiz based on other scenarios

Other Considerations

1. We all have less-than-perfect habits of managing relationships. Be aware of trainee defenses (and your own).

2.7 SSP Module Two

Lesson Seven: Figure-Ground Distinctions in Discourse

Lesson Overview

Top-down discourse for unfamiliar places and the place of detail

This lesson focuses on knowledge and skill.

Goals: Trainees will learn top-down discourse when describing something new and focus on detail for the otherwise familiar.

Activities

1. Review: “Any questions?”

2. Instructor gives an overview of the current lesson

The role and importance of context vis-à-vis detail

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview

3. Explaining the concept of “top-down”

The instructor explains the concept of “top-down” thinking. When you first read a new menu, you glance over the entire thing to get a sense of it. How big is it? How fancy is it? You then look at the kind of food offered—Greek, Italian, vegetarian—and then at the categories: appetizers, soups and salads, entrees, beverages, and desserts. Depending on your mood, you then focus on the particulars of a category. At some point you glance at the prices: first for an overall sense of the prices in general and then at the price of a particular meal you’re interested in ordering and how it compares to other items of interest.

This is the approach to reading a menu to a deaf-blind person as well. The same is true of the newspaper. Is this the New York Times or the Enquirer, and what are the categories, the headlines?

It is the same approach to reading the mail. What is the size of the mail delivery (probably the deaf-blind person had handled the mail and already has a sense of its bulk)? What percentage is advertisements, junk mail, business, or personal? On what does the deaf-blind person want to concentrate first? Then what?

Reading and signing for the deaf-blind person the contents of a menu, newspaper, or set of mail is distinguished from interpreting by the subject matter (relatively familiar and easy to comprehend) and the lack of any time pressure. The meaning of the menu can be made clear in five minutes or 30. The constraints of interpreting for accuracy of details and completeness are also lacking (it is not necessary to interpret all the ingredients for each entrée, or all the advertisements in the stack of mail).

Objectives:

- Explain the concept

Discussion: Trainees are then asked to reflect how this concept would apply to entering a new store. What would you do if you were going to the same store as usual but the management had rearranged everything?

Objectives:

- Encourage application and generalization of the concept

4. Orientation and Scale

Trainees are then asked to draw a map from the place of training to their home or where they are staying during the training. This should take no more than five minutes. Trainees then share their drawings or maps with one another. Did anyone run out of room on the paper? How did others avoid doing so? Starting by locating major points first is helpful.

The instructor now asks how this relates to the previous discussion of top-down descriptions.

The instructor then adds the dimension of orientation or the relationship between objects in the larger context. For example, in the map there is spatial orientation. Objects are a certain distance from one another—some people may live 30 minutes away from the training site while others may live only a few blocks away. Given that everyone used a regular sheet of paper, the amount of detail would vary depending on the amount of space to be drawn and ellipses may be used. That is, if the distance is 30 miles and 25 of those miles are driven on the Interstate Highway, it would not be necessary to represent all of those 25 miles at the same scale as the turns and blocks nearer each end point on the map. A wavy line, a set of parallel bars, or other conventions may represent such ellipses. In other words, it is not simply omitted. Its presence is represented, simply not to scale.

Key Question: How would this apply to SSP work?

Objectives:

- Help trainees recognize how they have been applying the concept of top-down thinking themselves in different contexts
- Reinforce the concept of top-down by making the concept concrete
- Encourage further application (to work as an SSP)
- Add the concepts of orientation and scale
- Encourage analytical thinking

5. Familiarity and Focus

The instructor then draws attention to the next logical point that if a person is going to a restaurant for the tenth time and is familiar with the place, its style, type of food, prices, and so on, it is not necessary to start at the top. The SSP may simply ask the deaf-blind person where they would like to start, what they are interested in reading. At the same time, if there are advertised specials or changes in the menu, the SSP should alert the deaf-blind client to this information.

6. Review and Synthesis

Instructor asks the trainees if this discussion has been helpful and how they will use it in their internship.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

None

Student Preparation

None, or teacher-prepared handout

List of Materials

a. paper

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What draws something to your attention?
- When you get dressed to go out, and you look in the mirror to see how you look, what is the process you use?
- How do you like people to give you directions (written, draw a map, other)? Why?
- How would the “top-down” approach to reading mail apply to reading e-mail? Video material?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

None

2.8 SSP Module Two

Lesson Eight: Internship: Exit Interview

Lesson Overview

Review of internship experience and planning for the future

This lesson focuses on analysis (the skill of self-awareness, self-assessment, and application).

Goals: Trainees will assess their experience and apply the results of this analysis to their future professional work as SSPs.

Activities

1. Review: Summary of the experience (listing activities, key learnings, questions, etc.)

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and grounding for the following discussion

2. Instructor guides the participant through a review of the goals of internship as laid out in lesson 2.3.

Objectives:

- Provide framework

3. Instructor asks for participant's own evaluation of successes and breakdowns vis-à-vis these goals.

Instructor makes sure to acknowledge successes as well as breakdowns (and breakdowns as well as successes) as part of the learning experience.

Instructor makes sure to recognize participants' meta-skills, such as self-awareness and ability to make corrections.

Instructor makes sure to recognize “soft skills” such as a sense of humor, faithfulness, and reliability, but is aware of when these are being used in place of skill, real change/growth (for example using humor to avoid changing bad habits).

Trainees are asked to reflect on the internship experience as a whole and how this experience fits with prior learning. “What have you learned about *yourself* in this experience?”

Objectives:

- Reinforce learning
- Set direction for future learning
- Opportunity to synthesize thoughts and feelings/emotions
- Encourage application and generalization of the skills and concepts
- Encourage self-awareness and personal growth as a part of professional growth

4. Review and Synthesis

Instructor brings the session to a close with appreciation for the trainee's participation in the course and encouragement to continue as an SSP, reminding them of the uniqueness of each of us and our contribution to the community. In cases in which the trainee has done outstanding work, the instructor recognizes this. In cases in which the trainee has shown a lack of aptitude or greater gifts in another area, the instructor encourages the trainee to recognize other ways in which he or she can contribute to the quality of life of deaf-blind people (e.g., as companion, interpreter, or volunteer).

Objectives:

- Closure
- Encourage analytical thinking, self-awareness, synthesis, and application (awareness of implications)

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Review of internship goals for this trainee

Student Preparation

Review of experience

Journaling

List of Materials

- a. Paper on which to make notes

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What have you learned about yourself in this experience?
- What was most important about this experience, and why?
- What was frustrating?
- How can we improve this experience for future trainees?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Self-analysis/awareness as demonstrated in the discussion

Other Considerations

1. Instructors should be aware of the trainee's style of dealing with this kind of session and instruct accordingly (i.e., some students

are too hard on themselves, some students use emotions to avoid analysis or dealing with the need for change, and some blame others for breakdowns or failures and so on). The goal here is learning and encouragement through SSP work but includes challenging dysfunctional learning patterns. Instructors themselves will have to be skilled at such confrontation so that it has a constructive effect and leads to positive change.

Module Three

SSP Intermediate: Overview

Description

Module Three prepares an experienced SSP to do work at the next level. The SSP entering this module has the knowledge and skill to work effectively when there is confusion/distraction, but has not yet advanced the skill of providing clear, detailed descriptions of the scenes or people, or have an understanding of the theory behind doing so.

Examples of post-Module Three assignments include: accompanying a deaf-blind person to a new area (on a tour, recreational outing, vacation, or all-day meeting or conference). Here the SSP would be able to communicate the ambiance and social dynamics of other participants as well as salient details that give the place and event a sense of particularity (why this place, these people, and this event are distinct from others).

Prerequisites for Trainees

Trainees should be

- fluent in conversational-level sign language and consultative discourse,
- regular, participating members of a deaf-blind community,
- experienced SSPs, and
- familiar with the structure of ASL and have meta-knowledge about the language and familiarity with the linguistic terms used to describe its elements.

Instructor Qualifications

Instructors for this module should be a team of one (or more) deaf-blind instructor(s) who knows about and uses SSPs, and one experienced SSP. Instructors should have teaching skills, be active and respected members of the deaf-blind community and have attended at least one AADB conference and preferably other statewide events as well.

The instructional team should be able to communicate effectively

with all trainees whether directly or through an interpreter.²⁵ The instructor(s) should have a working understanding of the theory of visual information such as distinctions between information that is useful/interesting, between being passive or active, and comfort in the role of “employer” (i.e., assertively giving direction to SSPs).

If there are no qualified deaf-blind instructors available, then it is even more important that the non-DB teacher have the respect of local deaf-blind community members. This instructor should make sure to host panels of deaf-blind people, show quality video material, invite deaf-blind guest speakers to the class, and otherwise endeavor to have the deaf-blind perspective well represented.

It is also important that instructors for this module be familiar with the structure of ASL and have meta-knowledge about the language and familiarity with the linguistic terms used to describe its elements. They should be familiar with the theories of the uses of vision (e.g., figure/ground distinctions, passive seeing vs. active looking).

Module Objectives

At the successful completion of this module, trainee SSPs will be able to:

- communicate the ambiance,
- communicate the social dynamics of participants, and
- convey salient details that give this place and this event a sense of particularity.

At the successful completion of this module, trainee SSPs will be aware of:

- the principles of seeing passively versus actively,
- the concept of figure/ground,
- the distinction between information that is useful versus interesting, and

²⁵ We are speaking here of the communication skill (beyond language) to quickly recognize the best approach to meet the trainee “where he is at” linguistically, culturally, educationally, and experientially to explain the concepts in this lesson. It is expected that deaf-blind trainees will vary greatly in such background.

- the importance of combining description with an invitation to touch as a way to enhance the experience.

3.1 SSP Module Three

Lesson One: Vision, Attention and Meaning

Instructional team: All faculty present (each team should ideally have at least two deaf-blind faculty members).

Lesson Overview

This lesson explores the concept of “visual information” including modes of attention, the concept of figure/ground (the object of our focused attention: figure, versus what we see in the background: ground) and “context” as a frame creating “meaning.”

The focus of the lesson is on self-observation and analytical thinking.

Goal: Trainees will become aware of the various uses of vision and the relative importance of different kinds of “visual information” (as foundation for later skill development in describing what they see).

Activities

1. Introduction to Faculty and Students

Lead instructor (deaf-blind) introduces her/himself to the students and relates the purpose of the training. Then the deaf-blind instructors greet each trainee personally, touching hands. Depending on how well known they are to one another, this personal greeting will be very brief (simply a greeting) or include where they are from and (in a nutshell) why they are taking the training. If trainees and instructors are mostly all new to one another, this is followed by a more extensive group “round-robin” in which trainees then briefly describe their prior experiences working/socializing with deaf-blind people.

Objectives:

- Re-establishes mode of touch as primary and helps trainees focus on expressing themselves tactually
- Establishes direct connection with DB instructors who do not see trainees

2. Instructor then asks students to report results of homework (see below, Student Preparation)

The instructor asks trainees what they noticed in response to the pre-training “thought question.” As the participants respond, the instructor writes the comments on a flip chart so all can see and have it reinforced (see Appendix A, Visual Information).

Objectives:

- Identify the largely unconscious mental processes through which we use our vision
- Notice the patterns and similarities among all participants in the use of these processes
- Specifically, become aware of the shift between a relatively neutral, broad focus to a conscious, attentive focus

3. Vision, Attention and Meaning

Modes of Attention

Tying the previous discussion to theory, the instructor then moves to a discussion of different ways of “seeing/looking” defined by the amount of attention given.

- Passive seeing is not looking at any one thing in particular (as when walking down a familiar street) but absently noticing things as they come into view
- Focused looking is when reading, threading a needle or looking at a painting

- Monitoring (focused on something else but being aware of changes and ready to respond as when having a conversation with a friend but monitoring the actions of the children, or having a leisurely dinner but watching the time so you're not late for the next event)
- Scanning is a way of quickly shifting focus or attention across a broad area, looking for something specific, for example:
 - moving focus across an area in search of one particular thing (scanning to see where I put my keys)
 - moving focus across an area for one of a type of things (scanning the picnic area for an empty spot)
 - moving focus across an area around a broad area for a sense of place (scanning a friend's apartment the first time you enter).

This discussion also introduces the concept of “figure/ground.”

Assigning Meaning

We use our vision to gain a sense of place, to feel oriented, and know where we are. Accordingly, we feel safe or tense, relaxed or focused and so on. We ascribe meaning to what we see. What we see is interpreted by us to mean something. We evaluate what we see.

- Is it useful?
- Is it interesting?

And so on...

If it is not dangerous, useful or interesting, we likely move it to the background of our attention. But we see it nonetheless.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness
 - of what has largely become an unconscious process (seeing and looking)
 - of how we use what we see, and

- the connection between vision and attention (thinking)
- Change the mode of attention to seeing so that it can be relayed to DB people
- Provide vocabulary for talking about ways of seeing

4. Setting a Scene – What do you see?

The instructor presents a slide show.²⁶ Trainees study each picture using their meta- awareness to observe themselves seeing at the same time. That is, trainees look at the picture and analyze it while thinking about what they are doing—how they are using their vision and attention to interpret what they see. (See below section on materials.) The slide show should include multiple examples of things that could be given the same label, for example the category “grocery store.” The SSP should be asking her/himself “What makes this grocery store a particular kind of grocery store? Is it a supermarket? Is it modern? What makes me say so? What is remarkable about its size, lighting fixtures, layout, paint scheme, or color palette? The slide show should contain at least three separate categories (e.g., grocery stores, parks, trees) and at least three samples of each (e.g., grocery stores: supermarket, corner market, natural foods market, ethnic market).

Instructor shows the slides slowly without comment.

Objectives:

- Concretize awareness (i.e., apply theory and exercise this dual awareness of what one is seeing and how one is processing this input)

5. Discussion – Lecture

Instructor asks for participants’ reflections on these observations, drawing attention to two ways of thinking: “top down” and “bottom up.”

- Top down is big-picture to detail
- Bottom up is detail to big-picture

²⁶ Instructor can create a PowerPoint using photos inserted into the slides.

When describing ways of reasoning we call them deductive and inductive respectively. When we are familiar with a topic or place, we identify it first by category (top-down) and then focus on details. When we are not familiar with it, we try to form a category by observing the details (bottom-up) and build its identity.

Therefore, when we're describing "a store" we know we have a category for that, and describe it top-down. The amount of detail we provide will depend on how significant those details are, i.e., how meaningful.

Objectives:

- Reinforce visual awareness
- Provide a framework for thinking about how we approach descriptions and why

6. Exercise: Describing the Scene

The instructor asks participants to seat themselves in two rows facing one another in teams of two or three. One row should be facing the front of the room where the instructor will show a series of pictures. (See materials below.) The people in the row facing the picture will describe the picture to the person opposite (the mock DB person) who cannot see the picture. All the scenes are familiar ones and readily identifiable (a park, a residential street, downtown central business district).

When the trainee describing the picture feels satisfied that they have provided an adequate description, they inform the listener who then turns to see the picture themselves. This mock DB person who has been listening to the description then gives feedback as to the accuracy and adequacy of the description—what was missing, distorted, or misunderstood.

This is repeated with the next picture with the trainees reversing position.

After two rounds (each person has had a turn to describe to the same partner twice), switch partners and repeat.

Objectives:

- Become aware of what makes up “a scene”
- Begin to figure out
 - What categories need more elaboration (detail)
 - Which details need more emphasis in a description and which less

7. Discussion

The instructor elicits observations, thoughts, feelings, and insights from the participants. The instructor helps trainees to articulate them, and relates them to the theory presented early in the lesson.

Key Question: Were these pictures interesting or not, and why?

Objectives:

- Reinforce and broaden awareness

8. Review and Synthesis

Instructor reviews the major points of the Lesson

- How we see—levels of attention
- Where we put our attention—top-down or bottom-up, and why
- The connections between seeing, attention, interpretation or meaning, and experience

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

- a. PowerPoint of types of vision, uses of vision, etc.
- b. Sets of slide shows of pictures (See materials below)
- c. Flip chart or whiteboard on which to write

Send out pre-training assignments to the students with clear instructions

Student Preparation

Pre-thinking assignment: “How do you use your vision?”
Observe yourself seeing this week. Notice how you use your eyes to see/look. What do you do in a new environment? How do you change the way you look/see in different settings, during different activities?

Review Chapters 3 and 4 in the reference text (Themes and Manners) and Chapter 13 Describing What You See.

List of Materials

- a. Instructor should gather multiple pictures of scenes for the first exercise above (simply looking). These pictures should be ones that could be given the same label, e.g. “grocery store.” This is to make the point that because not all grocery stores are alike, to simply report to a DB person that what you see is a grocery store is insufficient visual information.
- b. A second set of pictures for trainees to describe to one another (see element five above, “Describing the picture.” These pictures should be of scenes, or places in which people are not the focus.

Handouts

Handout on “Seeing, Looking, and the SSP” (not yet developed)

Key Questions

- What do we see; where do we look, and why?
- What is the relationship between seeing and looking?
- What are the three ASL signs for “look-at,” “watch,” and “observe”?
- What is the major distinction between these signs?
- How does the theory and skill presented here relate to being a good SSP?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Thought question: Given the seemingly unique ability of the visual channel to convey spatial information, how can the tactual channel convey spatial information?

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Instructor observations of trainees' performance during the exercises.

Other Considerations

None

3.2 SSP Module Three

Lesson Two: Establishing Perspective(s)

Instructional team: One deaf-blind faculty member and one experienced SSP.

Lesson Overview

Describing scenes, establishing perspective, and other spatial relations in TASL

This lesson focuses on theory and skill.

Goals:

- This lesson focuses on the skills of identifying or establishing perspective, shifting perspective and alternating between identifying perspective (and spatial relationship), and describing physical space
- Trainees will learn new techniques for conveying location, perspective, and spatial relations tactually
- Trainees will be introduced to the importance of providing visual information and its role in feeling oriented

Activities

1. Review

Instructor leads a review of the previous lesson:

- How we see—levels of attention
- Where we put our attention—top-down or bottom-up, and why
- The connections between seeing, attention, interpretation or meaning, and experience

Instructor then leads a discussion of the pre-workshop (thought ques-

tion): “Given the unique ability of the visual channel to convey spatial information, how can the tactual channel convey spatial information?”

Objectives:

- Re-establish the importance of understanding how as well as what we see and what that means.
- Foundation for current lesson

2. Exercise: Establishing Location and Describing Perspective

Key Questions:

What is spatial information?

What is its value?

Lecture: Instructor introduces another set of slides (see materials below) by talking about perspective. Slides show objects/perspectives such as looking up at a tall building, looking across a valley, two people looking at one another, a distance shot, or conversely, a close-up.

TASL will, like visual ASL, reflect our *perceptions*, that is how tall, far, etc., it *seems* as well as objective information.

Techniques: How to indicate perspective? Instructor demonstrates using one of the slides and signing ASL. Instructor then calls for a volunteer from the participants and demonstrates how it would be modified for TASL.

When there are multiple perspectives, each must be identified or framed. Instructor demonstrates.

Exercise: Again, as in lesson one, participants sit in rows and pair off with the person across from them. The person facing the screen describes the visuals.

Objectives:

- Apply principle of perspective
- Improve skill at using ASL to describe a scene

3. Exercise: Shifting Simple (One-Way) Perspective

The instructor introduces a visual film (for example one of the series “Over...” such as *Over Washington*). The scenes in the film appear to move but, of course, it is the camera perspective that is changing while the land remains where it is. Flying over and thus looking down at the landscape, TASL will, like visual ASL, reflect our perceptions, that it is the land that is moving.

Techniques: How to show the land, shifting and changing below us? Instructor demonstrates.

When the perspective shifts (i.e., the camera looks ahead at the mountains or above at the sky), the “look-at” sign is used to indicate or frame this new perspective. Instructor demonstrates.

Exercise: Again, as in lesson one, participants sit in rows and pair off with the person across from them. The person facing the screen describes the visuals.

Objectives:

- Apply principle of perspective
- Improve skill at using ASL to describe a scene

4. Lecture and Demonstration: Non-Dominant Hand as ‘Map’

Instructor introduces the technique of using the non-dominant hand as a “map” on which to place objects such as cities. Thus the non-dominant hand (NDH) can be used to represent the state of Washington (palm up as the palm is more sensitive to touch than the back of the hand) and the relative location and distance between cities can be represented by touching various parts of the palm to show where they are located.

Similarly, the NDH can be used to represent the city and parts of the city located on the palm to indicate their relative orientation/location and distance. Shrinking the scale further, it can represent a campus, building, or a single room in a building.

Extending this technique allows us to use the NDH as an object (e.g.,

a book, to show how far through the book we are, or how far down the page we are reading, or as a table to show where people are seated relative to one another). It should be noted that the ASL use of pointing to index (locate) people or items is not useful to someone who cannot see.

Finally, the signer's body or the body of the DB person can be used to indicate location, for example of sleeve length, boot height, and so on.

Instructor then demonstrates using both visuals (projected visual maps) and the techniques described.

5. Exercise

This technique is now practiced using the game of "Telephone." Trainees line up in small lines of perhaps four for each line. They face away from the front of the room and the projection screen. The instructor then projects a map of an unfamiliar state (far from the home state where the training is being offered). The first person in each line turns around and studies the map. When the first person in each line has had time to retain what they have seen, the projection is turned off. This first person in each line then taps the second person in line on the shoulder, who turns around to face the first person. This first person then uses the "non-dominant hand as map" to locate the three major cities on the receiving hand of the next person in line, identifying the state and spelling out the names of the cities first. When they understand, they repeat the process of conveying the information, turning to tap the third person in line and tell them tactually where the three cities are located.

6. Shifting Perspective

The instructor helps trainees recall ways that ASL shows a change in perspective or frame.

Instructor then shows the film from the perspective of a person walking through a house, from room to room, pausing for descriptions of each room. SSPs practice showing the layout (using the NDH as a map) and ASL discourse to show a shift in perspective as one moves forward, turns left or right, etc., to go from room to room and then briefly describes each.

Objective:

- Scaffold (combine) skills of identifying perspective, describing a place from a single perspective and finally shifting perspective

The exercise is then repeated with a second and even third film to give trainees more practice.

Once participants have achieved some fluency, the instructor should organize the trainees into pairs once again, one facing away from the screen as a mock DB person. The mock SSP then describes his or her own house or apartment, including its layout. When they have finished, the mock DB person then uses a placemat-sized piece of paper representing the footprint of the house to draw the basic outline of the house/apt. and its rooms in their respective locations. He or she chooses one room to re-describe (to feed back the description of the room as they heard it). Again, this should be repeated to give everyone a chance to be the person giving the description and the person receiving the description.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Student Preparation

Pre-thinking assignment: “What would be different between observing a scene and looking at people?”

List of Materials

- a. Instructor-created set of slides showing a wide variety of types of perspectives.
- b. A second set of instructor-gathered pictures for trainees to describe relations to one another (a map, various devices, a campus building).
- c. Instructor-created films (at least three) of “walking through a house”
- d. Flip chart

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- Other than for mobility, what is the importance of spatial relations to a DB person?
- How are spatial relations including position and perspective used metaphorically?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Thought Question: What would be different between observing a scene and looking at people?

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Instructor observations of trainees' performances during the exercises. Any of these can also be used as a performance quiz and trainees graded/evaluated accordingly

Other Considerations

None

3.3 SSP Module Three

Lesson Three: Seeing People

Instructional team: One deaf-blind faculty member and one experienced SSP.

Lesson Overview

Describing People

This lesson focuses on theory and skill.

Goal: Trainees will learn to establish personality/style/type and other unique characteristics in TASL

Activities

1. Review

Instructor leads a review of the previous lesson:

- Techniques for conveying spatial relations using TASL.
- Thought question: “Other than for mobility, what is the importance of spatial relations to a DB person?”
- Thought question: “How are spatial relations, including position and perspective, used metaphorically?”

Instructor then leads a discussion of the homework (thought question): What would be different between observing a scene and looking at people?

Objectives:

- Review and reinforce learning
- Reinforce the importance of the habit of critical analysis beyond simple skill building
- Set the foundation skills and ideas for current lesson

2. People – What do you see?

The instructor presents a slide show of different people²⁷ instructing trainees to analyze

- who they think these people are,
- what terms do they use internally to label or identify them, and
- what are the cues or details that lead them to these identifications?

Trainees then silently study each picture using their meta-awareness to observe themselves seeing and answering the questions above. That is, how they are “interpreting” what they see. (See below section on materials.)

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of the instantaneous nature of our evaluations and interpretations of what we are seeing and how that affects our work
- Develop a meta-awareness of where these evaluations come from
- Develop the habit of distinguishing
 - what we see (i.e., the clothes, postures, actions)
 - from what we perceive (e.g., the person’s status, role, and feelings) and
 - from what we think/feel about what we see (i.e., our evaluation)²⁸

3. Discussion

Instructor asks for participants’ reflections on these observations, making sure to draw distinctions mentioned above—between what we see (colors, shapes, postures, facial expressions), what we perceive or interpret (the person is an executive, police officer, angry, in love, etc.), and our eval-

²⁷ Instructor can create a PowerPoint using photos inserted in the slides.

²⁸ Note the root word of evaluation is *value*.

uation of that interpretation (assignment of meaning). The group may then review a few of the key slides slowly, one at a time relating them to trainee comments.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of details and big-picture distinctions
- Emphasize and reinforce the distinction between what we see, perceive, or interpret and how we evaluate or assign meaning to that

Key Question: What makes something interesting?

4. Describing People

The instructor introduces the exercise in which trainees will focus on describing people. The instructor reminds trainees of the resources of ASL (space, classifiers, and non-manual signals as well as facial expressions and body postures). Instructor asks what TASL uses, aiming to elicit answers as well as stimulate thought (lexical items, semantic hand shape, tension, movement parameters). Instructor writes edited responses on the flip chart.

Instructor demonstrates a few descriptions.

Exercise:

Instructor divides the group into two. Group A sits in a line facing the front of the room, where a brief ASL conversation is projected. Group B, also in a row, faces the back of the room where they cannot see the clip. (See materials below.) Group A members repeat the gist of the conversation but focus on describing the people in the conversation. Those in Group B (the mock DB people) evaluate whether or not they get a sense of the people in the conversation and if so, how that was conveyed, or conversely if not, what was missing. When all those in Group A feel satisfied that they have provided an adequate rendition of the gist of the conversation and description of those in the conversation, the instructor plays the conversation again. Those in Group B then offer feedback as to the accuracy and adequacy of the description—what was effective, missing, dis-

torted, or misunderstood.

This is repeated with the next clip with the trainees reversing position.

After two rounds (each person has had a turn to describe to the same partner twice), switch partners and repeat once.

Objectives:

- Become aware of what makes up our observations of other people, key elements (clothes, posture, eye-gaze, actions/ gestures, and pace)
- Begin to figure out the following
 - How to give descriptions in a non-evaluative or judgmental way
 - The role of detail in effective descriptions

5. Discussion

Instructor elicits observations, thoughts, feelings, and insights from the participants. Instructor helps trainees articulate them and relates them to the theory presented early in the lesson.

Objectives:

- Share, broaden, synthesize, and reinforce awareness.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

- a. sets of slide shows
- b. flip chart or whiteboard on which to write

Prepare handout

Student Preparation

Pre-thinking assignment key question: “What would be different between observing a scene and looking at people?”

List of Materials

- a. Instructor should gather multiple pictures of people the first exercise above (simply looking). These pictures should include a wide variety of men, women, children, and people from different places, doing different things.
- b. A second set of pictures for trainees to describe to one another (see element five above, “Describing the picture.” These pictures should be of people in which the scene is not the focus.

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What are the difference(s) in the way(s) we describe scenes from the way we describe people (why)?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

What skills would an SSP need that relate to being a companion?

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Instructor observations of trainees’ performance during the exercises

Other Considerations

None

3.4 SSP Module Three

Lesson Four: People Watching

Instructional team: One deaf-blind faculty member and one experienced SSP.

Lesson Overview

Describing People—Practice

This lesson focuses on skill.

Goals:

1. Trainees will learn improved awareness, observation skill, and fluency in establishing personality/style/type and other unique characteristics in TASL
2. Distinguish what is interesting from what is value laden
3. Refine skills in choosing who to describe
4. Reinforce variety of uses of visual information

Deaf-blind people and SSPs gather in a public place (such as a mall or park) to observe people.

Activities

1. Review

Instructor leads a review of the previous lesson:

- Reporting what you see should be as value-free as possible.
- Note the difference between describing scenes and describing people.
- Thought question: “Why would one describe a person?”

Objectives:

- Review and reinforce learning
- Reinforce the importance of the habit of critical analysis beyond simple skill building
- Set the foundation skills and ideas for the current lesson

2. Lab: People Watching

SSPs are paired off. Deaf SSPs are paired with deaf SSPs; non-deaf SSPs are paired with non-deaf SSPs. One person in each pair wears a blindfold. Each team selects a comfortable site where they can relax and see a mix of people. The person acting as SSP chooses people to describe and does so using his or her own primary language (i.e., hearing people use spoken language, presumably English, while deaf people use sign language, presumably ASL tactually).

After a few people, the blindfolded person offers feedback as to the effectiveness of conveying “the point” (i.e., was the person described chosen to set the scene, describe a unique style, a trend, evoke an emotion?)

How effective were the distinctions between

- what was seen (the clothes, postures, actions),
- what was perceived (the person’s status, role, and feelings), and
- what the SSP thought/felt about what was seen (our evaluation).

The non-deaf SSPs then discuss how this would have been different using TASL. The deaf SSPs then discuss how TASL is different (modified) from ASL.

Participants switch; the person acting as SSP puts on a blindfold and the person who was previously blindfolded now acts as SSP. They repeat observations, giving feedback and discussing the differences made by language (English vs. ASL) and modality (ASL vs. TASL).

They continue this process until there is a half hour left in the class.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of the way we observe people
- Increase awareness of motivations for describing people and how effective that is
- Improve skill in descriptions and in giving feedback

3. Discussion

The group reconvenes, and the instructor leads participants' reflections on these observations.

Objectives:

- Share perceptions
- Share hints, tools
- Raise awareness among deaf-blind participants regarding what is interesting and what is not

The instructor can reiterate particularly effective techniques such as the use of templates, categories, and prototypes as a starting place for descriptions, as explained in the next lesson. At the same time, discuss how our own values influence what we think is interesting.

Objectives:

- Improve trainees' store of linguistic devices for talking about people efficiently
- Increase self awareness (regarding values)

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Choose an appropriate site where people watching can be done comfortably, participants can spread out, and there is a good place to gather for the closing discussion.

Student Preparation

Continue considering the difference between observing a scene and looking at people.

List of Materials

None

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What makes something interesting?
- What makes people interesting?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Select three descriptions of people from fiction and identify how the author effectively and efficiently uses literary devices such as metaphor (parallel, analogy) and description to represent the character. Bring to the next session for discussion.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Self/mutual evaluation

Other Considerations

None

3.5 SSP Module Three

Lesson Five: Metaphor and Metonymy

Instructional team: One deaf-blind faculty member and one experienced SSP.

Lesson Overview

Templates, categories and prototypes

This lesson focuses on theory and skill.

Goal: Trainees become more efficient at describing scenes and people

Activities

1. Review

Present and discuss homework.

Objectives:

- Review and reinforce learning
- Set the foundation skills and ideas for the current lesson

2. Lecture – Discussion Metaphor

Metaphors

All languages use metaphoric or non-literal ways of speaking. Metaphors are analogies, or parallels. In common speech we tend to use labels such as “metaphor” or “figure of speech” in much the same way. What we mean is in general, a way of showing how two things are the same. Some of these metaphors become so common we’re not even aware of them anymore. For example, “I was blown away when she told me,” or in ASL, “Told me, jaw-dropped.” These metaphors express feelings or re-

sponges, but other metaphors explain function, for example “the heart is a pump” or “a college degree is a ticket into certain jobs or professions.” Other metaphors draw parallels between two things that are alike in character or style, for example, “The immune system sends an army of antibodies to attack the foreign bodies or pathogens which have entered the body.” Here the terms army, attack, and foreign all draw on our imagery of war (a larger metaphor) to help us understand the character of the immune system, which *defends us* against disease.

Students are asked to come up with other examples. They are also asked to discuss other features such as humor or cleverness.

The lecture continues. The use of metaphor as a shorthand can convey a lot of information quickly. Using metaphors or parallels can be very useful to SSPs describing the environment or people. To identify a building as European Gothic style conveys a lot, as does an adobe, Mexican-style house, or so much make-up as to look “clownish.” They are based on *prototypes* and are the first thing you think of when a category is mentioned. *Icons* are similarly based on these prototypical images. Icons are stripped of detail to emphasize the essence of something.

Coupled with specific details, metaphor can be a powerful way to convey complex ideas; it can be both efficient and interesting. For example, if we hear someone say, “He looks “military,” we jump to the image of someone with close-cropped hair, in good physical condition, with an upright, somewhat athletic stance. Indeed, we probably imagine him standing (as opposed to sitting or lying down). We also probably imagine him as fairly young, perhaps in his twenties but would not be shocked to then have the description modified by an estimated age of 40. This is where the *added detail corrects and completes the picture*. Is he blonde? Short? What is he doing?

Metaphors will be more or less accessible to people depending on their experience. Someone who grew up in eastern Washington may not have access to the same feelings about Halloween weather as someone from Southern Arizona or Washington, D.C. The metaphors used in English are not always the same as those used in ASL. SSPs should be aware of which are linguistically, culturally, situationally, and personally appropriate.

Trainees are asked to come up with examples of metaphors that may

or may not translate.

Next, the instructor asks participants to reflect on their use of ASL and how these linguistic devices might be useful. Think, for example, about the grammatical and discursive use of space (see thought question from previous lesson), classifiers, non-manual grammatical signals (NMGS) and metaphor.

Objectives:

- Raise awareness of metaphor (parallels) in ASL and their value as shortcuts in descriptions

3. Lecture – Discussion Metonymy

Metonymy is another linguistic device commonly used in ASL. Metonymy is the use of one part or aspect of something to refer to the whole. For example, in English and ASL we sometimes refer to the Thanksgiving holiday as “turkey day.” Indeed, the formal signs for most holidays in ASL use metonymy. In English it’s more likely to be a humorous or denigrating tone as when we refer to attorneys as “the suits” or old men as the “grey beards.” Cartoons often use metonymy in an exaggerated way.

We may use this to identify whose names we don’t know as in “the woman in the red blouse” or “the guy in the back corner.” These descriptions are situated and would not be meaningful to anyone not there.

Trainees are asked to come up with examples for metonymy in both languages.

Objectives:

- Provide one more technique for efficiently and accurately identifying objects, actions, and people
- Raise awareness of available linguistic devices

4. Exercise: “Telephone” – using linguistic devices efficiently

Instructor divides the group into small groups of four to five. Partic-

Participants will play a version of “telephone” using pictures. Once people are in small groups, instructors should have them line up facing one way. The first person at the end of the line will look at a picture, and then, getting the attention of the next person in line, identify the person in the picture as efficiently as possible, using the devices taught in this lesson. This second person will in turn, get the attention of the third person and relay what they understood... and so on down the line. The last person then asks to see the original picture and all discuss the process, offering feedback to one another. The person who began the process (saw the picture first) moves to the other end of the line, and the process begins again until all have had a chance to be at each position in the line (the exercise has gone through the line once).

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of linguistic and cultural differences in discourse between English and ASL
- Increase awareness of gender differences in discourse

5. Exercise:

Instructor demonstrates the following techniques of Tactile ASL:

- Drawing a map (showing relative locations) on the palm of a recipient’s hand (the mock deaf-blind person). For example, describing the location of various items in a large room: refreshments, coat rack, exit to the hall).
- Using a recipient’s hand as an object (a laptop computer) identifies the relative location of the USB port, power plug, etc.

Are there other techniques for communicating tactually that these experienced SSPs have seen or used effectively?

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Prepare materials

Student Preparation

Read handout

List of Materials

- a. Sets of pictures of people and scenes (at least one picture for each person)
- b. Teacher-prepared handout on metaphor, metonymy, icons, and prototypes in communication

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What are some contrasts between ASL metaphors and English metaphors?
- What elements of my ASL do I need to improve?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Thought question: In what ways is TASL efficient?

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Quality of participation in discussion and exercise

Other Considerations

None

3.6 SSP Module Three

Lesson Six: Conversational Discourse

Instructional team: One deaf-blind faculty member and one experienced SSP.

Lesson Overview

Comparison of discourse styles across languages, gender, and modality or channel (auditory, visual, tactual)

This lesson focuses on theory and skill.

Goals:

- Raise awareness of differences in conversational discourse between English and ASL and again, between women and men.
- Raise awareness that SSPs often have opportunities for simply having conversations with deaf-blind people while waiting in line, etc.

Activities

1. Review

Instructor leads a review of the previous lessons:

- Techniques for conveying spatial relations using TASL.
- Techniques for describing people.

Review and Expansion of Top-Down Discourse

Instructor reminds trainees of what we call top-down discourse (i.e., reading a menu by identifying categories first, describing a scene by identifying major objects and location first). Instructor elicits trainee thoughts on how this fits with the markers just identified.

Instructor complicates this understanding by relating this rule to the situations in which it is useful, that SSPs must keep in mind why they are describing something. For example, when in a familiar place, it is not necessary to describe what is already well known but rather focus only on the new, changed, or otherwise interesting.

Objectives:

- Review and reinforce learning
- Reinforce the importance of the habit of critical analysis beyond simple skill building
- Set the foundation skills and ideas for the current lesson
- Keep visual descriptions more appropriate and more interesting

2. Discourse Markers

Discourse is always situated. Why are you describing this scene, these people; why did you select this detail? Description should be motivated. Hence, the discourse begins with the following markers:

- let-you-know (FYI)
- interesting, wow, awful!
- caution (slight danger here or you should know..)
- question (I have a question)
- curious (may I ask)
- “hey” (wave for attention)

The instructor asks participants to reflect on their use of ASL and how these cues might be that much more important without facial expression or the environment as cues. They are asked to remember these ASL cues in using TASL and to practice during the lab.

Objectives:

- Improve awareness of the role of non-manual-grammatical-signals of ASL in discourse
- Improve awareness of tools to use to make TASL clear

3. Tactile Descriptions

Instructor demonstrates the following techniques:

1. Tactile-palm map: Using the deaf-blind person's hand as a sheet of paper, the SSP locates entities in space while describing the arrangement of a room
2. Tactile-palm model: Using the deaf-blind person's hand as a relatively flat/rectangular object (such as a lap-top) the SSP locates various keys, latches, plugs, etc.
3. Tactile-back map: Using the deaf-blind person's back as a map—with "up" being north—the SSP uses the back to locate various entities and their relative distances and directions (various cities in a state or countries on a continent).
4. Tactile-arm model: Using the deaf-blind person's forearm or extended arm, the SSP indicates relative length (the blade of a knife or width/depth of a step).
5. Tactile-hand model: Using the SSP's hands as classifiers, then the deaf-blind person's molded hand as the same classifier, describing shape, orientation and location of entities (teeth and gums).

Practice

Participants are then paired up, one person facing the front screen while the other person (deaf-blind) sits facing away from the screen. Trainees are then shown pictures of various entities and asked to apply the techniques just demonstrated. After three or four exercises, trainees switch positions.

Instructor reminds trainees how to touch respectfully (not controlling).

4. Discourse and Conversational Types

The study of discourse includes

- how, how often, and when people take turns,
- how turns are signaled,

- the organization of the discourse (direct vs. indirect, narrative vs. essay, vs. question/answer style, etc.)
- the goals of the discourse (to build relationships, compete, teach, etc.), and
- acceptable or unacceptable topics of conversation.

The goal here is not to become linguists but to develop a sense of conversational style as used by deaf-blind people by making some observations and directed comparisons.

Discussion

Instructor leads a discussion of the differences in discourse between English and ASL.

Instructor leads a discussion of the differences in discourse between women and men.

1. How often do people take turns?
2. What is the style?
3. What are the common topics?
4. How do interlocutors show interest?
5. How are topics maintained and changed and topic boundaries marked?

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of linguistic and cultural differences in discourse between English and ASL
- Increase awareness of gender differences in discourse

Exercise

Instructor shows a video of two deaf-blind people—ASL signing women having a conversation, then a video of two other deaf-blind people—ASL signing men having a conversation. Discuss.

1. How did the discourse differ?
2. How often do people take turns?

3. What is the style?
4. What are the common topics?
5. How do interlocutors show interest?
6. How are topics maintained and changed and topic boundaries marked?

5. Register and Intimacy

Instructor asks for participants' reflections on register in TASL. The issue is touch and its implications for intimacy, how this affects tactile communication with deaf-blind people. How can touch be used to establish contact, communicate, and convey information the best way?

Instructor relates eye-gaze in ASL to intimacy and how this affects hearing signers' communication dynamics when switching to English but retaining increased eye-gaze.

Instructor also discusses shifting registers from deaf-blind to hearing-sighted and how that affects the personal relationships of SSPs.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of discourse distinctions
- Increase comfort with appropriate touch

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Prepare videos

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Total six videos: English speakers (women, men); ASL signers (women, men), deaf-blind ASL signers (women, men)
- b. Instructor-prepared handout on discourse markers

- c. Instructor-prepared handout on discourse styles/types

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- Is it truly possible to be bi-cultural?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Thought question: “How are Topics marked in ASL vs. how are they marked in English?”

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Quality of participation in discussion

Instructor-prepared test

Other Considerations

None

3.7 SSP Module Three

Lesson Seven: Assertiveness II

Instructional team: One deaf-blind faculty member and one experienced SSP.

Lesson Overview

Comparison of direct and indirect discourse styles vis-à-vis assertiveness.

This lesson focuses on theory and skill.

Goals:

- Raise awareness of the effects of differences in discourse between English and ASL, specifically as they relate to assertiveness
- Raise awareness of the distinction between passive-aggressive and indirect communication
- Introduce beginning level skills

Reference:

None

Activities

1. Review

Instructor leads a review of the previous lessons:

- Conversational style
- The assertiveness continuum from passive, submissive, defensive through assertive to passive-aggressive to aggressive and threatening.

Objectives:

- Review and reinforce learning
- Set the foundation skills and ideas for current lesson

2. Assertive Discourse – Discussion

Discourse is always situated. How might a discourse be affected or influenced by power dynamics or relations?

The instructor asks participants to reflect on conflicts they have known in the past (their own or those of other people)

1. Identify the issue(s).
2. Identify the power relations between and among those having the conflict.
3. Identify the strategies used to resolve the conflict as assertive negotiations or those on the other ends of the continuum.

Those who feel comfortable doing so are asked to share those conflicts.

Objectives:

- Reinforce concept of assertiveness and place within the context of power relations

Discussion. Trainees are then asked to reflect on intimate relationships and how conflicts are resolved within families. How does this relate to power dynamics and the assertiveness continuum? Discuss.

Objectives:

- Reinforce concept of assertiveness and place within the context of intimate (power) relations

Instructor points out the danger in always being direct and hence, the face-saving value of being assertive but indirect.

3. Role-Plays

Instructor leads role-play exercises. *It is important that trainees actu-*

ally act out these role-plays and not simply talk about them. There is a great temptation during role-play exercises for students to try to stay in discussion mode, to say things like “well, I would have told them ‘xyz’” and others in the class then join in pointing out abstract issues and dangers instead of actually staying in character and saying “XYZ” and getting a response from the teammate in the role-play. Role-plays should be discussed only after the role-play exercise is finished.

Instructor chooses two trainees to be in the role-play, one deaf-blind the other to be the SSP. Some role-plays may require a third party (SSP coordinator or second SSP, as the two participants request or the instructor suggests).

Role-play conflicts:

1. The SSP is frequently late. This eats into the time the deaf-blind person has to do her shopping, other errands, etc.
2. The deaf-blind person is often ill groomed, with dirty hands. The deaf-blind person uses tactile signing and the SSP does not like communicating tactually with someone who is not well bathed.
3. The SSP is a new signer and often misunderstands what the deaf-blind person says.
4. The deaf-blind person has been isolated for a long time and is “heavy-handed,” putting too much weight on the hands of the SSP.
5. The SSP is a very nice person but she tends to do too much, unintentionally taking over.
6. The deaf-blind person has been relying on family for a long time and is used to them just doing things without much involvement on her part. She does not know what is going on most of the time and does not want to bother people more than necessary.
7. Two SSPs work with the same client on alternating assignments. One is a gossip, and the gossip includes negative comments about the other SSP.

8. The coordinator is over-worked and does not have time to do much more than respond to requests for scheduling, train new SSPs, and find subs when needed. The SSP feels she needs more training and has asked the coordinator for this.

Discussion

The instructor leads a discussion of patterns trainees notice. Where is it hard? What is the relationship between assertiveness and problem solving? What is the relationship between assertiveness and linguistic skills?

Note that bringing in outside solutions can sometimes best solve the problems identified. In the last role-play example, the SSP could possibly get additional training from some place other than the coordinator.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of linguistic and cultural differences in discourse between English and ASL

4. Appreciation

Appreciation in the sense intended here is a combination of respect and understanding, along with gratitude. Thus to appreciate a favor someone has done for me, I must understand what it has meant from their perspective as well as mine. For me to get someone a glass of water may be a very, very small favor, but for someone for whom mobility is difficult, it feels like a bigger favor. Someone with a comfortable income might easily give an inexpensive gift, but for someone with a very limited income, it is a greater effort.

Appreciation is an important part of assertiveness. (It is not all about confrontation or solving conflicts.)

Appreciation is best expressed when it recognizes

1. the motivation of the person one is appreciating,
2. what it has “cost” them, and
3. how you, yourself, really benefit.

This is not a formula for saying “thank you,” but it is a formula for *thinking about* our gratitude for the gifts of others. This gift may be simply putting up with our lack of skill, being patient with our crowded schedule, or payment for gas when the person paying is on a very tight budget.

Statements of appreciation are most effective (better heard by the recipient) if the speaker uses three thoughtful sentences. For example, if someone brings me a glass of water, it’s certainly enough to simply say “Thank you.” But if I’m thoughtful about what the person has done for me, I might say, “Thank you for the water; having a good glass of water always helps me feel better. I appreciate your thinking of me.”

5. Review and Synthesis

This concludes Module Three. It actually makes sense for the instructors to offer appreciation to the trainees at this time.

The instructors should leave time for review of the entire module and some, small celebration, and congratulations.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Review material from Assertiveness I

Student Preparation

Review material from Assertiveness I

List of Materials

- a. List of role-plays

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- Is it truly possible to be bi-cultural?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Read instructor-prepared handout on “The Drama Triangle” as described by Stephen Karpman.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Quality of participation in role-plays

Instructor-prepared test

Other Considerations

None

Chapter 5:

Deaf-Blind Modules

Module One: Deaf-Blind Beginner: Overview

Description

Module One is entry-level training. It provides a crash course for the new user of SSPs. The person completing this training has the knowledge and skill to use an SSP effectively when there is little or no confusion/distraction and little or no time pressure, and the task is both relatively simple and familiar to the SSP and to the DB person.

Examples of post-Module One assignments include: grocery shopping, getting a haircut, and having lunch at a café or diner. Here the deaf-blind person would be able to recognize the function (role) of the SSP as distinct from that of friend and come prepared to the assignment with clearly defined goals (e.g., a shopping list).

Prerequisites for Trainees

Trainees should be independent adults who live independently (not

necessarily alone) and make their own decisions. They should have at least conversational language skills.¹

Instructor Qualifications

Instructors for this module should be a team of one (or more) deaf-blind instructor(s) who knows about and uses SSPs, and one experienced SSP. Instructors should have teaching skills, be active and respected members of the deaf-blind community and have attended at least one AADB conference and preferably other statewide events as well.

The instructional team should be able to communicate effectively with all trainees whether directly or through an interpreter.² The instructor(s) should have a working understanding of the theory of visual information such as distinctions between information that is useful/interesting, between being passive or active, and comfort in the role of “employer” (i.e., assertively giving direction to SSPs).

If there are no qualified deaf-blind instructors available, then it is even more important that the non-DB teacher have the respect of local deaf-blind community members. This instructor should make sure to host panels of deaf-blind people, show quality video material, invite deaf-blind guest speakers to the class, and otherwise endeavor to have the deaf-blind perspective well represented

Module Objectives

At the successful completion of this module, DB trainees will be able to:

- Explain the role of the SSP as distinct from that of interpreter or friend.
- Use touch comfortably, together with remaining vision and

¹ For reasons we need not discuss here, some deaf-blind adults with normal intelligence still do not have a functional language.

² We are speaking here of the communication skill (beyond language) to quickly recognize the best approach to meet the trainee “where he is at” linguistically, culturally, educationally, and experientially to explain the concepts in this lesson. It is expected that deaf-blind trainees will vary greatly in such background.

hearing, to gain information

- Know that SSPs have a code of ethical behavior and be able to resist (or at least report) unethical behavior by the SSP.

1.1A Deaf-Blind Module One

Lesson One: Welcoming Reception³

All faculty present (each team should ideally have at least two deaf-blind faculty members). Deaf-blind faculty take the lead for this module.

Lesson Overview

This is an “ice-breaker” activity for deaf-blind people to meet with each other, non-deaf-blind signers, and the instructors.

This lesson focuses on knowledge (orientation) and attitude (positive motivation).

Goals: Orientation and reciprocal assessment

- Instructors will be able to assess participants’ primary language, background knowledge, skills regarding communication, and the social skills of the deaf-blind participants as well as adjust or adapt the following lessons accordingly (including the assignment of appropriate, qualified interpreters).
- Deaf-blind trainees will have an opportunity to meet SSP trainees and assess the SSPs’ communication. (See Objectives below.)
- Deaf-blind trainees will learn more about SSP trainees with whom to form relationships as a foundation for working together.
- Deaf-blind trainees (and SSP trainees) will experience communication models by using professional interpreters, specifically as to how to initiate and maintain appropriate conversations with new people.

³ This is a required lesson despite the rather informal-sounding name. See the objectives for the activities.

Activities

1. Introductions

Instructors personally greet and welcome each deaf-blind person.

Instructors then gather and welcome all. This is followed by an overview of the evening's activities. Trainees have professional interpreters for this section and again for final announcements.

Objectives:

- Warm up
- Experience using professional interpreters (those who are trained to work with deaf-blind people)

2. Ice-Breaker Exercise

Trainees are asked to form two lines facing one another, with deaf-blind people on one side, SSPs in training forming the other line and balancing the shorter deaf-blind line. People introduce themselves to the person across from them. They chat for approximately three minutes, at which time one of the instructors signals a time to shift (one line shifts down or steps to the left/right, while the other line remains in place). The person at the end of the shifting line moves to the other end. Lines alternate in taking turns shifting, making sure to keep moving in the direction to meet new people.

Objectives:

- Provide a sensory experience for SSPs (through touch)
- Model deaf-blind culture for deaf-blind people who may have been so isolated that they have not yet seen this model (cultural way of making introductions, i.e., directly, one to one, not through an interpreter and not in a group)
- Establish a comfortable atmosphere for the lesson and also for subsequent training (based on knowledge of other participants)

gained here, and based on the use of deaf-blind cultural norms which are a better fit with people who do not see/hear well)

- Provide an opportunity for instructors to assess the trainees' social skills, assertiveness, and ability to initiate

3. Play-Doh™ Exercise

Trainees are divided into pairs (deaf-blind trainees with SSP trainees, remaining SSP trainees with one another). One member of the team molds an object, and then passes it to her partner, who attempts to guess what the object represents.⁴

Instructors may make up two separate lists of suggested objects (see Appendix F for suggestions) for trainees who want one. Person A gets list A, and person B gets list B. These should also be available in Braille and large print. Instructors model the activity and then watch as participants do the exercise.

Objectives:

- Establish rapport between deaf-blind trainees, instructors and SSPs
- Provide a model of communication negotiation
- Provide a tactile (accessible) activity at which deaf-blind trainees can experience success in a social situation
- Provide a more intimate setting for interaction so that trainees who are shy or less comfortable in large groups can participate

4. Spice Activity

Participants make a game of trying to identify common spices and scents by smell and touch. Each vial is labeled with a number in large print and Braille. Participants are divided into groups of three or four. Each group is given an identical set of five vials containing spices or herbs.⁵ One

⁴ This is a modified version of the commercially marketed game Pictionary.™ Deaf-blind people have created a version they call “Tactile Pictionary,” and this is a further modification of that game.

⁵ Suggestions for herbs/spices include those commonly known to and used by many people, with a few that are more difficult (e.g., lavender, garlic, pepper, honey, vinegar, vanilla, fennel, chili).

person is the monitor (this might be an SSP or a deaf-blind person). The monitor hands the others a vial one at a time to see if they can agree on the identification of the spice or herb contained in the vial. Touch and taste are permitted as well as smell.

Once they have reached consensus or given a best guess, the monitor puts it to one side and makes a note (on paper or mentally) as to the number on the vial and the guess. When each group has gone through all the vials, the groups compare their answers, and the instructors announce the correct identifications.

Objectives:

- Increase awareness of avenues to information other than sight and hearing
- Put participants on a roughly equal playing field (possibly deaf-blind people will have more skills in identifying smells)

5. Review and Synthesis

Instructors thank everyone for coming, provide instructions for the next lesson, including taking lunch orders for the next day, and invite everyone to stay and enjoy refreshments.

Objectives:

- Get closure
- Encourage social interaction and motivation for the next lesson

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Meet with interpreters/SSPs in advance (prior the activity) to fill them in on whom they work with and what to expect from this activity.

Advise the interpreters/SSPs to be aware and flexible as most deaf-blind trainers may be inexperienced using interpreters.

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Play-Doh
- b. Blindfolds
- c. Accommodations including plain, dark cloths (sheets) with which to provide a dark background, so people with partial vision can see as clearly as possible. (See “accommodations” in the introduction.)
- d. Refreshments (see above).
- e. Training manual explaining the module and policies for using SSPs (see Appendix I, *Sample SSP Program Policies*).

Handouts

None

Key Questions⁶

- What is appropriate to share with SSPs? What is too intimate?
- How can I trust people if I cannot see them? How can I know that they understand me?
- What does it mean that my lead instructors are themselves deaf-blind?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

⁶ Key questions are to promote trainees’ use of critical thinking. The consistent use of key questions throughout the lessons develops the habit so that participants will begin to spontaneously ask this type of question of themselves as they progress.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. Some host institutions or establishments may have unreasonable fears or concerns about hosting a training for several deaf-blind people (e.g., concerns of liability). Contacting the management ahead of time and assuring them that safety concerns have been considered and covered is usually all that is needed.
2. Make sure that deaf-blind trainees who may travel to the site independently can easily arrive at the room. This may mean posting a host or escort at the front door (someone with good communication skills) who can guide them to the room. An experienced SSP would be a good choice for this role.
3. Prepare staff (of the hotel, restaurant, agency, or school) so they will know what to expect. Answer any questions or concerns they have and clarify your expectations (e.g., wait to clean up until everyone has gone). Let them know who is the “go-to person” if they have any later questions.

1.2A Deaf-Blind Module One

Lesson Two: SSP Role and Touch

Instructors themselves are deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

SSPs can provide help in a neutral, impartial way.

This lesson focuses on skills and attitude.

Goal: Trainees recognize the power of touch as access to information and increase skills in using touch to gain information (for deaf-blind trainees who are totally blind—see 1.2B for those who are partially sighted).

Introductions

Instructors and trainees have been formally introduced in the previous ice-breaker session. Instructors now identify themselves and ask participants to do the same (“Who is in the room”). Instructors then may identify the interpreters and SSPs in the room.

Objectives:

- Establish “the Deaf-Blind way” or manners so that all know who is present each time a group gathers.

Communication Ground Rules

Instructors explain that all will take turns talking and ask that trainees raise their hands and wait to be called on to participate so that everyone can know who is talking and interpreters know where to look.

Objectives:

- Establish “the Deaf-Blind way” / manners.

Activities

1. SSP role

Instructor explains the role of the SSP: to guide and provide visual information through conversation with trainees, asking how they shop for groceries now, who helps, what their frustrations are.

Objectives:

- Open the conversation/topic of the stress involved with using family members to help on such a regular basis without being able to return favors (reciprocity)
- Introduce the concept of paid help as a service

The instructor leads the group in a discussion of the different roles that people play in our lives (e.g., family member, friend, service provider). How do I distinguish them? How do I know what is appropriate and when, under what circumstances?

Objectives:

- Open the conversation of boundaries
- Understand the importance of planning

2. Role-Play

Instructor leads a role-play in which the deaf-blind trainee and an SSP go shopping in the room. This is done one on one—the instructor to the deaf-blind trainee, with an interpreter beside each to provide visual information. The instructor and trainee explore the “store” both visually (through the interpreter/SSPs) and tactually. (See materials list below.)

Objectives:

- Concretely demonstrate the value of touch as a source of information
- Give permission to “be different” and use touch
- Provide a mock demonstration of the role of an SSP who not only

goes to the store with the deaf-blind person but provides visual information

- Motivate deaf-blind people to use SSPs

3. The Value of an SSP

Instructors then talk about the value of using SSPs: how they save time, provide more information about the world, relieve stress on family relations, and so on. This is especially of concern for a) deaf-blind people who have useful vision remaining, b) deaf-blind people who come from very protective families.

Discussion: Expansion

Instructors return to the topic of role. It is tempting for deaf-blind people who are very isolated to over-use resources, that is, to see SSPs as interpreters, friends, baby-sitters, and even as potential spouses. Of course, this is a possibility, but it is also true that the role of SSP is not to provide all these needs. Instructors acknowledge this.

Deaf-blind people have many needs that are not systematically met; that is society's systems, as established, do not meet many needs for deaf-blind people. For example, not enough people in the general public know and use sign language, and transportation and interpreters are often not readily available. SSP service is a critical, foundational service to make shopping accessible to deaf-blind people. Instructors remind trainees to nurture the people who do this work and not to misuse them by venting frustrations on them, or crossing boundaries.⁷

4. The System: An Introduction

Instructors explain how the SSP system will work. SSPs are different

⁷ "Boundaries" is a term often used by interpreters and other professionals but is not a term used by people outside the field. It is important to talk about boundaries in context and not expect the word itself to be clear. This is another reason it is critical to have a good coordinator in place who a) matches people well and b) can mediate conflicts and foster good boundaries. Unfortunately, going deeper into this topic goes beyond the scope of this curriculum.

from volunteers. They are being trained, and a coordinator will manage the match-ups and pay. Make the limitations of the system clear (e.g., the number of allotted hours of SSP time per month). Explain what to do if they have problems with their SSP (e.g., they should first try to work it out with the SSP, and if this is not successful, they should talk with the coordinator). The instructor provides the name of and how to contact the SSP coordinator.

Discuss priorities. Time allotted to each deaf-blind person for SSPs (paid time) is limited so deaf-blind people have to prioritize SSP services depending on their own resources. For example, one deaf-blind person may decide to use the SSP only for mail reading and continue to shop with a family member or another might choose to use the SSP to alternate appointments for shopping and mail reading.

The agency pays for the SSP hours, but the deaf-blind person is responsible to pay for gas. Gas or bus tokens are part of the expense. The SSP and the deaf-blind person need to negotiate how much money is needed. The agreement might be a set amount for each time shopping and a different amount if the trip is to a different place that is farther away than usual. Conversely, the agreement might be on a per-mile charge. It is up to the SSP and the deaf-blind person to negotiate these details and come to an agreement.

Objective:

- Clarification/information for using SSPs

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Work with an interpreter/SSP coordinator to secure a specific number of qualified interpreters and SSPs to work with deaf-blind trainees and instructors.

- Meet with interpreters/SSPs ahead of time (prior to the activity) to discuss their assignment, schedule, how to match the clients, and what to expect from this activity.

- Make sure to arrange platform interpreters for copy signing (for deaf-blind trainees with tunnel vision) as well as for voice interpreting (for hard-of-hearing deaf-blind trainees).
- Advise the interpreters/SSPs to be aware and flexible as most deaf-blind trainees may be inexperienced in using interpreters.

Prepare handout (training manual regarding the agency, SSP role, policies, and system for requesting SSP service, see Appendices).

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Blindfolds for partially sighted trainees
- b. Plain, dark cloths (sheets) with which to provide a dark background, so people with partial vision can see as clearly as possible. (See accommodations in the introduction.)
- c. Objects for display in the “store” exercise above.
- d. Various textiles such as might be used in shirts, pants, or napkins for the touch exercise.
- e. Refreshments (See above).

Handouts

Agency prepared training manual explaining the policies and system for using SSPs.

Key Questions

- Can I recruit SSPs from my family?
- What experiences have you had in a DB community? What did you think about that?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Practice touching while communicating. For deaf-blind people accustomed to reading tactile sign language, this would include touching appropriately to “see” objects, including companion’s jewelry, sleeve, hair, etc.; for partially sighted deaf-blind people, this would include tracking or touching the signer’s wrist while using vision to watch facial expression or reading sign tactually while using vision to look at what is being described.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation:

- Willingness to accept the use of touch in this safe environment
- Exchanges questions and answers based on several scenarios

Other Considerations

1. Make sure that deaf-blind trainees who may travel to the site independently can easily arrive at the room. This may mean posting a host or escort at the front door (someone with good communication skills) who can guide them to the room. An experienced SSP would be a good choice for this role.
2. Encourage trainees to wear dark clothes to all trainings so other deaf-blind people can feel a little more comfortable communicating directly (deaf-blind person to deaf-blind person), as it makes reading sign language visually easier.
3. Expect that some trainees may not be accustomed to communication strategies used in a group of deaf-blind people (turn-taking rules).
4. There may be resistance to touch. Be aware of cultural differences in general. That is, not all participants may be members of the dominant culture; some may come from immigrant families or an ethnic background with different values and mores regarding touch. This may be a struggle/barrier to accepting touch as access to information.

1.3A DB Module One

Lesson Three: Ethics and Assertiveness

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Ethics of SSPs

This lesson focuses on knowledge and attitude.

Goals: To understand the role of SSP and use them appropriately.

- Understand the role of SSP
- Know how and where SSPs work
- Understand the value of SSPs to deaf-blind people
- Gain a basic understanding of policies and procedures of obtaining SSP service.

Activities

1. Review

Instructor reviews communication rules.

Then the instructor reminds trainees of the term “SSP” as introduced in the previous lesson.

Objectives:

- Review

2. SSP Ethics

Instructors explain the ethics of SSPs:

- Confidentiality

- Impartiality
- Focus on work

Instructors clarify by using an example:

Confidentiality. Two people are friends; one is an SSP. Can the SSP talk about working for you and what you do? No. But the SSP can tell her friend that she works as an SSP and enjoys her work. She might encourage her friend to join in, too, and apply to work as an SSP.

Impartiality. Going into a bank, I might be thinking about, should I deposit the check or should I hold on to it. Should I ask the SSP? No. Should the SSP comment? No. Maybe a family member or a friend might say, “Just go ahead and deposit the check and get it over with; then we don't have to come back here.” But an SSP should not comment. This is a decision for the deaf-blind person herself/himself.

But, how long the lines are might influence my decision. Maybe there is a huge line for the bank window and I have a limited amount of time to wait. I will want the SSP to tell me that information. How long is the line, how many people are waiting, how many cashiers are working, and how fast is the line moving? SSPs should provide information, not advice.

Working. Also, while we wait, the SSP should provide more visual information, for example “There are three people in line, one woman and her two dogs. The dogs keep sitting every time they move up in line.” That is information for me to have; it helps to inform me what goes on in my world.

Instructor explains that SSPs are trained. They learn how to communicate tactually, they are comfortable with touch, and they know how to guide. They also learn ethics. SSPs might not attend the same church as you. Maybe they do not go to church and you do go to church. The important point is mutual respect.

Respect. They should not talk to you about church unless you are interested. It's not okay for SSPs to preach about their church or

God to you and the same for you. It is not okay for you to preach about your church or God to the SSP.

Suppose you are going to the store and the SSP smokes. You may not like the smell of smoke on the SSP's hands and clothes and ask them to not smoke right before they come to work with you.

Exercise: Ask the trainees whether these are examples of following or breaking the code of ethics.

Suppose you are shopping and the SSP says she is going to go take a break and asks you to wait for 10 or 15 minutes while she calls home to talk with her family about their dinner tonight. (Depends on whether you agree and this is NOT subtracting from the time you have with the SSP.)

Suppose the SSP is driving you home and she tells you her friend lives only two blocks away from you and after she is finished work, she is going over to visit her friend. (This is fine, just news, not breaking any confidence about work.)

Suppose the SSP tells you that you should choose food with less fat because of your health? (Not okay; this is none of her business.)

Then ask the trainees to give you their own examples.

Objectives:

- Understand the distinction between a friend (who offers advice, suggestions, opinions) or may “take a cigarette break” versus an SSP (who is neutral and working)
- Understand that SSPs have a code of ethics and you have a right to expect ethical behavior

3. Hand-to-Hand Exercise

Respectful tactile communication. Many uninformed people do not know the correct way to guide deaf-blind people or to guide their hand to an object (to show it to them or to hand it to them).

The instructor shows deaf-blind trainees the appropriate way SSPs and interpreters should guide a deaf-blind person's hand to touch something (sliding their hand under that of the deaf-blind person and then moving it slowly to the object). The instructor then shows how a sighted person might do it incorrectly, grasping the deaf-blind person's hand and moving it. This is not appropriate, but it is a common error. The instructor then again demonstrates the appropriate way (sighted person's hand under the deaf-blind person's hand) and urges deaf-blind trainees to feel comfortable correcting SSPs or others who do it incorrectly.

Objectives:

- Validate trainees' feelings (objecting to being handled like an object themselves)
- Validate dignity (deaf-blind person is not an object to be "moved")
- Give permission to take charge of their own bodies and the way they are treated

4. Light Touch

It's also important that deaf-blind people keep their hands both clean and light on those of the SSP, not use the SSP's hands as a place to rest their hands. This is usually not a problem, especially if the deaf-blind person has experience communicating with other people regularly, but some very isolated deaf-blind people have not yet learned this.

Objectives:

- Call attention to manners (respectful communication practices).

5. Permission to Touch

The instructor then talks about touching objects. Touch is an important channel to learning about the world or environment. Within deaf-blind culture, it is good to touch the clothing and even hair of others, but it is courteous to ask permission to do so.

The instructor demonstrates asking permission and how to touch based on size and shape and location (e.g., sleeves, jewelry, shoes, etc.)

Objectives:

- Call attention to manners (respectful communication practices).

Exercise:

Trainees are then asked to touch each other's sleeves, first asking permission. They are then asked to touch their interpreters' sleeves, again, first asking permission.

Objectives:

- Increase confidence (accessing information through touch)
- Understand the rules of touch

6. Communication:

Instructors remind trainees of asking permission to touch, the parallel authority to teach SSPs how to touch (guide their hand to objects, not grasp and move the deaf-blind person's hand), and the authority to remind SSPs of their role (to provide information, not offer advice).

Demonstration: Instructor and SSP Role Play

Instructor tells trainees that she will now demonstrate respectful clarification. Instructor and SSP role-play shopping. The SSP first grasps the instructor's hand inappropriately. The instructor corrects her and shows her the right way to guide a deaf-blind person's hand to the object.

Role-Play: The instructor then asks for a participant to repeat the same role-play with the same SSP.

If it seems easy for the trainees, the instructor may move on. If the trainees struggle to assert their authority in a respectful way, they may need more practice. The instructor may call on other trainees to perform the role-play, followed by a discussion of the exercise and how to improve this kind of communication.

Objectives:

- Encourage respectful but clear use of authority on the part of deaf-blind trainees

Demonstration: Instructor and SSP Role Play II

Instructor tells trainees he will now demonstrate respectful clarification in the situation of advice. Instructor and SSP again role-play shopping. This time, the SSP offers advice on which blouse to buy. The instructor corrects her and reminds the SSP to provide visual information only.

This topic is more sensitive and requires greater skill. The deaf-blind person might, for example, remind the SSP that visual information is what is helpful to making decisions, not advice. The instructor might model both inappropriate affect and appropriate affect.

Role-Play: The instructor again then asks for a participant to repeat the same role-play with the same SSP.

Objectives:

- Encourage respectful but clear use of authority on the part of deaf-blind trainees

7. Communication and Trust

Instructors lead a discussion of the issue of trust without vision. Key points:

1. Trust comes over time; it's not instant
2. Language is important
3. Communication is a dialogue; it's not one-way
4. Control can be both intentional and unintentional (vs. unconscious)
5. Money is an important consideration
6. Trainees must have recourse

Instructors validate trainees' assumed reluctance to trust someone they do not know, someone outside the family, with sensitive information such as comes in the mail or exchanged at the bank. Instructors explain that SSPs are screened but that it is not perfect. How much you want to trust the SSP and with what information will depend on the relationship you build with the SSP.

Time: With time we get to know people, their habits, their character, and then we learn what we can trust them with and what we cannot trust them with.

Language: SSPs may be second-language learners and not yet fluent in ASL. They may have to ask the deaf-blind person to repeat frequently. This is annoying, but it is a good thing. It means they want to be clear and want to truly understand. On the other hand, they may not ask for clarification when they should. In this case, the deaf-blind person can correct the SSP and emphasize the importance of good, clear communication and honesty when they do not understand.

Dialogue: Often the visual information is incomplete. The SSP may simply say, “We’re in the store; where do you want to go?” without giving more information. It’s fine to ask for more information like, “How big is the store?” “What kind of store is it, modern, country, specialty?” and so on.

Intention: No one is perfect, and there may be times when the SSP misses some important visual information or misunderstands things. It is the pattern that is important.

Money: SSPs are screened, but deaf-blind people can have double-checks such as keeping receipts, using only small bills, and using direct deposits for their accounts.

Objectives:

- Call attention to elements of trust so participants can begin to analyze feelings.
- Compare stories for validation of feelings and
- Challenge to some preconceptions.

8. Review and Synthesis

Review the main points of this lesson, specifically the importance of mutual respect, permission to touch, and open, clear communication.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Student Preparation

Read Chapter 14 in the reference text, SSPs: Definitions and Role

List of Materials

- a. Interesting objects to touch. May use objects for “the store” (same as Lesson Two).

Key Questions

- What are the different roles that people play in our lives (e.g., family member, friend, service provider)? How do I distinguish them? How do I know what is appropriate and when, under what circumstances?
- How can I trust people if I cannot see them? How can I know that they understand me?
- What does it mean that my lead instructors are themselves deaf-blind?
- Can I inform the SSP as to what I need? Or do I tend to let them tell me what to do?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Meet the SSP students and a common ground.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. There may be some confusion about roles. Some deaf-blind participants will have attended regional camps in which the role of SSP may be interpreter-SSP. Others may have attended AADB in which the role is even broader. Further, small towns or other areas may have very limited resources, and professionals may switch hats frequently, assuming different roles in different situations.
2. Limited resources may tempt some case managers, VR counselors, and so on to sometimes act as SSPs. This creates a conflict of interest. While there is no conflict between the role of interpreter and that of SSP (both are working for the deaf-blind person in a position “under” the deaf-blind person) there is a conflict between counselor, case manager, and interpreter or SSP given the authority and control a counselor or case manager has over access to services and other resources.

1.1B Deaf-Blind Module One

Lesson One: “Ice-Breaker” Activity

Instructor(s) is/are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

This is a social for deaf-blind people to meet with non-deaf-blind interpreters, SSPs, and signers as well as the instructors.

This lesson focuses on knowledge (orientation) and attitude (positive motivation).

Goals: Orientation and reciprocal assessment

- Instructors will be able to assess participants’ primary language, background knowledge, skills regarding communication, and social skills of the deaf-blind participants as well as adjust or adapt the following lessons accordingly (including the assignment of appropriate, qualified interpreters)
- Deaf-blind trainees will have an opportunity to meet SSP trainees and assess the SSP’s communication. (See objectives section below.)
- Deaf-blind trainees will learn more about SSPs with which to form relationships as a foundation for working together.
- Deaf-blind trainees will see communication models by observing professional interpreters, specifically how instructors initiate conversations with one another tactually and how they do so with deaf-blind people having limited vision/hearing.

Activities

1. Introductions

Instructors personally greet and welcome each deaf-blind person.

Instructors then gather the group and welcome all, followed by an overview of the evening's activities. Trainees have professional interpreters for this section and again for final announcements.

Objectives:

- Warm up
- Experience using professional interpreters (those trained to work with deaf-blind people)

2. Ice-Breaker Exercise

Trainees are asked to form two lines facing one another with deaf-blind people on one side, SSPs in training forming the other line and balancing the shorter deaf-blind line. People facing each other then introduce themselves to one another and chat for approximately three minutes. One of the instructors signals a time to change/shift lines (one line shifts down while the other line remains in place). The person at the end of the shifting line moves to the other end. Lines alternate in taking turns being the one to shift.

Objectives:

- Provide a sensory experience for SSPs (sight, hearing and some touch, for attention or to communicate directly with instructors using tactile sign language)
- Model deaf-blind culture for deaf-blind people who may have been so isolated that they have not yet seen this model (cultural way of making introductions—directly, one to one, not through an interpreter, not in a group, and cultural ways of using touch)
- Establish a comfortable atmosphere for the lesson and also for subsequent training (based on knowledge of other participants gained here, and based on the use of deaf-blind cultural norms which are a better fit with people who do not see/hear well)
- Provide an opportunity for instructors to assess the trainees' social skills, assertiveness, and ability to initiate.

3. Play-Doh™ Exercise

Trainees are divided into pairs (one deaf-blind trainee with one SSP). See instructions in the Appendix F.⁸ It's important to have at least one practice round. Deaf-blind trainees are invited to wear blindfolds. If they are too uncomfortable to do so, they're invited to watch since playing the game requires the use of blindfolds.

Objectives:

- Establish rapport and trust between deaf-blind trainees, instructors, and SSPs
- Provide a model of communication negotiation
- Provide a tactile (accessible) activity at which the deaf-blind trainees can experience success in a social situation
- Provide a more intimate setting for interaction so that trainees who are shy or less comfortable in large groups can participate
- Have fun, create motivation

4. Review and Synthesis

Instructors thank everyone for coming, provide instructions for the next lesson, including taking lunch orders for the next day, and invite everyone to stay and enjoy refreshments.

Objectives:

- Closure
- Encourage social interaction and motivation for the next lesson

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Meet with interpreters/SSPs ahead of time (prior to the activity) to fill

⁸ This is a modified version of the commercially marketed game Pictionary™. Deaf-blind people have created a version they call "Tactile Pictionary," and this is a further modification of that game.

them in on whom they work with and what to expect from this activity.

Advise the interpreters/SSPs to be aware and flexible as most deaf-blind trainers may be inexperienced using interpreters.

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Play-Doh
- b. Blindfolds
- c. Accommodations including plain, dark cloths (sheets) with which to provide a dark background, so people with partial vision can see as clearly as possible. (See accommodations in the introduction.)
- d. Refreshments (see above).
- e. Training manual explaining the module and policies for using SSPs (See Appendix I).

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What is appropriate to share with SSPs? What is too intimate?
- How can I trust people if I cannot see them? How can I know that they understand me?
- What does it mean that my lead instructors are themselves deaf-blind?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. Some host institutions or establishments may have unreasonable fears or concerns about hosting a training for several deaf-blind people due to liability issues. Contacting the management ahead of time and assuring them that safety concerns have been considered and covered is usually all that is needed.
2. Make sure that deaf-blind trainees who may travel to the site independently can easily arrive at the room. This may mean posting a host or escort at the front door (someone with good communication skills) who can guide them to the room. An experienced SSP would be a good choice for this role.
3. Prepare staff (of the hotel, restaurant, agency, or school) so they will know what to expect. Answer any questions or concerns they have and clarify your expectations (e.g., wait to clean up until everyone has gone). Let them know who is the “go-to person” if they have any later questions.

1.2B Deaf-Blind Module One

Lesson Two: Touch as Information

Instructors themselves are deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Touch as Information

This lesson focuses on skills and attitude.

Goal: Trainees recognize the power of touch as access to information and increase skills in using touch to gain information (for deaf-blind trainees who are partially sighted—see 1.2A for those who are totally blind).

Introductions

Instructors and trainees have been formally introduced in the previous ice-breaker session. Instructors now identify themselves and ask participants to do the same (“Who is in the room”). Instructors then may identify the interpreters and SSPs in the room.

Objectives:

- Establish “the Deaf-Blind way” or manners so that all know who is present each time a group gathers.

Communication Ground Rules

Instructors explain that all will take turns talking and asks that trainees raise their hands and wait to be called on to participate so that everyone can know who is talking, and interpreters know where to look.

Objectives:

- Establish “the Deaf-Blind way” or manners.

Activities

1. Channels: Discussion

Instructor introduces the topic of different ways of communicating—specifically as relates to the techniques for hearing deaf and deaf-blind people and the different channels (auditory, visual, and tactual) they employ. Instructor reflects on the value of understanding, efficiency, and clear communication vs. following dominant-culture ways of communicating (e.g. oralism for deaf people). Examples include deaf-to-deaf person communication as signing, hearing-to-hearing person communication as using speech, and deaf-blind to deaf-blind person as using touch.

The discussion includes experiences of other people snapping back their hands, or moving back instead of communicating through touch. It includes attitudes of some members of the deaf community, family members, and so on. It includes trainees' own perceptions and fears about losing vision.⁹

Instructors introduce the topic of using a cane. This, too, is a tool that can be stigmatizing. Instructors suggest strategies for dealing with this stigma.

Objectives:

- Open the conversation/topic of stigma, the pressure to conform, feelings of shame vs. the desire to know and communicate clearly
- Validate perceptions
- Give permission to “be different” and use touch
- Provide both language and a forum to talk about these experiences and the feelings associated with them
- Reflect on past experiences and the process of gaining/missing information using auditory, visual, and tactual means
- Enhance understanding of cultural conflicts regarding the use of touch for information

⁹ Some deaf-blind people feel that touching for communication actually “makes” them more blind.

- Normalize touch as a way for any deaf-blind person (not limited to someone who is totally blind)
- Gain knowledge of deaf-blind identity and culture

2. SSP role

Instructor explains the role of SSP: to guide and provide visual information through conversation with trainees, asking how they shop for groceries now, who helps, what their frustrations are.

Instructor points out that SSPs can be helpful in such things as reading the small print on labels or facilitating communication with store clerks. Deaf-blind people with tunnel vision may miss seeing announcements of sales or objects left in the aisles of stores. Having an SSP means not having to use vision for mobility (finding the right aisle, seeing steps, or objects in the aisle of a store), allowing the deaf-blind person to concentrate more on the objects for sale. One deaf-blind person with tunnel vision, for example, never realized that the snack she bought regularly came in different sizes (the larger, cheaper sizes were on the bottom shelf, and she didn't see them).

Objectives:

- Open the conversation/topic of the stress involved with trying to use partial vision for mobility, communication, and shopping
- Introduce the concept of paid help as a service

3. Discussion: Expansion

Instructors return to the topic of role. Deaf-blind people with partial vision sometimes overestimate what they can see and underestimate how much help they are getting from family members or friends. Of course, friends and family members often want to help; it is part of being close. Instructors acknowledge this. But it also can put a strain on the relationship. Using SSPs will relieve this strain but also open up more opportunities for the deaf-blind person whose friends or family members are not always available.

SSP service is a critical, foundational service that makes independence possible for deaf-blind people. When friends and family members are very valuable as both people who are dear and as people who are needed for daily living, the balance of power becomes one-sided and can lead to issues of control, dependence, and even at times abuse. Instructors are not therapists or advocates, so the discussion remains abstract and instructors should cut off overly personal revelation or alternatively, offer to make a referral.¹⁰

4. Hand-to-Hand Exercise

The instructor shows deaf-blind trainees the appropriate way SSPs and interpreters should guide a deaf-blind person's hand to touch something (sliding their hand under that of the deaf-blind person and then moving it slowly to the object). Many uninformed people do not know the correct way to guide deaf-blind people or to guide their hand to an object (to show it to them or to hand it to them). The instructor then shows how a sighted person might do it incorrectly, grasping the deaf-blind person's hand, wrist, or finger and moving it as if it were an object. This is not appropriate, but it is a common error. The instructor then again demonstrates the appropriate way (sighted person's hand under the deaf-blind person's hand) and urges deaf-blind trainees to feel comfortable correcting SSPs or others who do it incorrectly.¹¹

Objectives:

- Validate trainees' feelings (objecting to being handled like an object themselves)
- Validate dignity (deaf-blind person is not an object to be "moved")

¹⁰ People under stress (and becoming blind is obviously stressful) may benefit from access to counseling, people who can help with problem solving or simply lend an ear.

¹¹ Some deaf-blind trainees may have little to no experience in the deaf-blind community and thus not know the correct way to give and receive assistance. So, in some instances they may be learning these manners as well. This is also true of many deaf-blind children as they transition from home to the adult deaf-blind world, especially when they are from small, isolated towns.

- Give permission to take charge of their own bodies and the way they are treated

5. Permission to Touch

- A. Instructor talks about her/his own experience learning to use more touch, the advantage of saving time and getting more clear communication and more information. Instructor gives concrete examples of each.
- B. Instructor talks about asking permission to touch (e.g., the watch the other person is wearing, their shoes, the material on their jacket). Touch is an important channel to learning about the world or environment. Within deaf-blind culture, it is appropriate to touch the clothing and even hair of others, but it is courteous to ask permission to do so.

The instructor demonstrates asking permission and how to touch based on size and shape and location (e.g., sleeves, jewelry, shoes, etc.)

Exercise:

Trainees are then asked to touch each other's sleeves, first asking permission. Then trainees are asked to touch their interpreters' sleeves, again, first asking permission.

Objectives:

- Reinforce the value of touch even when one has partial vision
- Increase confidence (accessing information through touch)
- Understand the rules of touch
- Prepare for decreasing vision

6. The System: An Introduction

Instructors explain how the SSP system will work. SSPs are different from volunteers. They are being trained, and a coordinator will manage the match-ups and pay. Instructors should make the limitations of the system clear (e.g., the number of allotted hours of SSP time per month) and

explain what to do if they have problems with their SSP (i.e., first try to work it out with the SSP, and if this is not successful to talk with the coordinator). The instructor provides the name and how to contact the SSP coordinator.

Instructors then discuss priorities. Time allotted to each deaf-blind person for SSPs (paid time) is limited, so deaf-blind people have to prioritize SSP services depending on their own resources. For example, one deaf-blind person may decide to use the SSP only for mail reading and continue to shop with a family member, or another might choose to use the SSP to alternate appointments for shopping and mail reading.

The agency pays for the SSP hours, but the deaf-blind person is responsible to pay for gas. Gas or bus tokens are part of the expense. The SSP and the deaf-blind person need to negotiate how much. The agreement might be a set amount for each time shopping and a different amount if the trip is to a different place that is farther away than usual. Conversely, the agreement might be on a per-mile charge. It is up to the SSP and the deaf-blind person to negotiate these details and come to an agreement.

Objective:

- Clarification/information for using SSPs

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Work with an interpreter/SSP coordinator to secure specific number of qualified interpreters and SSPs to work with deaf-blind trainees and instructors.

Prepare handout (training manual regarding the agency, SSP role, policies, and system for requesting SSP service, see Appendixes).

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Blindfolds for partially sighted trainees.
- b. Plain, dark cloths (sheets) with which to provide a dark background, so people with partial vision can see as clearly as possible (See Chapter 2, Accommodations).
- c. Objects for display in the “store” exercise above.
- d. Various textiles such as might be used in shirts, pants, or napkins for touch exercise.
- e. Refreshments (see above).

Handouts

Agency prepared training manual explaining the policies and system for using SSPs.

Key Questions

- Which feels more comfortable, using only my eyes to focus on communication or touching more often to retrieve more information? Why?
- Can I understand the information you relay through tactile?
- What is the difference between the information you get through touch combined with vision compared with the information you get through vision alone?
- What have other people told you about touch (directly or indirectly)?
- What experiences have you had in a DB community?
- How safe do you feel using touch in a DB culture environment?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Practice touching while communicating. For deaf-blind people ac-

customed to reading tactile sign language, this would include touching appropriately to “see” objects, including companion’s jewelry, sleeve, hair, etc.; for partially sighted deaf-blind people, this would include tracking or touching the signer’s wrist while using vision to watch facial expression or reading sign tactually while using vision to look at what is being described.

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation:

Willingness to accept the use of touch in this safe environment.

Exchanges questions and answers based on several scenarios.

Other Considerations

1. Make sure that deaf-blind trainees who may travel to the site independently can easily arrive at the room. This may mean posting a host or escort at the front door (someone with good communication skills) who can guide them to the room. An experienced SSP would be a good choice for this role.
2. Encourage trainees to wear dark clothes to all trainings so other deaf-blind people can feel a little more comfortable communicating directly (deaf-blind person to deaf-blind person), as it makes reading sign language visually easier.
3. Expect that some trainees may not be accustomed to communication strategies used in a group of deaf-blind people (turn-taking rules).
4. There may be resistance to touch. Be aware of cultural differences in general. That is, not all participants may be members of the dominant culture; some may come from immigrant families or an ethnic background with different values and mores regarding touch. This may be a struggle/barrier to accepting or being comfortable with touch as access to information.

1.3B DB Module One

Lesson Three: Ethics and Assertiveness

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Ethics of SSPs

This lesson focuses on knowledge and attitude.

Goals: To understand the role of SSP and use them appropriately.

- Understand the role of SSP
- Know how and where SSPs work
- Understand the value of SSP to deaf-blind people
- Gain a basic understanding of policies and procedures of obtaining SSP service.

Activities

1. Review

Instructor reviews communication rules.

Then the instructor reminds trainees of the term SSP as introduced in the previous lesson.

Objectives:

- Review

2. SSP Ethics

Instructors explain the ethics of SSPs:

- Confidentiality

- Impartiality
- Focus on work

Instructors clarify by using an example:

Confidentiality. Two people are friends; one is an SSP. Can the SSP talk about working for you and what you do? No. But the SSP can tell her friend that she works as an SSP and enjoys her work. She might encourage her friend to join in, too, and apply to work as an SSP.

Impartiality. Going into a bank, I might be wondering whether I should deposit the check or hold on to it. Should I ask the SSP? No. Should the SSP comment? No. Maybe a family member or a friend might say, “Just go ahead and deposit the check and get it over with; then we don't have to come back here.” But an SSP should not comment. This is a decision for the deaf-blind person herself/himself.

But, maybe there is a huge line for the bank window and I have a limited amount of time to wait. Then the SSP informs me that there are other branches of the same bank that are on our route. This offers me a choice to go to another branch to save time. It is not advice; it is information. SSPs should provide information, not advice.

Working. Also, while we wait, the SSP should provide more visual information, for example if she notices something interesting to point out. It may be outside your field and you did not see it. She would call attention to it, e.g., “There is a woman in line with her two cute dogs. The dogs keep sitting every time they move up in line.” That is information for me to have; it helps to inform me what goes on in my world.

SSPs should not use work time to go make a phone call, do their own shopping, smoke a cigarette, and so on. This is different from a friend who might offer to do things together. The SSP is on the clock—working.

Instructor explains that SSPs are trained. They learn how to commu-

nicate tactually, they are comfortable with touch, and they know how to guide. They also learn ethics. SSPs might not attend the same church as you. Maybe they do not go to church and you do go to church. The important point is mutual respect.

Respect. They should not talk to you about church unless you are interested. It's not okay for SSPs to preach about their church or God to you and the same for you. It is not okay for you to preach about your church or God to the SSP.

SSPs should make sure they have clean hands and do not have a strong scent (e.g., perfume or from smoking).

Exercise: Ask the trainees whether these are examples of following or breaking the code of ethics.

Suppose you are shopping and the SSP says she is going to go take a break and asks you to wait for 10 or 15 minutes while she calls home to talk with her family about their dinner tonight. (This depends on whether you agree and this is not subtracting from the time you have with the SSP.)

Suppose the SSP is driving you home and she tells you her friend lives only two blocks away from you and after she is finished work, she is going over to visit her friend. (This is fine, just news, not breaking any confidence about work.)

Suppose the SSP tells you that you should choose food with less fat because of your health? (Not okay; this is none of her business.)

Then ask the trainees to give you their own examples.

Objectives:

- Understand the distinction between a friend (who offers advice, suggestions, opinions) or may “take a cigarette break” versus an SSP (who is neutral and working)
- Understand that SSPs have a code of ethics and you have a right to expect ethical behavior

3. Hand-to-Hand Exercise

Respectful tactile communication. Many uninformed people do not know the correct way to guide deaf-blind people or to guide their hand to an object (to show it to them or to hand it to them).

The instructor shows deaf-blind trainees the appropriate way SSPs and interpreters should guide a deaf-blind person's hand to touch something (sliding their hand under that of the deaf-blind person and then moving it slowly to the object). Some deaf-blind people with partial vision do not like to be touched or guided in this way and would prefer the SSP get their attention and point. This is a decision for the deaf-blind person, of course, but it is important to model how it is done correctly and respectfully.

Objectives:

- Validate trainees' feelings (objecting to being handled like an object themselves)
- Validate dignity (deaf-blind person is not an object to be "moved")
- Give permission to take charge of their own bodies and the way they are treated

4. Sighted Guide

Taking a sighted guide (holding the elbow of the guide) while using vision to look around instead of having to stare at the ground can be a relief. How readily a deaf-blind person with partial vision accepts a sighted guide (and how they decide to use it) will vary. For example, one deaf-blind person may prefer to simply walk beside the guide and have the guide tell them as they approach a curb or obstacle in the path. They may prefer to use a cane. Deciding how much help they need, when, from whom, etc., is an ongoing process for a person losing vision. It is complex because it involves the SSP as well. For example, it may be easier for the SSP to offer an elbow than watch the ground and then get the attention of the deaf-blind person, all while trying to carry on a conversation. Similarly, it may be less stressful (for the SSP) to sign tactually rather than in a tiny space by the face. But, independence is important. This might be a good time (es-

pecially with deaf-blind instructors) to open this discussion. The goal is not to find “the right answer” but to simply share perceptions.

Objectives:

- Provide rationale for using a sighted-guide so decisions become more the result of analysis than of emotions
- Promote acceptance of touch
- Promote acceptance of a “Deaf-Blind” identity.

5. Permission to Touch

The instructor then talks about touching objects. Touch is an important channel to learning about the world or environment. Within deaf-blind culture, it is good to touch the clothing and even hair of others, but it is courteous to ask permission to do so.

As a person transitions from using vision to using vision and touch, and finally using information from others (SSPs, for example) and touch, it is important to have people around who support this transition with positive attitudes. A deaf-blind community is one obvious place to get such support. The instructor should make sure all trainees have information about local organizations and events that the deaf-blind community offers. Again, this is not to push one “right” or “better” answer, but to provide information.

Exercise:

Trainees are asked to touch each other’s sleeves, jewelry etc., first asking permission. Then they are asked to touch the interpreters’ sleeves (again asking permission first). Finally, they discuss the experience briefly.

Objectives:

- Increase confidence (accessing information through touch)
- Understand the rules of touch

6. Communication:

Instructors remind trainees that they have the authority to assert their

own preferences. They can inform the SSPs how to offer sighted-guide service, inform them of interesting things in the environment, and take the authority to remind SSPs of their role (to provide information, not offer advice).

Some people with tunnel vision are tempted to use the SSP as an interpreter. On the other hand, some SSPs are reluctant to even facilitate communication, wrongly thinking that because they “may not interpret” that they are only to provide rides and sighted-guide service. This is a good time to reiterate the distinction and emphasize that SSPs are indeed to provide communication access for communication with clerks in the store or read mail. This is not the same as interpreting for meetings at the deaf club or meetings with the VR counselor.

Objectives:

- Encourage respectful but clear use of authority on the part of deaf-blind trainees
- Clarify roles
- Encourage distinctions

7. Communication and Trust

Instructors lead a discussion of the issue of trust without vision. Key points:

1. Trust comes over time; it's not instant
2. Language is important
3. Communication is a dialogue; it's not one-way
4. Control can be both intentional and unintentional (vs. unconscious)
5. Money is an important consideration
6. Trainees must have recourse

Instructors validate trainees' assumed reluctance to trust someone they do not know, someone outside the family, with sensitive information such as comes in the mail or is exchanged at the bank. Instructors explain that SSPs are screened but that it is not perfect. How much you want to trust the SSP and with what information will depend on the relationship

you build with the SSP.

Time: With time we get to know people, their habits, and their character, and then we learn what we can trust them with and what we cannot trust them with.

Language: SSPs may be second-language learners and not yet fluent in ASL. They may have to ask the deaf-blind person to repeat frequently. This is annoying, but it is a good thing. It means they want to be clear and to truly understand. On the other hand, they may not ask for clarification when they should. In this case, the deaf-blind person can correct the SSP and emphasize the importance of good, clear communication and honesty when they do not understand.

In another case, the SSP may have a language bias (pro-ASL, pro-English) and resist using the appropriate language. This should be discussed with the SSP coordinator.

Dialogue: Often the visual information is incomplete. The SSP may simply say, “We’re in the store, where do you want to go?” without giving more information. It’s fine to ask for more information like, “Tell me the organization of the store.” “Let’s go through the list, but I want you to tell me if you notice any new items like things on sale or fresh vegetables that have just come in.”

Intention: No one is perfect, and there may be times when the SSP misses some important visual information or misunderstands things. It is the pattern that is important for building trust.

Money: SSPs are screened, but deaf-blind people can have double-checks such as keeping receipts, using only small bills, and using direct deposits for their accounts.

8. Review and Synthesis

Review the main points of this lesson, specifically the importance of mutual respect, permission to touch, and open, clear communication.

Objectives:

- Closure

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Student Preparation

Read Chapter 14 in the reference text, SSPs: Definitions and Role

List of Materials

- a. Interesting objects to touch

Key Questions

- What are the different roles that people play in our lives (e.g., family member, friend, service provider)? How do I distinguish them? How do I know what is appropriate and when, under what circumstances?
- What does it mean to be “blind” if I can still see (have partial or limited vision)?
- What does it mean that my lead instructors are themselves deaf-blind?
- Do I really need an SSP?
- How can I maintain my independence if I’m using an SSP?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Meet the SSP students at a community gathering. The purpose is for deaf-blind participants to have some social time, perhaps meet more (new) people, and practice using an SSP to facilitate this socializing.

Evaluation of Trainee achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. There may be some confusion about roles. Some deaf-blind participants will have attended regional camps in which the role of SSP may be interpreter-SSP. Others may have attended AADB in which the role is even broader. Further, small towns or other areas may have very limited resources and professionals may switch hats frequently, assuming different roles in different situations.
2. Limited resources may tempt some case managers, VR counselors, and so on to ask the SSP to act as an interpreter. SSPs typically work for less money than interpreters and typically have very different training. In the case where the SSP is indeed a certified interpreter, then the role (within this particular situation) just needs to be clarified and pay adjusted (and invoiced) accordingly. While there is no conflict between the role of interpreter and that of SSP (both are working for the deaf-blind person in a position “under” the deaf-blind person) there is a conflict between counselor, case manager, etc., assuming the role of interpreter or SSP.

1.4 DB Module One

Lesson Four: Lab: Lunch

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

The lessons for 1.4 to the end are the same for tracks A & B; there are no more distinctions other than those included in the directions or comments within the lesson.

Lesson Overview

Experience using an SSP in a social situation

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goals: Appreciate the value of information provided by an SSP.

- Attend to visual information as provided by the SSP and use it to make decisions/choices
- Practice applying visual information obtained from SSPs
- Build community

Activities

1. Lunch

A buffet lunch is served. This could be ordered out, or it could be a potluck. Instructors explain the reasons for the lesson and request that partially sighted participants put on blindfolds for the duration of the meal.

Deaf-blind trainees decide (and inform SSPs) whether they would prefer the SSP to serve the food at their instruction or whether they would prefer to serve themselves.

Objectives:

- Motivate people to use SSPs

- Measure trainee knowledge of how to use SSPs
- Develop rapport with local SSPs
- Practice skills of using SSPs

2. Discussion

Instructors debrief with deaf-blind trainees and ask what came up for them.

Objectives:

- Give permission for feelings
- Promote sharing to build Community
- Promote self-reflection and awareness
- Provide an opportunity to problem solve if this is an issue

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Match up deaf-blind trainees with SSPs

Arrange for lunch

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Blindfolds for partially sighted trainees

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- How can everyone be included in conversations?
- What are the limits of socializing with SSPs?

- What are the proper tasks of an SSP while in this social setting?
How does the situation affect the role?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Student/Participant Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. Burns and hot food.
2. Who serves the food onto the plates of the deaf-blind trainees.
Some people prefer to do this themselves; some prefer to have the SSP do it.
3. Some deaf-blind people with partial sight might not want to put on a blindfold. In this case, the instructors can reformulate the exercise so that deaf-blind people make sure they can participate in the lunch conversation, observing appropriate turn taking. All should signal turns clearly and wait until the person with partial vision has had a chance to locate and focus on the next person talking before beginning to talk.
4. Mixed groups of deaf-blind people—some with partial vision, some with useful hearing, some totally deaf and blind—create a communication challenge. Instructors should strive to see that all are included as much as possible.

1.5 DB Module One

Lesson Five: Lab: Shopping

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Experience using an SSP in a common application of the service (shopping)

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goals: To build fluency in using SSPs

- Enhance understanding of the role of SSP through practical experience
- Experience independence by making decisions without interference
- Promote appropriate use of SSPs
- Build skill at communicating with SSPs

Activities

Location depends on geographic area and transportation. All trainees (deaf-blind and SSPs) meet at the front of the store (see Accommodations).

1. Pre-Lab Information

Instructor informs the students prior to beginning the exercise that interpreters will not be used during the lab. DB trainees will work exclusively with SSP trainees.

Set up teams of three: one DB trainee with two SSPs. SSPs will rotate throughout the lab. Specific instructions: 1) if this is a new store to you, first walk through different aisles to get oriented and explore what is available; 2) if you are familiar with this store, pretend you are shopping and explore each particular section where you might shop. Remember that the instructor provides full details before beginning.

Objectives:

- Provide orientation to the lesson.
- Provide information to support confidence.
- Bring focus to the exercise
- Allow for questions, clarification etc.

2. Mock Shopping Part I

Negotiation

DB Trainee and SSP work together on how to handle the cart while communicating and guiding at the same time. DB trainee decides who pushes or pulls the cart based on logistics and information provided by the SSP. Both should be able to communicate while moving through the store (e.g., both on the rear of the cart pausing/guiding by feeling the handle bar of cart).

Instructors observe and provide tips and feedback to both DB trainees and SSPs.

Objectives:

- Become familiar with the technique of using the cart while working with SSP
- Empower the deaf-blind person to figure out what works best and question “the way I’ve always done it”
- Establish a routine in which communication is comfortable and effective

3. Discussion/Report

Trainees will meet the instructor at a designated place and report on what they have learned.

Objectives:

- Reinforce learning, review and synthesis
- Provide an opportunity to offer more information, instruction or to correct mistakes.

4. Mock Shopping Part II

Trainees are instructed to browse a particular area (in depth) to, for example, find out what kinds of cereal are sold, how they are packaged, their ingredients and nutritional value, etc. Trainees select which topics are interesting to them.

Instructors: Make sure to pay close attention to the techniques SSPs use (guiding, providing visual and environmental info) and how appropriate they are to each trainee; at the same time observe the skills DB trainees develop (communication and how to retrieve info they need).

Objectives:

- Develop communication skills
- Retrieve information that may be useful in the future
- Practice using touch for information
- Practice screening visual/auditory information (to avoid over-stimulation) and focus
- Gain the sense of responsibility to take the leading role

5. Check Out

DB trainee and SSP get in the line to buy an item. Instructor observes, paying close attention to the pace, quality, and quantity of visual information provided by the SSP that the trainee is able to absorb. The clarity of what is happening for the cashier and deaf-blind person's own control of money (i.e., the DB trainee hands the money to the cashier instead of SSP giving to the cashier).

If the DB person prefers to use the ATM machine, again, the deaf-blind trainee should retain control (pushing the buttons, with visual information from the SSP). The trainee should connect enough with the cashier that the cashier understands to hand the receipt to the DB trainee, not the SSP.

Objectives:

- Practice details

- Reinforce decision making from the beginning to the end as the purview of the deaf-blind person
- Experience the power of visual information and how it can be used
- Reinforce the impartiality of the role of SSP

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Contact the store manager in advance, explain the purpose, and get the name of a back-up person's contact information in case any issues arise during that day. It is recommended that the DB trainer and interpreter greet/meet the manager personally on the day of training as it provides clear understanding and a positive model for the manager to see and understand the purpose of this activity taking place at his/her store.

Student Preparation

Bring a shopping list. This might be an actual list of things you want to buy or a mock list for this exercise.

List of Materials

- a. Money for the DB trainees to practice buying at least one item
- b. Bus fare tickets if planning to use bus to the store from the training center
- c. Ideal to have map of the store ahead of time for both instructors and SSPs

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- How is this different from the way I have been shopping (e.g., with family, on my own without complete information)?
- How do I know what is appropriate and when, under what

circumstances (e.g., at the check-out counter)?

- How can I trust the SSP if they know my ATM password?
- How often and how long will it take me to complete the shopping task with the SSP?
- How will I know what other people think of me using an SSP when I can't see their body language or facial expressions, and what will I do with that information?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Keep practicing and review on how to establish your own routine.

Evaluation of Student/Participant Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. Some host establishments may have unreasonable fears or concerns about hosting a training for several deaf-blind people (e.g., concerns of liability). Contacting the management ahead of time and assuring them of safety concerns is usually all that is needed. Let them know who the “go-to person” is if they have any later questions. (See above.)
2. DB trainees may have set routines for shopping given the typical lack of communication without this SSP service. As a result, they may know this store, but they may not have a good idea of all that is available (e.g., range of brands, range of size of packages, novelty items, etc.)
3. Poverty of many deaf-blind people (due to unemployment or underemployment). This is a consideration in choice of establishment for practice shopping.

1.6 DB Module One

Lesson Six: Lab: Restaurant

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Experience using SSP service in a different venue (restaurant).

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goals: To build fluency in using SSPs

- Enhance understanding of the role of SSP through a different practical experience
- Experience independence by making decisions without interference
- Motivate people to use SSPs correctly
- Build skill at communication with SSPs

Activities

Location depends on geographic area and transportation. All trainees (deaf-blind and SSPs) meet at the front of the restaurant.

1. Pre-Lab Information

Instructor informs the students prior to beginning the exercise that interpreters will not be used during the lab. DB trainees will work exclusively with SSP trainees. It is thus important that the instructor provides full details before beginning.

This information includes the type of restaurant and how payment will be handled.

Objectives:

- Preview the lesson so participants have a clear understanding of the activity and

- Provide an opportunity for participants to ask questions or express concerns.

2. Getting seated

Set up teams of three: DB trainee with two SSP trainees. SSPs will rotate throughout the lab.

Negotiating: The deaf-blind trainee and SSP trainee negotiate where to sit so that each is comfortable and can communicate comfortably. Factors to consider include lighting, glare, and distance/positioning from one another.

3. Ordering

The DB trainee will decide what to do with the menu (ask for Braille or have SSP read or read on their own). DB trainee lets the SSP know what assistance is needed (e.g., pointing to particular parts of the menu, reading the small print under some of the items).

Preparation before placing the order:

- DB trainee lets the SSP know how she will order (e.g., pointing to the menu) and what assistance is needed (e.g., help finding the specific food on the menu to point it out to the waiter/waitress, relaying the order) and whether there are questions.

The SSP trainee will notify the DB trainee if waitress/waiter arrives. Even though she is not ready to order, she may have some questions.

Objectives:

- Reinforce the role of SSP for all participants
- Reinforce boundaries

4. Waiting

DB trainee may use the time waiting for the food to get to know the SSP better by chatting about safe topics or may want to know more about the restaurant itself, its ambiance, other people there, and so on. They will work together to negotiate this conversation/description.

If there is a group at the table, the SSP may facilitate communication by repeating what others say, or if the deaf-blind person is partially sighted, they will all remember to keep everyone involved by turn-taking appropriately (i.e., signally a change of turn, whose turn is next) and signing in a clear way (e.g., in a small signing space).

Instructors both model this process with their own SSPs and observe trainees.

Objectives:

- Become familiar with the technique of directing the reading of a menu, starting with an overview then going to what is interesting (does the deaf-blind trainee want to hear about the 15 kinds of hamburger or just the ones with sauce, only vegetarian meals, only fish?) and including other techniques, such as asking about the special of the day
- Establish the habit of expressing needs and preferences (such as where to sit) while getting more information with which to make a decision (two-way conversations)
- Establish rapport with SSPs in a comfortable environment
- Become comfortable asking for and receiving visual information
- Practice making decisions independently
- Learn to participate fully
- Become empowered while being stimulated with information

5. Discussion/Report

Trainees will meet the instructor at the conclusion of the meeting to report on what they have learned.

Objectives:

- Synthesize, share, and reinforce learning

6. Paying the Bill and Departing

The deaf-blind trainees pay for their meal using their preferred method

(cash, check, or card), learning from the SSP's visual information whether to pay at the table or counter.

Trainee may ask for a guide to bus, taxi, or a specific place, etc.

Objective:

- Follow through on self-reliance, clear communication, and other skills

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Contact the restaurant manager in advance, explain the purpose, and get the name of a back-up person's contact information in case any issues arise during that day. It is recommended that the DB trainer and interpreter greet/meet the manager personally on the day of training as it provides clear understanding and a positive model for the manager to see and understand the purpose of this activity taking place at his/her store.

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Bus fare tickets, if planning to use bus to the restaurant from training center

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- If I bring an SSP to a restaurant with me and family members or friends, how would that work?
- If I ask an SSP to go to a restaurant with me, who pays for the SSP's meal?

- Would it be possible to work out a communication system with the wait staff so I could come another time alone (without an SSP)?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Keep practicing and review on how to establish your own routine.

Evaluation of Student/Participant Achievement

Participation, specifically assertiveness.

Other Considerations

1. Some host establishments may have unreasonable fears or concerns about hosting a training for several deaf-blind people due to liability issues. Contacting the management ahead of time and assuring them of safety concerns is usually all that is needed, and let them know who is the “go-to person” if they have any later questions. (See above.)
2. DB trainees may have specific dietary needs (e.g., allergies).

1.7 DB Module One

Lesson Seven: Review and Preparation for Internship

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Review and Preparation for Internship

This lesson focuses on knowledge.

Goals: To prepare for internship

- Reinforce skills learned during this unit
- Offer closure for this module
- Provide details concerning the up-coming internship

Activities

1. Review

Instructors ask what questions trainees have.

After answering questions, instructors ask trainees what they remember most from the training, emphasizing key points:

- Deaf-blind people have their own culture, which is much more tactile (just as deaf people sign much more than hearing people use gestures, so, too, do DB people touch a lot more than sighted-hearing people)
- SSPs have a code of ethics
- DB people make the decisions

Objectives:

- Reinforce the role of SSP for all participants
- Reinforce boundaries

2. Overview

Instructors give an overview of the coming internship (some of this is review from the earlier sessions).

- Deaf-blind trainees and SSP trainees will be matched by the coordinator (who is introduced if she is not known to them)
- DB trainees and SSP trainees will be scheduled through the coordinator at the beginning, but if it is comfortable to both, it can be changed

Objectives:

- Make expectations clear
- Provide an opportunity for reflection on what has been learned in a classroom or structured setting and how this can be applied to one's life
- Provide an opportunity for questions

3. Evaluations

Instructors will stay in touch with the coordinator to make sure all is going well.

Instructors will stay in touch with trainees to make sure all is going well.

Trainees should take all problems to the SSP coordinator.

There will be a closing session to debrief at the end of the internship.

Objectives:

- On-going improvement of training

4. Policies

Instructor hands out a copy of agency policies and reviews them with participants to make sure they are clear and understood.

Objectives:

- Provide transition
- Reinforce boundaries and roles of agency personnel
- Provide information as to structure and practice.

5. Review and Synthesis

Instructors check in to see if there are any concerns.

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Work with SSP coordinator to make match-ups.

Work with coordinator to do follow up.

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

None

Handouts

SSP Policies

Key Questions

- What do I expect to get out of this internship?
- What are the qualities I most want in an SSP (e.g., friendly attitude, reliability)?
- What if the SSP is not available when I want one?
- What if there is a problem?
- What if I decide I don't want to use an SSP after all?
- What are my concerns?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Use of SSPs.

Evaluation of Student/Participant Achievement

Participation, specifically assertiveness.

Other Considerations

1. Trainees will need close follow-up. Some will feel shy about using SSPs and simply not make appointments. Some will want to use the SSP as an interpreter or friend instead of SSP and need reminders/guidance. Some will take advantage of SSPs (e.g., refuse to pay for gas) and so on. It's a learning process.

1.8 DB Module One

Lesson Eight: Exit Interview and Reception

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

This lesson is to add fluency to all skills, provide closure to the module, and transition to the next module. Members of both classes, the SSP track and DB track, are participants, as well as any community members (deaf-blind people, SSPs, interpreters, etc.) the instructor or class members wish to invite. Additionally, to synthesize the experience of the internship and initiate bridge building with other service providers and communities, and develop a network.

This lesson focuses on knowledge and attitude.

Goals: To synthesize internship experiences and look to the future

- Reinforce skills learned during internship
- Celebrate
- Broaden the network available to both deaf-blind people and the service providers who work with them

Activities

1. Exit Interview

Although instructors have been in touch with trainees throughout the internship, this is an opportunity for a 'big picture' discussion.

Trainees are asked to describe their experiences and share with one another. Instructors are looking primarily for ways to improve future training and the system by which service is offered.

Objectives:

- Transition
- Celebrate

2. Transition

Instructors thank trainees for their participation thus far and describe the SSP service available going forward and correct any misunderstandings the trainees might have.

The instructor describes the planned reception to follow (who will attend and why they are invited to participate). She explains the interpreting arrangements.

Objectives:

- Transition
- Celebrate

3. Community Reception

The reception is for the community: other deaf-blind people, deaf people in the community, other SSPs, interpreters, and other service providers, such as VR counselors and job-placement specialists. It is scheduled during the day when agency people can attend on work time.

The instructors and agency director greet people as they come in, welcoming them to read the materials offered and meet with others in the room.

The Program. The program begins roughly 20 minutes after the doors open.

Instructors, the SSP coordinator, and trainees are introduced. The agency director explains the agency itself and the programs offered and profiles several successful deaf-blind people. At the conclusion, she emphasizes the importance of SSP services to deaf-blind people for their independence and ability to maintain a healthy work life. She invites others to work together to support deaf-blind people in collaboration.

After the 15-minute presentation, the director takes questions and then invites people to enjoy refreshments and meeting one another.

Objectives:

- Celebrate
- Broaden the contacts between and among deaf-blind people and service providers

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Work with interpreter/SSP coordinator to make match-ups

Recruit local interpreters who have not yet worked with deaf-blind people to come and learn more

Send out invitations to the reception, order food, etc.

Student Preparation

Reflect on experience in the program

List of Materials

- a. Brochures on the agency
- b. Brochures on the program
- c. Refreshments

Handouts

See materials

Key Questions

- What did I get out of this internship?
- How can I use SSPs in my daily life to make the quality of my life better?
- What other ways can I enlarge my network?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Use of SSPs.

Evaluation of Student/Participant Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. There is often a conflict in trying to choose the best time for the reception. Deaf-blind people and interpreters may be working during the day and unable to take time off without losing pay. On the other hand, professionals such as VR counselors and job placement specialists will consider attending this reception to be work and thus want it to be during their paid work time (day hours). The agency sponsoring the event will have to determine priorities (and resources, for example to reimburse deaf-blind people for time off work).

Module Two

DB Advanced Beginner: Overview

Description

Module Two is advanced beginner level training. It provides a deeper look at using SSPs. The emphasis is on communicating the visual information (and types of visual and tactual information) wanted to the SSP. This communication to the SSP requires both communication skill (linguistic) and assertiveness. The person completing this training is aware of ways to use SSP service beyond the accomplishment of simple tasks and errands.

Examples of post-Module Two uses of an SSP include: exploring the possibilities and benefits of using a new gym or recreational center, looking for a new apartment, or taking part in a community street fair. Here the deaf-blind person would be able to effectively gather the pre-assignment information about possibilities and explain the requisite background information to an SSP as to what is desired.

Prerequisites for Trainees

Trainees should

- Be experienced in using SSPs and
- Be comfortable using touch (in public) for information.

Instructor Qualifications

Instructors for this module should be a team of one (or more) deaf-blind instructor(s) who knows about and uses SSPs, and one experienced SSP. Instructors should have teaching skills, be active and respected members of the deaf-blind community and have attended at least one AADB conference and preferably other statewide events as well.

The instructional team should be able to communicate effectively

with all trainees whether directly or through an interpreter.¹² The instructor(s) should have a working understanding of the theory of visual information such as distinctions between information that is useful/interesting, between being passive or active, and comfort in the role of “employer” (i.e., assertively giving direction to SSPs).

If there are no qualified deaf-blind instructors available, then it is even more important that the non-DB teacher have the respect of local deaf-blind community members. This instructor should make sure to host panels of deaf-blind people, show quality video material, invite deaf-blind guest speakers to the class, and otherwise endeavor to have the deaf-blind perspective well represented.

Module Objectives

At the successful completion of this module, trainee deaf-blind participants will be able to:

- Gather information through the Internet or other sources with which to plan outings.
- Clearly communicate the goals of the assignment to the SSP.
- Assertively request specific or additional visual information from an SSP.
- Effectively combine the use of visual information received through the SSP with tactual information gained through touch.

At the successful completion of this module, trainee deaf-blind participants will know the following principles of the role:

- a. The value of negotiating with SSPs to achieve the maximum benefit of the work.
- b. The value of assertiveness and self-knowledge.

¹² We are speaking here of the communication skill (beyond language) to quickly recognize the best approach to meet the trainee “where he is at” linguistically, culturally, educationally, and experientially to explain the concepts in this lesson. It is expected that deaf-blind trainees will vary greatly in such background.

2.1 DB Module Two

Lesson One: Analyzing Touch and Vision

Instructor(s) is/are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Using touch, remaining vision, and visual memory to better understand the environment.

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goal: Participants re-analyze and adjust their use of information resources.

Activities

1. Instructor leads a discussion of the topic, access to information.

Instructors lead a discussion about how participants use vision and touch and how the two work together.

Instructors draw out how one sense enhances the understanding gained from the other. For deaf-blind people not yet using tactile sign language, instructors encourage them to try using “hands-on” together with their vision.¹³

Objectives:

- Provide orientation and preview
- Share strategies
- Validate the use of touch

¹³ Interpreters should be arranged for all participants so that enough are there if/when the people with tunnel vision or partial vision decide to use interpreters tactually (or close-vision) in addition to using their vision.

2. Instructors transition into a discussion of the topic using touch while using SSPs to provide visual information.

This is a specific strategy: using visual information (not only from oneself but through the SSP) together with touch.

Objectives:

- Practice touch to understand language (tactile signing)
- Use residual vision to look at what is being described
- Practice touch to explore what has been described
- Use visual memories to understand

Instructors provide several items of interest such as tapestry sculpture (figures made in bas relief of a soft material such as cotton) with bright, contrasting colors.

Interpreter/SSPs can both identify them visually and then show them tactually. Participants are encouraged to share favorite things to touch (as well as material or textures not liked).

Food is another interesting material. Oatmeal with raisins and walnuts, for example, provides smell, taste, and texture to be felt with the mouth. Other foods such as artisan bread or hard-boiled eggs can be eaten with the hands and provide a tactile as well as visual and gustatory experience. Participants are encouraged to share favorite approaches to making food more interesting.

Exercise:

Instructor invites participants to use vision and visual description (from SSPs) along with touch to explore some interesting objects, for example:

- textiles with upraised symbols or forms
- solid art objects with a tactile element
- fruit, vegetables

3. Instructors lead a discussion about asking SSPs for more visual information.

Instructors identifies different kinds of information:

- useful (e.g., that some items are for sale, the price of objects)
- interesting (e.g., new styles, what people are doing)
- aesthetic (e.g., velvet, hand lotion)

The instructor suggests ways that deaf-blind people can use SSPs for more than just shopping, such as to visit interesting places. A specific strategy of using SSPs for visual information (together with touch) is to explore interesting places, for example:

- Folklife festivals
- Farmers' markets
- Hardware stores

Objectives:

- Stimulate curiosity
- Reinforce the use of touch as valid, accepted, valuable
- Build a common but more complex, nuanced understanding of the role of SSP

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Gather materials

Student Preparation

Reflect on past experiences with SSPs

List of Materials

- a. Objects that are interesting and can be touched

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What are my choices regarding the use of my available resources?
- What makes a good SSP?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Apply what is learned to the next exercise

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. There is a very limited amount of money available for formal, paid SSP hours and thus a paradox of encouraging more use when the funds might not be available. Encourage deaf-blind trainees to think of ways they can work together to approach their legislators for regular funding for SSPs. Deaf-blind people in a few states have been successful; others can be, too.
2. Another consideration is establishing a tactile sign language small group class (again, with deaf-blind instructors). This has been done with no SSPs or interpreters, using creative techniques in an emotionally safe environment.

2.2 DB Module Two

Lesson Two: Lab: The Environment

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Experience using an SSP in a new application of the service (learning about the environment)

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goals: To build fluency in using SSPs

- Enhance understanding of the role of SSP through practical experience
- Promote the more effective use of SSPs
- Build skill at communication with SSPs

Activities

Location depends on geographic area and transportation. All trainees (deaf-blind and SSPs) meet before the exercise begins.

1. Pre-Lab Information

Instructor informs the trainees prior to beginning the exercise. Interpreters will not be used during the lab, so it is important to make sure expectations (the plan) is clear before interpreters step back and SSPs begin working.

DB trainees will work with advanced SSP trainees in teams of three: one DB trainee with two SSP trainees. SSPs will rotate throughout the lab to provide variety. The goal for the DB trainee is to have a sense of the environment, its structure, atmosphere, and its unique attributes through use of remaining vision/hearing but more importantly through touch and information from the SSP.

Instructors will give DB trainees an overview of the space: “You are in the downtown public library, which has three floors. What is particularly interesting in this building is the architecture and arrangement of various spaces.” The instructor then asks SSPs to give an overview of the space (a general sense of it: modern, classic, spacious, rich, and textured) and then asks the DB trainees to think how they can best get a sense of the overall space and particular points of interest and to direct the SSPs accordingly.

Instructors observe and provide tips and feedback to both DB trainees and SSP students.

2. The Exercise

Instructors have chosen a site that is interesting either because there is interesting architecture, design, or interior decorations. There should also be a tactile element to the site that deaf-blind trainees can experience tactually.

Negotiation

DB trainee and SSP work together on how to explore the space. The deaf-blind trainee decides with information from the SSP, based on the site, the time allotted and the logistics of exploring the building.

Objectives:

- Become familiar with the technique of receiving interesting as well as useful information from an SSP
- To establish mutual cues so that the deaf-blind person has clear signals as to the value of the information.

3. Discussion/Report

Trainees will meet the instructor at a designated place and report on what they have learned.

Objectives:

- Provide an opportunity for self-reflection.

- Reinforce learning.
- Provide an opportunity for feedback and correction.

4. Exercise Part II

Trainees have a mini-feedback session with their SSP in terms of which techniques are effective, which cues are unclear, etc.

Trainees are instructed to browse a particular area (in depth).

Objectives:

- Develop skills at using vision, touch, and memory to establish a sense of place
- Enjoy the experience
- Practice screening visual/auditory information (to avoid over-stimulation) and focus
- Gain the sense of responsibility to negotiate understanding

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

Contact the location manager in advance, explain the purpose, and get the name of a back-up person's contact information in case any issues arise during that day. It is recommended that the DB trainer make a request to touch any art objects or architectural features that might otherwise be off limits.

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Ideal to have map of the site for SSPs to review before the exercise

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- Was this a positive experience? Why or why not?
- What would have made it better?
- Can I really direct the SSP to what I want to know about, or elicit enough information to know what to ask?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Thought question: If the exercise were “people watching,” how would this be different from architecture or art?

Evaluation of Student/Participant Achievement

Participation.

Other Considerations

1. This may bring up a sense of loss for things the deaf-blind person is unable to see for him or herself. It might be frustrating if the SSPs are not sufficiently skilled.
2. If it is an artistic building, steps may be atypical and thus difficult to navigate.
3. There is a trade-off to be considered for this exercise. Using highly skilled SSPs will provide a more effective lesson for the deaf-blind trainees. On the other hand, using SSPs in training saves instructors’ planning time. It may be best, if possible, to do both. Have SSP trainees practice but with supervision (one on one) by highly skilled SSPs who can step in and model as well as minimize frustration on the part of the deaf-blind trainees.

2.3 DB Module Two

Lesson Three: Lab: People Watching

All instructors are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Experience using an SSP in a new application of the service (people watching)

This lesson focuses on skill.

Goals: To build fluency in using SSPs

- Enhance understanding of the role of SSP through practical experience of this enhanced value
- Promote more effective use of SSPs
- Build skill at communication with SSPs

Activities

Location depends on geographic area and transportation. All trainees (deaf-blind and SSPs) meet before the exercise begins.

1. Pre-Lab Information

DB trainees will work with advanced SSP trainees (fluent signers). Instructors talk about special signals in TASL, such as feedback (back-channeling) that one understands, or does not understand what is being said. She will ask if any of the participants have other signals they use to communicate tactually that they'd like to share. Any abbreviations or signs they have invented should be shared.

Objectives:

- Preview for orientation.
- Opportunity for sharing (which also builds a sense of community).

Set up teams of three: DB trainee with two SSP trainees. SSPs will rotate throughout the lab. The goal is to have a sense of the people in the environment, their “type,” style, and behaviors.

Instructors observe and provide tips and feedback to both DB trainees and SSP students.

2. The Exercise

Instructors have chosen a site that is interesting for people watching, e.g. a local park, a shopping mall, etc.

Negotiation

DB trainee and SSP work together on how to observe. What is most interesting to the deaf-blind trainee (children/teenagers, actions/clothes). The SSP exercises judgment based on the feedback from the deaf-blind trainee, the people present, and the time allotted.

Objectives:

- Become familiar with the technique of receiving interesting as well as useful information from an SSP
- Establish mutual cues to make conveying such information more efficient

3. Discussion/Report

Trainees will meet the instructor and one another at a designated place and report on what they have learned, to de-brief and exchange ideas.

Objectives:

- Provide an opportunity for self-reflection.
- Reinforce learning.
- Provide an opportunity for feedback and correction.

4. Exercise Part II

Trainees have a mini-feedback session with their SSP in terms of

which techniques are effective, which cues are unclear, etc. They watch again for a short period of time.

Objectives:

- Establish a sense of place through “people watching”
- Experiment with cues
- Enjoy the experience
- Practice screening visual/auditory information (to avoid overstimulation) and focus
- To gain the sense of authority to negotiate understanding

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

None

Student Preparation

None

List of Materials

- a. Ideal to have places to sit comfortably from which to observe

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- Was this a positive experience? Why or why not?
- What would have made it better?
- What’s my limit for listening to description? How do I find and set my filter and share this with another (the SSP)?
- How, when, and in what way is touch most useful? How is it best for me to use touch with verbal description?

- How can we develop TASL to really use the modality of touch?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

Thought question: What kinds of instructions are most useful to SSPs? How can I improve communication with SSPs to get more of the kind of information and experiences I want?

Evaluation of Student/Participant Achievement

Participation.

Other Considerations

1. This may bring up a sense of loss for things the deaf-blind person is unable to see for him or herself. It might be frustrating if the SSPs are not sufficiently skilled.
2. If it is an artistic building, steps may be atypical and thus difficult to navigate.

2.4 DB Module Two

Lesson Four: Communication

Instructor(s) is/are themselves deaf-blind.

Lesson Overview

Healthy Communication

This lesson focuses on skill and attitude.

Goal: Participants move closer to assertive communication.

Activities

1. Instructor leads a discussion on the topic of the DB-SSP relationship.

Instructors lead a discussion about how participants may sometimes feel frustrated with SSPs, perceiving that the SSPs do not provide enough information since you are not getting the information you want. The answer is communication.

Instructors encourage asking SSPs for more information, “Tell me what you see.” Sometimes SSPs feel like they “do not see anything.” This is because they are using their *passive vision*. They are seeing passively, waiting for something interesting to focus on but meanwhile, they are gathering and storing information. For example, when I drive to the grocery store, I may not “notice” anything consciously. I may be thinking about what I’m going to buy for dinner, but I still do see things. I see whether it’s raining or not, I see how much traffic there is, whether there is a house for sale or a new building going up.

Objectives:

- Teach theory (of vision)
- Validate assertiveness

Instructors encourage deaf-blind people to ask SSPs to go to interesting places and to exchange information with one another regarding such places. This provides stimulation and helps build a store of information about the world (for example, the two places just visited).

Lesson Preparation

Instructor Preparation

None

Student Preparation

Reflect on recent experiences with SSPs

List of Materials

None

Handouts

None

Key Questions

- What do I want to do with my SSP time?
- How can I help my SSPs improve so that I get better service?
- What do I need to communicate with my SSP so that she will understand my needs better?

Follow-Up Activities

Independent Assignments or Homework

None

Evaluation of Trainee Achievement

Participation

Other Considerations

1. There is a very limited amount of money available for formal, paid SSP hours and thus a paradox of encouraging more use when the funds might not be available.

Appendix A:

Visual Information

The topic of visual information is huge. Here we will focus on a few of the major functions of the information we gather by seeing or looking and how this relates to work as an SSP.

First, of course, we use our vision to navigate the environment and to identify the path before us, approaching dangers and inferring actions we should take such as making a turn, pausing, stepping over or around obstacles, and so on. Sighted guides do this as a matter of course and without usually informing the deaf-blind person.

But our vision also provides information which

- Locates us in a particular time, place, and setting.
- Helps us navigate the social environment.
- Is intellectually stimulating.
- Is substance for later conversations.
- Provides information to store, things that may not be meaningful in the moment but which may become important later.
- Is aesthetically pleasing.

At the beginning level, it is all an SSP can do to process the visual information needed to navigate the physical environment and safely guide the deaf-blind person while remembering to communicate the reasons for pausing and so on. But as SSPs gain skill, they are then able to add “scene setting” to their skills, to describe the room in terms of its ambiance, the people who are there, their dress, mood, and so on. Each space has its own tone. Elements such as spaciousness, light, color, and style give it a sense of airiness, coziness, somberness, and so on.

But the environment is not merely physical; it is social. To ease social relations, it is important to know who is present, what they are doing, and what they are feeling. Knowing other people’s age, gender, and dress, as well as posture, gestures, and actions keep us connected.

Thirdly, what we see challenges our old thinking, stimulates questions, sparks memories, and becomes the content for our conversations. We stay in touch with the world around us, almost unconsciously using the information we gather as we go about our daily routines. New buildings go up, old ones come down, new products are advertised, and businesses change the ways they operate.¹

What we see gives us food for thought and information for future conversations. These conversations lead in turn to a greater participation in society, further intellectual stimulation, and become part of our store of knowledge which may be useful later. We may, for example, begin a new hobby and remember that the shop we passed on our way to the grocery store sells materials for this. Conversely, learning about the shop may inspire us to take up the hobby. Even if we personally never take an interest in the topic, it will provide background with which to understand another person’s conversation about it.

Deaf-blind people, too, want the information that goes beyond simply navigating the room physically. They want to be socially oriented as well as physically oriented, and they want the intellectual stimulation, and connection with others, that this information provides. The work of SSPs is critical, providing not simply a guide and the price of the food on the

¹ Remember, for instance, the days before bar codes and ATMs?

shelf, but descriptions of what is seen along the way. Indeed, as the SSP learns the more about the interests and personality of the deaf-blind person with whom they are working, they may add even more information gleaned at other times and in other places. The best way to start a conversation is not always to ask questions but often to just begin with talking about what is interesting. All this is included when we say SSPs provide “visual information.”

Appendix B:

SSP Sample Job Description

SSPs are responsible to communicate effectively with the deaf-blind person to whom they are assigned, to act as sighted-guide, and to provide visual/environmental information.

Duties include but are not limited to the formal SSP program, that is, the agency occasionally sponsors or supports community events in which deaf-blind people participate and for which they will need volunteer SSPs.

Responsibilities:

- Convey and describe visual information (what you see).
- Provide casual interpreting.
- Act as a professional guide.
- Provide information with which the deaf-blind person is able to make independent decisions.
- Comply with ____ (*our agency*) ____ SSP policies and abide by ethical and professional practices.
- Prepare and submit monthly invoices and reports to the agency in a timely and professional manner.

Qualifications:

- Formal training as an SSP. (If an applicant does not have any

formal training but otherwise qualifies, the agency will provide the necessary training.)

- A minimum of one year's experience working with deaf-blind individuals as a paid worker or volunteer.
- A minimum of one year's experience interacting and socializing in the deaf-blind community in community events.
- Fluency in ASL/PSE skills.
- Knowledge of deaf-blind culture.
- Knowledge of ethical practices and agency policies.

Appendix C:

Demographic Information on the Deaf-Blind Population in the United States

There are no reliable sources of demographic information on deaf-blind people in the United States. This is due to several factors, including the purpose for the data and definitions of “deaf-blindness.”

While the United States census counts people who identify as having a disability, it does not break down this count into specific disabilities. The National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness conducts an annual count of children who are identified as being deaf-blind. The Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), through its regional offices, counts deaf-blind persons who identify themselves as such within specific categories, when they ask about or need services; it is not a full count of all the deaf-blind persons in a region or state, only those served by HKNC. The Deaf-Blind Service Center (DBSC) similarly counts the number of clients it serves in the greater Seattle area, as well as a few areas in Washington state but does not count the number of deaf-blind people in general.

What does it mean to be deaf-blind? To measure visual acuity and field, and to measure audiological decibels and Hertz is relatively easy, but to infer lifestyle and implications for a person’s well-being is much more difficult.

Demographic information is sought for different reasons. For example:

- a. An attempt to identify the incidence of various syndromes that cause deaf-blindness (medical perspective), in order to parse out the effects of various etiologies for the purposes of future research.
- b. An attempt to assess how much service will be needed (by e.g., Departments of Vocational Rehabilitation, or public schools) or to include in a grant proposal requesting funds to support specific services.
- c. An attempt to identify the number and/or location of people who are culturally deaf and then become deaf-blind (as for anthropologists and linguists), again for the purposes of study.
- d. An attempt to identify the number of elderly people in whom poor vision is combined with poor hearing as a basis for research on the quality of life of the elderly.
- e. An attempt to identify the number of people who might find a particular product (e.g., an electronic book that produces output in large print and Braille).

What we do know is this: There are no reliable, consistent statistics, but it is clearly a very, very, very small percentage of the general population.¹ Wolf, Schein, and Delk's 1982² study on the prevalence of deaf-blindness in the general population³ breaks down the numbers of persons who are both deaf and blind into five categories,⁴ each with their own rate

¹ The best counts seem to be for children, and because of the nature of the various etiologies, the numbers of children is not predictive of the number of adults, i.e., some syndromes manifest early and cause significant medical problems, which may result in early death, while other syndromes manifest in young adulthood and may not be included in counts of younger children. See the National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness: <http://nationaldb.org/index.php>.

² Wolf, E. G., Delk, M. T. & Schein, J. D. (1982) Needs assessment of services to deaf-blind individuals. Silver Spring, MD: Redex, Inc.

³ Schein, Jerome D. (1986) Rehabilitating the Deaf-Blind Client. *Journal of Rehabilitation of the Deaf*, Vol. 19 Nos. 3-4, January/February 1986; pp. 5-9.

⁴ Some within each category may also have additional disabilities.

of prevalence⁵: deaf-blind, deaf, and severely visually impaired; blind and severely hearing impaired; severely visually and hearing impaired; and “all definitions combined.”⁶ For the purposes of this curriculum, we are using the category of “all definitions combined,” which, based on their figures, is 346 persons per 100,000. A few caveats come to mind. One is that prevalence reported by this study may be distorted by the areas in which they did their study, i.e., in urban areas where services are concentrated. Another is that this study is over 25 years old, but, to our knowledge, it is the latest such data available.⁷ Based on this ratio, and using the most recent United States census figures, the number of deaf-blind persons in the United States would be 1,052,047, and in Washington state 22,315.⁸

Further, most *adults* who are deaf-blind are so because of either:

- a. Very advanced age (presbycusis and presbyopia)
- b. Usher Syndrome,
- c. Rare epidemics of maternal rubella, or
- d. Genetic anomalies.

Each of these etiologies has very different implications for the person themselves and for service providers.⁹

⁵ Based on a set of factors outlined in their research, they have come up with the rate per 100,000 persons for each category.

⁶ The Deaf-Blind Service Center uses four categories based on the reporting person’s residual hearing or vision: deaf and partially sighted, hard of hearing and partially sighted, deaf and blind, and hard of hearing and blind. The Northwest Region of the Helen Keller National Center further breaks down its data by how its “customers” self-identify the etiology of their hearing and/or vision loss.

⁷ Schein, Jerome D. (1986) Rehabilitating the Deaf-Blind Client. *Journal of Rehabilitation of the Deaf*, Vol. 19 Nos. 3-4, January/February 1986; p. 6.

⁸ Based on July 1, 2008 US Census data estimates.

⁹ People deaf-blind as a result of old age, for example, are not likely to be very active (having arthritis, heart conditions, and so on), and they are not likely to be fluent in ASL. People deaf-blind as a result of Usher Syndrome Type I may identify primarily as deaf people who use sign language, while those deaf-blind as a result of CHARGE Syndrome will have multiple and extensive medical and physical challenges.

For the purposes of this curriculum, it makes the most sense for each agency providing SSP service to do outreach in your local area and discover where such services are needed and for colleges and universities offering training to work closely with the local service-providing agencies. As services are provided, and as the national deaf-blind community grows more established, cohesive and well-known, the kind and amount of SSP services needed will become clear.

Appendix D:

Touch, Culture, and Power

Touch, along with smell and taste, are the remaining senses with which deaf-blind people know about and experience the world. The importance of touch cannot be overestimated. This raises four important issues:

- How deaf-blind people are touched and how often
- Cultural rules
- personal comfort about touching, and
- Control, power, and touch.

Learning How. One of the first lessons sighted people learn is how to get the attention of a deaf-blind person by touching them. The text covers this, as do parts of this curriculum. This is the purely mechanical aspect of touch, the “how to” part. However, the other issues must be understood as well. If the sighted person simply takes hold of the deaf-blind person’s hand and moves it as if it were an object (say to find a cup of coffee), the touch has a dehumanizing effect on the deaf-blind person. Thus, how sighted people touch deaf-blind people relates strongly to issues of control. This can be discussed as mechanics—the right way to do it—or as an element of control.

Cultural rules about touch. Americans are typically not as comfortable

touching one another as are people in some other cultures. Adults do not typically hold hands unless we are in a romantic relationship with one another or even with children unless it is a safety precaution. Americans like “our space.” However, this is counter the needs of deaf-blind people. Just as we easily become comfortable with new (foreign) foods and clothes, we can become comfortable with the new (deaf-blind culture) rules of touch.

As teachers, we should monitor how our SSP students use touch and encourage an understanding of it within the context of being both deaf and blind as well as within the context of personal space, boundaries, power and control.

Personal Comfort. Individuals will come with different levels of comfort with touch. There will be those whose families were very comfortable with touch and showed a lot of affection. Conversely, there will be others who have had bad experiences in their pasts that leave them emotionally uncomfortable with such personal touch. At the same time, some deaf-blind people have been so isolated that they have become desperate for human contact and may move to an intimacy that is inappropriate. Some deaf-blind people too have had bad experiences with touch. Both need to be assertive, clear communicators, thinking about and setting boundaries regarding personal touch. These are personal issues and should be negotiated.

Transitions and Power. It is important that the SSP become comfortable with touch and use it as optimally as possible. This is what some deaf-blind people call “the power of touch.” The transition from reading ASL visually to reading it tactually is gradual. It makes sense to use touch to communicate when the light is dim, when the space is crowded, and when the conversation or action moves relatively rapidly from one place to another (as in a group conversation when the person next to the deaf-blind person can tactually signal where to look). As vision fades, touch should naturally be used more and more. Sighted people must be careful to understand this natural use of touch and to welcome it.

Finally, touch is a source of information about things as well as a channel of communication and way to connect with other people. Here again, we run into culture. As children, we were often told, “Look, but don’t

touch.” In stores we can touch the merchandise, but it is not encouraged. In museums, objects are protected behind glass or ropes. Many things are simply out of reach.

A focus on “doing it the right way” or fitting in may make both a new SSP and a partially sighted deaf-blind person hesitant to use touch at all. They may want to avoid “looking strange” despite the fact that using touch may be the best way to literally get a sense of something. Being deaf-blind is different. The lives of deaf-blind people are different and that’s okay.

Appendix E:

Simulation Goggle Kit

A kit of simulators is very helpful, if not essential to the beginning levels of training for SSPs. Kits can be purchased “ready-made” for approximately \$250 (2009 dollars) or made by the instruction team from easily purchased items and several hours of work.

Ready-made:

A ready-made kit can be purchased (within the continental US) from www.lowvisionsimulationkit.com. The kit contains four goggles and interchangeable lenses and funnels that allow the wearer to briefly experience tunnel vision of varying degrees or blurry vision. These are the typical results of Usher syndrome, macular degeneration, and other common causes of blindness. The field loss and/or lack of visual clarity affect mobility, awareness of the environment, gathering of information (especially incidental information), and the daily activities of life (activities of daily living: ADL).

The lenses in the goggles can be removed/replaced much like the lenses of an expensive camera to create a variety of simulations. The kit comes with a carrying case and instructions for use. The biggest limitation of the ready-made kit (other than its price) is the size (smaller than an average class). It is designed to be used with groups of eight: four users and four guides.

Do-It-Yourself

To make your own kit, you will need the following parts:

- Goggles with removable lenses. We recommend item #JAC3002686 from www.airgas.com, but we also suggest comparing welding goggles from various vendors.
- Funnels (can be purchased at medical supply stores or your local drug store).
- A sharp utensil (e.g., box cutter or saw).
- Dark paint to cover the funnels and block the light.¹

The funnels help simulate various levels of tunnel vision (or restricted field), the degree of vision depending on the width of the narrow end of the funnel. The black or dark paint covering the funnel prevents the participant from seeing light through the plastic.

Each set of goggles will have one lens covered with black paint. The other eyepiece will be replaced by a funnel (to simulate tunnel vision). Trim the end of the funnel using a box cutter or saw, to fit in the eyepiece, in place of the lens. The narrower end of the funnel can be cut down to any length; the smaller the opening, the more limited the user's vision will be. Be sure the funnel itself is thick and opaque or is painted to prevent light from leaking in.

Complete Blindness

Finally, blindfolds made from strips of fabric (fleece is a great material) to be tied around the head, covering the eyes, will simulate complete blindness. Sleep masks can also be used and purchased at any drug store, but fleece is readily available at a fabric store, inexpensive, durable, comfortable to wear, easy to store, and easily washed between uses. One yard of fabric cut into strips 6 inches wide by 36 inches long will make 6 such blindfolds.

¹ Be sure to choose paint that will adhere to the material of the funnel. For example, if the funnel is plastic, make sure the paint will adhere to plastic.

Additional Supplies

To complete the kit, include earplugs, or noise-blocking, moldable material to simulate a mild to moderate hearing loss.

Appendix F:

Play-Doh™ Pictionary

Materials:

- Enough Play-Doh for all participants (1 can each, of any color, should be sufficient).
- Blindfolds

Goal of the game:

Identify the object modeled by your partner before the other teams (members of other teams also guessing) do so.

Purpose of the game:

- Become more sensitive to the deaf-blind experience (e.g., having to wait without knowing what is going on).
- Get to know one another better.
- Improve communication skills (specifically topic comment discourse¹ used in Tactile ASL).
- Learn more about the ergonomics of tactile sign language (positioning at a table, use of physical supports, etc.).

¹ Establishing what one is talking about before making a comment about it (the topic). For further elaboration on this topic, see the literature on ASL discourse.

- Have fun.

Players:

Four or more plus a leader (it's best to have one leader and an assistant if the group is larger than 6).

Divide into teams of two people each. If the group has an odd number, one team can have three players who rotate in (as active players) and out (as observers).

The players are called “modelers” and “guessers.” These roles reverse from game to game. The modelers form the object using Play-Doh, and the guessers touch the object and try to identify it using only touch.

All “talking” between team members is done using Sign Language or gesture. The person with the blindfold on will read signs tactually (see below). The leader will sign instructions and comments and will write the target word on the flip chart or whiteboard. This is important so that the educational objectives can be met.

Each player should have her own blindfold. The two-member teams begin by deciding on a name for their team. The leader then writes these team names on a flip chart or whiteboard to be used as a scorecard visible to all.

The leader then explains the play and the rules. It's a good idea to begin with a practice round so all can understand before beginning to score.

The play:

1. To begin, the guessers put on their blindfolds.
2. The leader gives the modelers a target word (“wristwatch”) and the amount of time allotted for modeling the object (two minutes) by writing it on the chart or board. The time is determined by the difficulty of the object. For example, “wristwatch” is fairly simple and would require only two minutes. The easiest objects (such as “book”) are given only one minute, and the most difficult (“popcorn”) may require three.
3. Once the object to communicate is clear to all the modelers, the

leader says, “Go,” and the modeling begins.² The modelers then have the allotted time to shape the object using the Play-Doh. If they finish early, they must wait but not hand the object to the guessers. That is, all guessers must wait until the signal is given by the leader that it is now time to begin the guessing phase. It usually takes one or two practice runs for all participants to understand this point.

4. When the time for modeling is up or all modelers are finished, the leader signals time to hand the Play-Doh modeled objects to the guessers, again signaling, “Go.”
5. The guessers sign their guesses, and the modeler responds with only a hot/cold kind of response (i.e., “no” if the guesser is way off base, “so-so” gesture if the guesser is somewhat right but not really, or a “come-on” gesture if the guesser is very close but not quite right).
6. Once the guesser correctly identifies the object, the modeler slaps/pounds the table and raises a hand.³
7. The leader checks to make sure the guesser is correct and awards the point.
8. All guessers and modelers then switch roles (the guessers take off their blindfolds and become modelers while the modelers put on blindfolds and become guessers).
9. The play continues.

The score:

The team that first guesses the object correctly scores a point, and the

² It is often helpful for new signers to write this word on a flip chart. Indeed, it is helpful to have the rules printed as a handout for the same reason.

³ This is so the guesser knows s/he is correct, other teams and the leader are aware that the correct guess has been made.

game goes to the next round.

Rules:

1. No voicing used.
2. Modelers wait for time or signal from the leader before allowing guesser to touch the modeled object.
3. No hints other than the possible responses (gestures) named above.
4. No writing out a word (i.e. modeling snake-like letters to spell out the word).

The leader (teacher) and assistant watch to make sure all are following the rules and to give hints as to how to communicate better.

Hints:

1. 3-D models are often easier to identify than 2-D, flat, drawing-like models.
2. As the modeler, giving feedback helps the process.
3. As the guesser, keep guessing to get feedback even if you have no idea what the object is supposed to represent.

Sample objects to be modeled:

These are just suggestions for objects and time. The leader can let her/his imagination run. Presenting the objects in categories (e.g., accessories, vehicles) makes the subsequent objects much easier to guess. Mixing them up is probably best.

1. Wristwatch (2)
2. Ring (1)
3. Shoe (2)
4. Belt (1)
5. Airplane (2)
6. Bicycle (2)

7. Car (2)
8. Book (1)
9. Camera (3)
10. Phone (cell phone, digital device of the moment) (2)
11. Purse (2)
12. Backpack (1)
13. Toaster (2)
14. Spaghetti (1)
15. Popcorn (3)
16. Hamburger (1)
17. Pizza (2)
18. Sandwich (1)
19. Dog (2)
20. Cat (2)
21. Bird (2)
22. Fish (2)
23. Whale (2)
24. Boat (2)
25. Submarine (2)

Goal of the lesson:

The goals of the lesson (as opposed to that of the game) are to:

- Develop better tactile communication (as indicated above, by gestures, pounding on the table).
- Develop sensitivity regarding how it feels to wait (in this case even just a few minutes while the modeler molds the object) when the blindfold makes it impossible to see and all communication is silent.
- Improve understanding of what makes sense tactually.
- Learn the importance of getting comfortable before beginning to

save backaches, etc. (e.g., sitting at the corner of a table so there is less turning or twisting of the back, sitting where players can see both the leader and flip chart easily, and using tables and chair backs for support).

Time of play and discussion:

The leaders determine ahead of time how long the game is to continue. Usually 90 minutes (including the time to get organized into teams, understand the directions, the play and the rules) is about right. It is important to follow the game with a discussion period to reinforce learning. Thirty minutes is a good amount of time to allow for this discussion. The leader elicits insights from the players with open-ended questions:

- What did you notice?
- How did you feel when you were the guesser?
- How did you feel when you were the modeler?
- What seemed to help the communication?
- What was frustrating? What would have helped?

Appendix G:

Sample Job Description: Coordinator, Support Service Provider Program

Duties include but are not limited to the formal SSP program; that is, the agency occasionally sponsors or supports community events in which deaf-blind people participate and for which they will need volunteer SSPs.

Coordinate SSP services for deaf-blind individuals:

- Plan and implement procedures for
 - Matching deaf-blind clients with SSPs
 - Recruiting new SSPs
 - Training and evaluation of SSPs
 - Arranging for substitute SSPs as needed
 - Monitoring SSP hours and invoices
 - Organizing volunteers for non-paid activities when possible

The Coordinator's activities Include:

- Analysis and evaluation of the language, communication, and people skills of clients and SSPs for the purpose of creating successful assignments (see matching and training above).
- Facilitation of SSP workshops for new SSPs, experienced SSPs, and as technical assistance to other agencies using SSPs.
- Ongoing evaluation and improvement of the current SSP

curriculum (see recruiting and training above).

- Ongoing evaluation and suggestions for improvement of SSP program policies and procedures.
- Maintenance of accurate files, including the tracking of invoices and documentation of all services as well as e-mail and other written correspondence.
- Development of marketing tools and strategies with which to recruit new SSPs.
- Provision of technical assistance to related agencies on the role, use, and importance of SSP services and the distinction between SSPs and interpreters, advocates, etc.
- Monitoring of the success of SSP-client match-ups.
- Provision of ongoing support, counsel, and instruction to SSPs and deaf-blind clients.
- Creation of monthly reports to be used by the Director for budgeting, fundraising, and planning.

Required qualifications:

The person hired for this position must

- Be a skilled SSP
- Be able to work independently and yet as a member of a team
- Maintain healthy professional relationships and manner
- Possess skills in problem-solving and conflict resolution
- Possess advanced communication skills using American Sign Language (ASL), tactile ASL, and written English
- Have good organizational skills
- Understand policies and procedures and be able to apply them appropriately

Desired qualifications:

- A Bachelor's of Arts Degree in a related field (e.g., Social Work, Human Resources, Deaf Studies, Psychology, Interpreting)
- Three or more years' experience working and socializing with deaf-blind people
- Two or more years' experience coordinating
- Familiarity with agency policies and procedures
- Familiarity with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and relevant state laws (WAC)
- Computer skills using current versions of Microsoft Windows, Excel, and Outlook

Appendix H:

Sample Support Service Provider (SSP) Program Policy

The ____(*Your agency name*)____ Support Service Provider (SSP) Program is intended to support the independence of deaf-blind people by contracting with qualified vendors to provide sighted guide service and visual information as well as to facilitate communication for deaf-blind people.

Overview

The number of hours per month allotted to SSP services is constrained by our financial and personnel resources. We budget annually for these services, making adjustments at least annually for the maximum amount of support possible. All paid SSP work must therefore be first arranged for and/or approved by the agency.

Regular SSP service includes the following essential tasks:

1. Grocery shopping.
2. Basic banking (reading statements, writing deposit/withdrawal slips, using the ATM). Note: Sometimes, the deaf-blind person will need an interpreter, e.g., to help open an account, apply for loan or credit card, or solve problems with their account). The bank is to provide an interpreter—this is not the SSP's responsibility.

3. Mail reading.
4. Errands (for example, getting a haircut, buying gifts, or going to the post office).

During these assignments, SSPs guide (sighted guide), inform the deaf-blind person of both useful and interesting information about the visual environment, and facilitate communication with store clerks or regarding print media, etc.

We are not able to arrange SSPs for out-of-town trips, or deaf or deaf-blind community events. While we at ____ (agency)____ totally support such activities and the full engagement of deaf-blind people in the wider community, our resources do not currently allow us to provide this service. SSP hours may, however, be used to provide transportation to the train station or airport for such a trip and to navigate purchasing a ticket, checking in, getting to the correct gate, and establishing a communication system with the driver, steward, etc.

Role of SSPs for ____ (your agency) ____

Deaf-blind clients who receive SSP services are independent adults who make decisions for themselves. SSPs do not make decisions for deaf-blind clients or act in a custodial or guardianship role.

SSPs are independent contractors who provide the following services:

- Sighted guide (which may include driving to and from the assignment with the deaf-blind person—see liability insurance in the SSP section below).
- Visual information that is useful for orientation to place and for accomplishing the task at hand (e.g., “This area of the store has fruits and vegetables. There is a large bin of fresh asparagus. There are four people in line ahead of us with very full baskets.”). It might also include a sense of the people, their mood, style, and so on.
- Nominal communication facilitation—relaying questions, comments, and brief pleasantries.

The deaf-blind person decides where to go and what to do. The deaf-blind

person decides how to divide up the time and which stores to use, but the deaf-blind person and the SSP may talk about the easiest or most efficient way to do it (e.g., save driving back and forth).

The deaf-blind person may not commit the agency to pay the SSP for more hours. Other arrangements may be made between the deaf-blind person and the SSP (e.g., the deaf-blind person will him/herself pay the SSP for this time). ____(*Our agency*)____, however, is responsible only for arrangements made through the SSP coordinator. We will not pay for private arrangements.

While SSPs and deaf-blind people often enjoy one another's company and may look forward to working together, the role of SSP is distinct from that of friend or paid companion. SSPs and deaf-blind people who are indeed also friends may arrange to see one another outside of this contracted time. This is not, however, part of the role.

What SSPs are NOT...

- SSPs are not an emergency service and are not available for emergencies.
- SSPs are not employees of the agency; they are outside contractors.
- SSPs are not generic “helpers” for deaf-blind people. The SSP does not run errands for, clean house for, act as driver, or in any other way “take care of” the deaf-blind person.
- SSPs are not generic “professionals” working with deaf-blind people; they do not teach, counsel, advocate, find a job for, or act as recreation specialists.
- SSPs are not interpreters. While SSPs do facilitate communication while shopping or running errands, they do not analyze the content and intent of the message.

Community Support and Duplication of Services

Deaf-Blind people, like all people, need a larger support network than just SSP service. ____(*Our agency*)____ avoids duplication of services and/or

competition with other agencies serving deaf, blind and deaf-blind people. These other agencies include ____ (*other agency*) ____, which provides audiological services, ____ (*other agency*) ____, which provides low-vision counseling and visual aids, ____ (*other agency*) ____, which offers support and transitional housing for victims of domestic violence or sexual assault, ____ (*other agency*) ____, providing funds for vocational rehabilitation, employment training, support and placement for deaf-blind people, and so on. There are also several interpreter referral services in ____ (*xx*) ____ area serving deaf-blind people as well as deaf people. SSPs are not a replacement for such services but intended to augment them.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Deaf-blind people who apply for SSP service must be:

- Adults (over the age of 18)
- Live in the catchment area in which we have resources
- Independent

Vendors who apply to be SSPs must

- Be adults (over the age of 18)
- Have appropriate communication skills
- Demonstrate no criminal record as verified by a background check
- Have a valid business license
- Have a valid driver's license
- Have current car insurance that includes liability insurance
- Commit to a regular schedule and a minimum of six months' service

In many instances, SSPs will be expected to drive as a part of the assignment (e.g., to and from the grocery store). Exceptions can be negotiated (e.g., an SSP who only does mail reading and does not drive but rides the bus). The SSP and not ____ (*agency*) ____ is liable for any car accident and injuries. SSPs must bring in a copy of their licenses and insurance so the agency can make copies to be kept on file.

PROCESS

Intake

Deaf-blind people wishing to engage SSP service meet with ____ (the advocate) ____ to discuss how ____ (agency) ____ can best meet their needs. The ____ (advocate) ____ will describe all the services we offer and relevant services offered by other agencies and make any appropriate referrals. Together they will make a plan for how ____ (agency) ____ and the client will work together. If SSP services are appropriate, the deaf-blind person will be referred to the SSP Coordinator for an appointment.

Vendors wishing to work as SSPs meet with the SSP Coordinator, who explains the role and responsibilities of an SSP, ____ (agency) ____ policies, and SSP eligibility. SSPs are then referred and scheduled for training.

Match-Ups

The SSP coordinator will meet with the deaf-blind person to review ____ (agency) ____ SSP policies and to begin the process of matching the deaf-blind person and an SSP. Match-ups are done based on communication, geography, age, and personality as well as availability.

The coordinator will introduce the SSP and deaf-blind person for the first time and follow-up with both within the next two months to see that they are satisfied. If the SSP is not sufficiently skilled to communicate effectively with the deaf-blind person, or it is difficult for the two to communicate, the SSP Coordinator will help solve the problem (e.g., match the deaf-blind person and SSP with a different person). The coordinator should be informed of any communication issues/problems as soon as possible.

The deaf-blind person and SSP are encouraged to talk about confidentiality, privacy (see below), scheduling, and any concerns they have. They are also encouraged to do any necessary problem solving on their own. If, however, there is a problem they are unable to resolve, the SSP coordinator will assist and if necessary assign a different match-up.

Schedules and Subs

The SSP Coordinator matches paid SSPs with deaf-blind clients. The

number of hours worked is set as a part of the contract. Any and all changes to the number of hours must be agreed upon by the SSP Coordinator and ____ (agency) ____ Director. Priority is given to those with the most need.

The deaf-blind person and the SSP, however, do scheduling of these hours. For example, they may begin working together on alternate Wednesday evenings but after a few months decide that Tuesday evenings work better for them. This is entirely up to the deaf-blind person and the SSP. The agency is concerned only with a) reliability and b) total number of hours (money).

If a paid SSP is unable to work on a scheduled work day (e.g., sick), the SSP will contact ____ (agency) ____ with as much notice as possible and request a substitute so that the deaf-blind person can still complete his or her errands. The SSP Coordinator has a list of SSPs who work as subs when regular SSPs are ill or have an emergency.

Saving or carrying hours over from one month to the next is not possible. Deaf-blind people who do not use all their hours in a month will forfeit them.

ETHICS

SSPs are expected to act professionally and ethically.

Confidentiality, Privacy, and Respect

The SSP must agree to both abide by confidentiality and respect the privacy of the deaf-blind person. For example, the SSP must agree not to talk to other people about the deaf-blind person's activity, what she or he buys, how much money she has in the bank, or any other business of the deaf-blind person.

The SSP can talk generally about being a ____ (agency) ____ SSP, but names and private information should be kept strictly confidential. SSPs who need to problem solve or vent their feelings should talk with the SSP Coordinator—not with other SSPs or deaf-blind people.

Similarly, the deaf-blind person must agree not to gossip about SSPs.

Deaf-blind people who need to problem solve or vent their feelings should talk with the SSP Coordinator—not with other deaf-blind people or SSPs.

Conflict of Interest

SSPs should avoid a conflict of interest. For example, an SSP who also works for a bank should not be involved in transactions with that bank with his or her deaf-blind client.

Boundaries

SSPs and deaf-blind people who are friends as well as work together should not confuse roles and should be clear when it is friend time and when it is work time. Any concerns in this area should be discussed with the Coordinator.

While the SSP is working, he or she should not be making personal phone calls, doing his own grocery shopping, or otherwise combining personal needs or errands with the job.

Professional Development

SSPs shall seek continuing education training to help them improve their SSP skills, their understanding of the deaf-blind experience, and their communication/language skills. Deaf-blind people should help support new SSPs by both being patient while they develop skill and helping them do so by giving both useful direction and feedback.

JUDGMENT and RESPECT

The SSP and the deaf-blind client should exercise judgment. For example, if the SSP is feeling sick and possibly contagious, she should arrange for a sub. In any case, both the SSP and the deaf-blind person should be aware of the implications of tactile or close-vision communication and take care to exercise good health habits such as washing hands regularly, etc.

If the deaf-blind person is the parent of a young child, it may not be possible for the SSP to both guide the deaf-blind person and watch the young child at the same time. SSPs who are not yet fluent in ASL may not

be able to safely communicate in sign language and drive at the same time. The SSP and deaf-blind person should discuss these issues.

The deaf-blind person and SSP should communicate clearly and listen respectfully to each other. For example, if an SSP is annoyed because the deaf-blind person does not seem to be able to manage time and tasks well and the errands always seem to take more time than is allowed, this should be discussed. If the deaf-blind person is annoyed because the SSP is frequently late, this should be discussed. If the problem persists, the problem should be reported to the SSP Coordinator. Problems with the Coordinator, the system, or the agency's policies should be referred to the Director, and if the issue is serious, a formal grievance filed.

The SSP must respect the privacy of others and refrain from gossip. An SSP may, in the course of work, learn private information about someone in the deaf-blind community (e.g. come to the agency to turn in invoices and incidentally see a deaf-blind person meeting with the advocate or having an argument). The SSP should act in a professional manner by keeping that information private. On the other hand, deaf-blind people should have access to the same general information SSPs are seeing while working. For example, if the SSP sees another deaf-blind person in the store while assisting the deaf-blind person to shop, they would relay this as visual information.

Law Abiding

The SSP should follow and obey all laws. SSPs should further be alert and ready to work during an assignment and not under the influence of any drugs, alcohol, or mood-altering substances. Harassment and abuse (physical, verbal, or emotional) are strictly forbidden and should immediately be reported to the SSP coordinator. If the abuse is serious, the victim may file charges.

Professionalism and Business Practices

Reliability and Communication

The SSP is expected to follow through on commitments, to be de-

pendable, to arrive on time and be ready to work. Frequent absences or changes in schedule are unprofessional and not acceptable.

In the case of illness, emergency, or unforeseen circumstance (e.g., a flat tire, sick child), SSPs should communicate as soon as possible with both the deaf-blind person and the SSP Coordinator. In the case of repeated complaints and failure to improve, the SSP will be terminated.

If the SSP experiences major life changes (e.g., moving out of town) and decides to terminate the agreement (to stop working) or otherwise significantly alter his or her commitment, the SSP is expected to inform the deaf-blind person and the coordinator in a timely way (see below).

Invoicing and Expenses

Invoices should be submitted on a form that is clear and easy to read and submitted to the agency within 30 days of service.

SSPs pay for their own gas to and from the assignment.

The deaf-blind person will pay expenses incurred during the job. These include:

- Mileage (amount negotiated periodically)
- Bus fares
- Parking fees

CANCELLATION AND NO-SHOW PROCEDURES

SSPs and deaf-blind people are encouraged to keep a regular schedule or to reschedule if at all possible and not use the sub-request procedure except as a last resort. Any significant changes or exceptional circumstances should be communicated to the SSP Coordinator (e.g., the deaf-blind person finds she need fewer hours, or one of the pair will be out of town for a month). SSPs may not bill for time not worked.

If the SSP will be unavailable for a week, and the deaf-blind person is not able to wait an additional week, the deaf-blind person may ask the SSP to contact the SSP Coordinator to find a sub. This should be done as soon as the need for a sub is known. When subs are arranged, the substitute

SSPs will be paid, and the regular SSP will not.

If the deaf-blind person cancels at the last minute or does not show up, the SSP should wait for half an hour and then can charge for time scheduled. The SSP must inform the SSP Coordinator of this “no-show” within two days. If the SSP is more than 30 minutes late or does not show up, the deaf-blind person should report this to the Coordinator.

Permanently Cancel: If the SSP decides to stop working, he or she must first inform the deaf-blind person and then inform the SSP Coordinator. This should be done two or more weeks in advance so a replacement can be found.

INVOICES and TAXES

SSPs are responsible to invoice the agency for their time five business days before the end of the month. See contract for details.

SSPs are responsible for their own reporting and taxes. At the end of the year, the agency will send out 1099s.

GRIEVANCES

The agency has strict policies against physical, verbal, or emotional abuse, sexual harassment, unfair/illegal discrimination, and the use of controlled substances that might influence the SSPs’ thinking, driving, or judgment while working. (See these policies and the grievance procedure.) If an SSP or deaf-blind client acts in a way that is contrary to these policies, there is a clear grievance procedure that the victim is encouraged to follow.

SSPs who violate these policies or engage in unethical behavior or practices will have their contracts cancelled immediately.

Appendix I:

Sample Support Service Provider (SSP) Independent Contractor Agreement

Agency Name: _____

SSP Contractor Name: _____ [type]

This contract is _____ **a renewal/** _____ **a new contract.**

Services to Provide:

I, _____ [SSP], agree to provide SSP service: to include guiding services, visual and environmental information, and simple facilitation of communication while the deaf-blind client(s) assigned to me is (are) doing regular errands such as food shopping, banking, and mail reading on a regularly scheduled basis.

I understand that this service is for deaf-blind adults who make their own life decisions independently and that as SSP I am not to advise, offer unsolicited opinions, or attempt to make decisions for the client.

I understand that I am to communicate in the preferred language of the deaf-blind person.

I agree to arrange scheduling with the deaf-blind person and to be clear about the time and place to meet, and the length as well as purpose of the assignment.

I agree that the deaf-blind person and I will establish effective distance communication (e.g., e-mail, text paging) for schedule changes, etc.

I understand that the role of SSP does **NOT** include:

- Chore services such as housecleaning.
- Heavy lifting, such as the moving of boxes or furniture.
- Interpreting, including phone calls.
- Advocacy regarding legal, medical, or other issues.

I further understand that for emergencies, I am to call 9-1-1 and request a qualified interpreter for the deaf-blind person involved in the emergency situation and not to try to solve the problem myself or to attempt to interpret for emergency responders. _____[initial]

Billing:

SSPs will report and send invoices to the SSP Coordinator by the 3rd of each month. Invoices that do not reach the coordinator by this date will be included in the following month's billing cycle. **Invoices submitted more than 90 days from the billing date will not be paid.**

If the deaf-blind person is a "no-show," the contractor is to inform the SSP Coordinator by the end of that day. The agency agrees to pay for the contracted time, and this time will be deducted from the amount allotted to the deaf-blind person who scheduled the time.

Invoices for the final month of the contract must be submitted on time. Invoices submitted more than five business days late will result in a refusal to renew this contract in the future. _____[initial]

Confidentiality and Boundaries:

I, _____[initial], agree to respect the ethical tenets of confidentiality, conflicts of interest and professional boundaries. I agree to keep all information learned in the course of this work confidential. The time, place, activities, and conversations are all to be kept in confidence.

I agree to refrain from counseling, teaching, advocating, etc. If, for any

reason, I have concerns about this, I will report the issue to the SSP Coordinator, who will take the appropriate action (e.g., talk with the deaf-blind person, refer to the advocate).

This contract is for the following:

Period of _____ [date] and ends on _____ [date] (six months).

This contract covers the SSP services as listed above, to be provided by _____, independent contractor to the Deaf-Blind Service Center (DBSC/Contracting Agency).

The _____ [agency] agrees to pay \$ _____ per hour of authorized services. The SSP and deaf-blind person may not increase the allotted number of hours without approval.

I understand that as an SSP I am an independent contractor and that the agency is **NOT** responsible for providing any of the following:

- Insurance: health, auto, liability, industrial, or any other insurance covering Independent Contractors.
- Any other benefits of employment not specified elsewhere in this contract.

The agency can cancel this contract for any reason, at any time, with >10 days' written notice. In the event of a cancellation, payment will be provided for all services performed prior to the notification of cancellation.

The Independent Contractor [SSP] can cancel this contract for any reason with >30 days' written notice to the SSP Coordinator.

My signature below indicates that I understand and agree to follow the terms and conditions of this contract.

For renewal contracts, all prior invoices for work completed through _____ will be turned into the agency by _____.

Support Service Provider

Date

Agency SSP Coordinator

Date

For Office Use Only

Driver's License Copy: _____

Auto Insurance Copy: _____

WA State Master Business License Copy: _____

[Other requirements dictated by state regulations or by contract/funder requirements, e.g., a background check.]

W-9 (or other necessary tax forms): _____

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Appendix J:

Sample Support Service Provider (SSP) Client Agreement

Agency Name: _____

Deaf-Blind Client Name: _____ **[type]**

Date _____

Services to Be Provided:

I, _____ [client] agree to manage my SSP services responsibly and to work through the SSP Coordinator when appropriate.

I understand that this service is for deaf-blind adults who make their own decisions independently and that as a recipient of this service I am not to ask the SSP to go beyond his or her role. I understand that the role of SSP does **NOT** include:

- Chore services such as housecleaning.
- Heavy lifting, such as the moving of boxes or furniture.
- Interpreting, including phone calls.
- Advocacy regarding legal, medical, or other issues.

I further understand that for emergencies, I am to call or have the SSP call 9-1-1 and request an interpreter and that the SSP cannot interpret

even in emergency situations. _____[initial]

I agree to schedule time together with the SSP and to be clear about the time and place to meet, and the length as well as purpose of the assignment.

I agree that we will establish effective distance communication (e.g., e-mail, text paging) for schedule changes, etc.

Number of Service Hours:

I understand that I have a maximum of _____ paid SSP hours per month, and that the SSP and I may not increase the allotted number of paid hours without approval from the Coordinator, that I am to prioritize my errands and other activities accordingly, and that I cannot carry over hours from one month to the next. I also know that the agency can occasionally look for volunteers for certain situations, and when necessary, I will discuss this need with the SSP Coordinator.

I understand that if I do not show up for a scheduled meeting with my SSP that the SSP will be paid for that time, and these hours will be deducted from my hours for that month. If I need to reschedule, I can do this with the SSP in advance.

I understand that I can and should report any concerns or complaints about the SSPs assigned to me to the SSP Coordinator.

Confidentiality, Privacy, and Boundaries:

I understand that the SSP has signed a confidentiality agreement with the agency. I, in turn, agree to respect the privacy of the SSP, and to maintain proper personal and professional boundaries.

If I have a complaint about an SSP or feel the SSP needs further training, I agree to inform the Coordinator.

I understand that the SSP service is to provide visual information and does not include transportation. If I ask the SSP for a ride to do the errands, I do so at my own risk. I understand that all SSPs are independent contractors; the agency will check to be sure the SSP has a valid driver's

license and current regular auto liability insurance, but beyond this holds NO responsibility or liability for my safety while soliciting or accepting a ride.

My signature below indicates that I understand and agree to follow the terms and conditions of this agreement.

Deaf-Blind Client

Date

Agency SSP Coordinator

Date

For Office Use Only

[Other requirements dictated by state regulations or by contract/funder requirements, e.g., a background check.]

Approved by: _____ Date: _____

Appendix K:

Sample SSP Evaluation Procedure

SSPs' work is to be formally evaluated at least once each contract period (every six months) and notation made in the file. The initial contract period should include an evaluation which includes observation (see process below).

All evaluations are done by the SSP Coordinator on the basis of a) feedback from deaf-blind clients and b) observations by the coordinator.¹

Specific elements of the work to be evaluated include:

- communication skills, including sign language skills (not only language but openness, creativity in communication, patience)
- reliability
- ethical behavior (maintaining confidentiality, avoiding a conflict of interest etc.)
- professional conduct (maintaining proper boundaries, etc.)
- technical skills: ability to provide visual information, appropriate use of touch, guiding skills (safety)

¹ If either the deaf-blind person or the SSP are frustrated and report this to the SSP Coordinator, the Coordinator will arrange an observation to monitor the working relationship. This then becomes a part of an ongoing evaluation.

- flexibility and willingness to work as part of a team

Each element of the work is rated on a scale (e.g., 1-5, with 1 being unsatisfactory and 5 being outstanding), with notes made as to why this number was chosen. Ethical concerns and unprofessional conduct could be sufficient reason for termination.

The Process

1. The SSP coordinator checks with all assigned deaf-blind clients as to their satisfaction.
2. If the client is unsatisfied, the SSP coordinator explores this further by asking questions / gaining more information, with the goal of improving the situation and the SSP's work.
3. The SSP Coordinator will, from time to time, accompany the deaf-blind person and the SSP to observe the SSP's work.²
4. The SSP coordinator will make use of incidental opportunities to observe the SSPs during various community events.³

The SSP coordinator will have a formal interview with each SSP at the end of her/his contract to a) review the assignments and get the SSP's input into the program as well as these specific assignments and b) provide feedback to the SSP at the end of each evaluation, being clear about areas where the SSP is providing good or above average service as well as where he or she needs improvement. If needed, the coordinator will make recommendations for further training or other suggestions of ways to improve in weak areas.

² Most SSPs are new and may need some support from the SSP Coordinator.

³ This is especially helpful in considering personalities and therefore good 'matches.'

Appendix L:

Guidelines for a Quality SSP Program

A quality SSP program should:

1. Have a reliable source of income, such as line-item state funding. Relying on grants or donations does not make for a solid program; rather, these funds should be used for special projects (e.g., advanced training) or to augment essential services.
2. Be designed locally. Different areas of the country will have varying needs, resources, and contexts. It is important that the SSP program make sense within this context. The availability of interpreters and the state of the transportation infrastructure are two key resources that make up this context.¹
3. Assure formal training of SSPs prior to hiring, and require ongoing education.
4. Provide training for deaf-blind people using the service so they are empowered to get the most benefit from the service.

¹ We found, for example, that in rural areas where there were not sufficient interpreting resources, there was often undue pressure put on SSPs to act in that capacity. In this case, the state RID association should be contacted to provide training to interpreters who can fill this gap.

5. Pay SSPs a fair wage.
6. Supervise SSPs to assure they are reliable and ethical.
7. Match SSPs and deaf-blind clients for compatibility of:
 - a. communication
 - b. personality and style
 - c. schedules, and
 - d. whenever possible, common interests.
8. Employ a coordinator who is responsible for recruiting, training, and assigning SSPs, processing or reconciling invoices, problem solving and generally monitoring and promoting the success of the program.² (See Appendix G, Sample SSP Coordinator Position.)
9. Employ a program coordinator who has a good working relationship with key people in the community³, as well as institutions and organizations from which to draw or recruit SSPs. These include but are not limited to local interpreter training or preparation programs⁴ and local deaf groups.⁵
10. Recruit volunteers (unpaid SSPs) for deaf community events. These volunteer SSPs should be no less ethical or reliable.
11. Have an ongoing recruitment and training plan, including advanced training for experienced SSPs.

² We found, for example, that some areas having SSPs overburdened the coordinators so that they were unable to provide adequate recruitment, training, and monitoring of the services provided. This lent itself to unnecessary abuses and/or poor service.

³ Key people in the deaf-blind community can provide valuable input, feedback, and support to the program.

⁴ Interpreters in training need more exposure to the use of sign language in context, and working as an SSP provides such an opportunity.

⁵ Deaf people who are underemployed may enjoy the intellectual challenge and opportunity to contribute.