

AN INTERVIEW WITH CORRINA VEESART

Hello, I'm Corrina Veessart, from California.

Interviewer: When did you start using an SSP?

Corinna: All the time I was growing up, ...a long time ago, starting from my mother fighting for my needs for an SSP. My home town is small and at first, there were no SSPs where we lived; I used my friends for help, for support. It started, ...I don't know, ...I was so young. I went to my first AADB¹ when I was 11. I used an SSP at the conference so maybe I started using SSPs when I was 11 at the AADB.

I don't know the full story, but for a long time my mother fought for many years to get me SSPs. She fought for many hours a month, for home services but there were no regular support services ...so now maybe 60 hours a month. But it is very, very hard because there are no regular support services where I live. It's always a problem; there are limited interpreting services in my area, too. It's been a very long struggle starting, at least since the time I was 11 years old, a long time.

¹ American Association of the Deaf-Blind, conference which used to be held annually until the early 1990s.

I use SSPs for things I want, like to drive me to the beach, or fun things like going to Deaf social events, or parties, or socials, or maybe going out, to town to do errands like grocery shopping, going to a restaurant or shopping – many, many things – I want a social life, so I need SSP services to get out of the house and do things.

Interviewer: Can you explain for us the difference between an ‘intervenor’ and an SSP, what is the difference between them?

Corinna: An intervenor works in school, one-on-one with the deaf-blind person in school – guides them, helps support in schools. An intervenor works in schools, an SSP works outside, in the community, in informal situations. They guide and help navigate out in the community, not in schools. I want both, support both in school and in the community. Intervenors and SSPs help a lot. In college now I struggle every day; I need a tutor for Braille, and a note-taker, I need one-to-one help a lot. I need support. So, I need an intervenor and SSP both for in school and for out in the community.

Interviewer: So I understand that the intervenor and SSP work in different settings, the intervenor in school and the SSP out in the community, but is their role the same?

Corinna: No, their roles are different. You want me to explain the difference? [Interviewer: yes, please.] In school the intervenor helps with like paperwork, explaining the classroom situation, helps interpret and support. It's like interpreters but with more information, more explanation, visual information and after class helps explain books, like with Braille lessons. I used to have an SSP and interpreter both, the interpreter in the classroom would interpret and then the SSP would add information and it helped a lot. Then an SSP outside of school to go with me as a guide and support and give me information like for food shopping and explain what she sees on the shelves, everything visual; the SSP helps explain everything that is around – what is happening in the situation so the DB person can think themselves what they want to do. The SSP explains everything so the DB person can think themselves and make a decision for themselves.

Interviewer: ... young DB people like you – do they need to take a class?

Corinna: No, they need lots of experience. Classroom – maybe one-to-one training how to use an SSP, how to explain what an SSP means, maybe training. [But] Some DB people don't know what a formal classroom situation means – better to sit down one-to-one and

discuss it, not a classroom but more independent, one-to-one what the role is and for the DB person, what their ideas and what their requirements are and the SSP what their requirements are so the SSP and the DB person both talk about it, not in a classroom, no, but through a two-way discussion so everyone understands clearly what the rules and roles are, each and both.

Interviewer: ...Can you explain what skills a DB person needs to use an SSP, the skills. Please explain for us.

Corinna: You need to communicate clearly and honestly. Make sure your boundaries and limits are clear. Tell me when you need a break. Clear communication – and respect each other. Don't overstep boundaries and respect. Clear communication is important. I think clear communication is very important because otherwise there are misunderstandings and frustration and problems keep coming up. And visual information is really important so help the SSP.