

# Montana DeafBlind Project

PROVIDING INFORMATION AND  
RESOURCES ON DEAFBLINDNESS  
ACROSS MONTANA

## OUR MISSION

We help families, teachers, and providers access the information and resources they need to support the learning, growth, and development of children with deafblindness, ages birth through 21.

## WHAT IS DEAFBLINDNESS?

Deafblindness is a combination of vision and hearing loss that affects a person's ability to communicate, learn, and access information. It's also sometimes called "dual sensory loss". Most people who experience deafblindness have some usable hearing and/or vision.

## UNDERSTANDING DEAFBLINDNESS

Deafblindness is a unique and complex disability, and no two children are alike.

- 50% of children with deafblindness have complex healthcare needs
- 87% of children with deafblindness have one or more additional disabilities
- 99% of children with deafblindness have some usable hearing and / or vision

Creating meaningful connections, beginning in infancy, is the foundation for supporting and educating children with deafblindness. Relationships rooted in trust and respect boost learning and communication, provide safety, reduce anxiety, and empower individuals to explore and engage with the world.

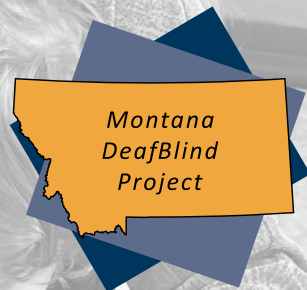
## WHEN TO CONSIDER DEAFBLINDNESS

- Does the child have a medical condition associated with deafblindness?
- Were there concerns when hearing was screened?
- Were there concerns when vision was screened?
- Has the child experienced a traumatic brain injury?
- Does the child's hearing and / or vision seem better in different settings?

There are many different causes associated with deafblindness. Some of them include:

- CHARGE Syndrome
- Down Syndrome
- Usher Syndrome
- Congenital Cytomegalovirus (CMV)

Deafblindness might be present at birth, happen due to a sudden event, or develop over time because of changes in hearing or vision. Genetic testing may help identify children at risk for deafblindness earlier, connecting them to services and supports.



## TIPS TO EMPOWER CHILDREN WITH DEAFBLINDNESS

Deafblindness brings unique learning challenges, making it harder for children to gather information. It is important to bring the world to the child and help them explore and learn in multiple ways. If you suspect deafblindness, contact the Montana DeafBlind Project for individualized support.

### Discover the World Differently Through Sensory Adventures

Children with deafblindness have their own unique way of understanding the world around them. Encourage exploration through textures, materials, and interactive objects. Use moving, noise-making, and light-up items for engaging learning experiences.

### Create a Predictable and Structured Environment

Establish a schedule allowing children to expect and participate in daily activities and communicate about the surroundings to let them know who is coming, who is going, and why.

### Unlock the Unique Ways Children Communicate

Identify and respond to the child's expressions of likes, dislikes, and needs. Recognize their diverse communication methods, including body movement, gestures, vocalizations, objects, symbols, sign language, and speech.

### Teach Skills for Movement, Exploration, and Independence

From an early age, help children understand their bodies and track where they are, where they are going, and how to get there. Create a feeling of safety and teach different ways to move so they can confidently travel from one place to another.

### Support Feelings and Needs

Identify when a break is needed, as children with deafblindness may tire more quickly. Their brains and bodies work extra hard to understand and interact with the world. Identify the causes of frustration and provide support in settings where they don't hear or see as well.

### Build Friendships

Children with deafblindness may find it challenging to start and maintain social interactions due to sensory challenges. Discover shared interests to foster interactions with peers. Create diverse opportunities for social engagement.

### Collaborate with Families

Deafblindness can create everyday challenges for families, requiring adjustments in communication and routines to meet their child's unique needs. Involve families in decision-making and planning, acknowledging their invaluable insights into their child's needs.



[mtdeafblind.org](https://mtdeafblind.org)

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