



Deaf + Blind = Hearing Loss + Vision Loss

What is Deaf-Blind?

The term “Deaf-Blind” is a general term used for the population who has combined hearing and vision loss in varying degrees. Often, when we see the word “deaf-blind,” we think of a person who is totally deaf and blind. However, each individual who has hearing and vision loss is different.

What are the types of vision loss?

- **Visual acuity:** 20/70 or higher requiring large print to read.
Legal blindness: 20/200 or higher.
- **Visual field loss:** peripheral vision loss; experiences difficulty in locating things in a timely manner, bumping or hitting things that are out of his or her visual field.

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A person is legally blind if vision field is less than 20 degrees in their better eye.

- **Light sensitivity:** (1) Sensitive to light/glare requiring adaptations to the environment, (2) lack of sensitivity to light requiring more light than a normal person would, or (3) night blindness—difficulty seeing in dark/dim environments as well as at night.
- **Contrast sensitivity:** Has difficulty seeing similar colors (i.e.: white/yellow, black/blue, red/pink, blue/green) requiring high contrast in clothing, printed text).

How do you identify a person with combined hearing and vision loss?

- **Hearing:** Misses certain sounds, has difficulty understanding in certain situations, or has difficulty understanding any speech (relies on other avenues of communication such as



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printed text, sign language, or gestures).

Some people wear hearing aids.

- **Vision:** The individual may exhibit one or any combination of the following:
 - 1) Difficulty reading regular print and prefers reading large print or is unable to read any print.
 - 2) Misses certain items in the environment or needs “guiding” assistance by following a person or by holding a person’s arm. Some use white canes.
 - 3) Has difficulty seeing things because of too much or too little light in the environment.

What label do I use for individuals who have combined hearing and vision loss?

When interacting with individuals who have both hearing and vision loss, ASK them how they identify themselves:

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- Hard of Hearing-Visually Impaired
- Hard of Hearing-Blind
- Deaf-Blind
- Deaf-Visually Impaired

Use their preferred identifying label. RESPECT is one of the most important considerations in working with this population.

*For more information contact
the Deaf-Blind Services Specialist
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(704-568-8558 or 800-835-5302)
or the Raleigh Regional Center
(919-859-8526 or 800-999-5737).*



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