

**Canadian Deafblind Association  
Competency Framework for  
Intervenors for Individuals who are Deafblind**

The CDBA Competency Framework describes standards for intervenors working with individuals with deafblindness, which can be used to support consistent, high quality deafblind intervention practices. It reflects the characteristics of Canadian-developed expertise, philosophy and values, as well as knowledge and skills developed across the international field of deafblind intervention.

The Competency Framework can be used by:

- Trainers of intervenors with individuals who are deafblind, to guide professional development programs and activities. The Framework can also serve as a support for practicum supervisors.
- Employers of intervenors, to assess the organization's program delivery strengths and indicate areas for further development. The Framework can be an effective tool for discussion with employees.
- Intervenors, to evaluate their own knowledge and skills and identify areas where they may want to develop further proficiency.

The Competency Framework is organized into ten standards, or categories, with a total of 133 competencies. The competencies are divided between:

- Core Competencies: general knowledge and skills required for effective intervention for individuals with deafblindness
- Individual Specific Competencies: knowledge and skills that pertain to working with a specific individual, primarily one who is congenitally deafblind and/or an emergent communicator

The Competency Framework provides a foundation for other tools to be developed by CDBA, such as an inventory of training resources, a portfolio format for intervenors to summarize their skills and other training materials.

Developed by a CDBA committee of members who are trainers, the CDBA Competency Framework draws on work done by a number of other organizations, including SKI-HI Institute, the National Technical Assistance Consortium, and Texas Deaf-Blind Project. Responses to the Canadian field test in 2006 made an important contribution to the final Competency Framework.

Approved by the CDBA National Board (November 2009)

Please note: throughout the CDBA Competency Framework, "intervenors" refers to intervenors with individuals who are deafblind.

<b>Standard 1: Demonstrate knowledge of deafblindness and its impact on learning and development.</b>
<b>Core Competencies</b>
<i>Intervenors should have knowledge of:</i>
1.1 The definition(s) of deafblindness
1.2 The impact of deafblindness on the acquisition of information
1.3 The differences and similarities between congenital and acquired deafblindness
1.4 The implications related to: the causes of deafblindness, the age of onset of vision and hearing loss, the type and degrees of loss, and the presence of additional disabilities/health issues
1.5 Every person's need for anticipation, motivation, communication and confirmation and the impact of deafblindness on these needs.
<b>Individual Specific competencies</b>
<i>Intervenors should have knowledge of:</i>
1.6 The individual's specific etiology and related characteristics, when known
1.7 The individual's specific vision and hearing abilities
1.8 The individual's strengths and needs
1.9 The individual's likes and dislikes
1.10 The impact of deafblindness on the individual's learning style, abilities and communication
1.11 The impact of the individual's need to anticipate, to be motivated, to communicate and to receive sufficient feedback from the environment.

**Standard 2: Demonstrate knowledge of the philosophy, principles and process of the Canadian concept of deafblind intervention.**

**Core Competencies**

*Intervenors should have knowledge of:*

2.1 The origins and development of deafblind intervention in Canada

2.2 The definition of deafblind intervention

2.3 The philosophy and principles of deafblind intervention

2.4 The core principle that deafblind intervention must be individualized to meet the specific needs and desires of each individual who is deafblind.

**Individual Specific competencies**

*Intervenors should have the ability to:*

- 2.5 Understand and demonstrate the CDBA Principles of the Canadian Concept of Deafblind Intervention:
1. Total and unconditional belief in and respect for an individual who is deafblind
  2. Total and unconditional belief in the value of deafblind intervention for all individuals who are deafblind.
  3. The amount of deafblind intervention and the form that it will take must be individualized to meet the specific needs and desires of each individual who is deafblind.
  4. Individuals who are deafblind have a right to access information in their modes of communication.
  5. Deafblind intervention is "Doing With, Not For"
  6. No assumptions should be made regarding the abilities of an individual with deafblindness.
  7. Never underestimate the importance of the relationship between the intervenor and the individual who is deafblind.
  8. The process of deafblind intervention must always provide the individual who is deafblind with the information required for anticipation, motivation, communication, and confirmation.
  9. Every experience is an opportunity to provide information and encourage interaction.
  10. The focus of deafblind intervention should always be on the needs of the individual who is deafblind.
  11. Deafblind intervention is recognized as a process that requires intervenors to have specific skills, knowledge and experiences in order to be effective in providing the best possible opportunity for people who are deafblind to gather information, process it and develop communication, concepts and skills.

<b>Standard 3: Demonstrate knowledge of and the ability to implement the role of the intervenor</b>	
<b>Core Competencies</b>	
<i>Intervenors should have knowledge of:</i>	
3.1	The definition of an intervenor
3.2	The differences among intervenors, interpreters, caregivers, educational assistants, personal support workers, rehabilitation workers, support service providers, etc.
3.3	The role intervenors play in contributing, as part of a multidisciplinary team, to the development of an individual's goals and objectives and the program plan to achieve them
3.4	The need to provide visual, auditory and environmental information that the individual is otherwise unable to gather
3.5	The importance of the intervenor as a communication partner
3.6	The importance of providing anticipatory information to the individual.
3.7	The importance of providing the motivation necessary for the individual to want to be an active participant in the environment
3.8	The importance of providing accurate feedback to the individual
3.9	The importance of facilitating a variety of social opportunities
3.10	The intervenor's role in providing opportunities for increasing the knowledge and skills of the individual
<b>Individual Specific Competencies</b>	
<i>Intervenors should have the ability to:</i>	
3.11	Provide deafblind intervention, which facilitates consistent access to visual, auditory and tactile information
3.12	Ensure the individual has the information needed to be an active and informed participant
3.13	Design, adapt and implement activities and experiences to achieve the individual's goals and objectives
3.14	Facilitate the individual's interactions with a variety of people and environments
3.15	Provide anticipatory information to the individual, using a variety of methods
3.16	Encourage independence for the individual, through deafblind intervention
3.17	Engage the individual in effective interactive communication
3.18	Provide accurate and appropriate feedback to the individual.

<b>Standard 4: Demonstrate knowledge of, and the ability to implement the fundamental strategies of deafblind intervention.</b>	
<b>Core Competencies</b>	
<i>Intervenors should have knowledge of:</i>	
4.1	The need to allow sufficient time for the individual to receive, process and respond to information
4.2	The impact of various environmental factors on the individual (i.e. lighting, contrast, background noise, room layout, potential hazards, consistent organization of the space)
4.3	The best way to approach individuals, in the least startling manner, to let them know someone is present and about to interact
4.4	The importance of the simultaneous use of a variety of communication modes to ensure the individual has the best opportunity to understand the communication
4.5	The importance of recognizing and responding to the individual's interests and initiations of interaction.
4.6	The importance of incorporating strategies, throughout interactions, to address the areas of anticipation, motivation, communication, and confirmation
4.7	The difference between concept development and skill development, and the impact of deafblindness on each
4.8	The process of concept development (from concrete to abstract) and related strategies for an individual who is deafblind
4.9	The importance of ensuring that the individual is given opportunities for direct involvement in all aspects of an experience
4.10	The importance of hands for exploration, interaction and communication and the ability to interact with the individual's hands in a respectful manner.
<b>Individual Specific Competencies</b>	
<i>Intervenors should have the ability to:</i>	
4.11	Develop a relationship built on trust while maintaining professional boundaries
4.12	Demonstrate the "Do With, Not For" philosophy of Deafblind intervention
4.13	Vary the level and intensity of input and ensure that the pace and duration meet the individual's needs
4.14	Use strategies that provide the individual with opportunities to solve problems and to make informed decisions and choices
4.15	Determine the degree of complexity with which a concept should be introduced and/or expanded
4.16	Assess, adapt, and organize the environment to maximize the individual's opportunity to be self-sufficient
4.17	Be self-aware of the intervenor's affect (body language, demeanour, muscle tone, etc.) on interactions with the individual
4.18	Facilitate as necessary, the individual's self-awareness of their own emotions and the impact of their demeanour on others

<b>Standard 5: Demonstrate knowledge of, and an ability to facilitate communication.</b>	
<b>Core Competencies</b>	
<i>Intervenors should have knowledge of:</i>	
5.1	Stages of the development of communication in sighted/hearing individuals
5.2	The impact of deafblindness on communication and interaction
5.3	The role of the intervenor in facilitating the development and use of receptive and expressive communication and ensuring the understanding of information
5.4	Forms and functions of communication used by individuals who are deafblind (e.g., natural movement, gestures, touch cues, environmental cues, texture cues, tangible symbols, signed language, tactile communication, large print notes, Braille, etc.)
5.5	The use of calendar systems to support the development of skills, concepts, communication and organization
5.6	The facilitation of language and literacy development
5.7	Various technical devices used by individuals with deafblindness, such as specialized computer hardware & software, assistive listening devices, low vision aids, tactile aids, etc.
<b>Individual Specific Competencies</b>	
<i>Intervenors should have the ability to:</i>	
5.8	Implement methods and strategies for providing information in a way that the individual understands (receptive).
5.9	Observe and identify the individual's expressive communication (including facial expressions, body language, signed language, etc)
5.10	Interpret the meaning of the individual's communication and respond appropriately.
5.11	Provide opportunities and use strategies for encouraging expressive communication by the individual
5.12	Provide opportunities and use strategies to promote conversation and interaction with the individual
5.13	Provide opportunities and use strategies to enhance and expand communication (e.g., increase vocabulary, topics for conversations, and communication skills)
5.14	Incorporate effective communication into routines and activities
5.15	Facilitate the individual's interactions with others, such as family members, peers, community members, etc.
5.16	Share meanings and thoughts through the co-creation of movement
5.17	Accurately document and share with other team members the individual's formal and informal communication.

**Standard 6: Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of deafblindness on psychological, social, and emotional development and have the ability to facilitate social and emotional well-being.**

**Core Competencies**

*Intervenors should have knowledge of:*

- 6.1 The impact of deafblindness on relationships, attachment and social interaction
- 6.2 The role of the intervenor in facilitating social and emotional development
- 6.3 The impact of deafblindness on psychological development and on the development of self-identity
- 6.4 The effects of deafblindness on the individual and family, related to isolation, stress, vulnerability, grieving, and interdependence
- 6.5 The reasons for and strategies to deal with challenging behaviours
- 6.6 The impact of deafblindness on aspects of sexuality (e.g., modesty, privacy, appropriate touch, intimate relationships).

**Individual-specific competencies**

*Intervenors should have the ability to:*

- 6.7 Establish a trusting relationship with the individual
- 6.8 Provide an atmosphere of acceptance, safety, and security that is reliable and consistent for the individual
- 6.9 Promote positive self-esteem and well-being in the individual
- 6.10 Implement strategies for dealing with challenging behaviour
- 6.11 Support the individual's opportunities for self-determination (e.g., independent thinking, making choices, problem solving, decision making)
- 6.12 Promote social interactions and the development of meaningful relationships with an ever-expanding number of people
- 6.13 Establish a working relationship with the family and support circles.

**Standard 7: Demonstrate knowledge of, and have the ability to facilitate the effective use of sensory systems.**

**Core Competencies**

*Intervenors should have knowledge of:*

7.1 The importance of the tactile sense in learning and interaction

7.2 Basic anatomy and functions of the eyes, ears and central nervous system

7.3 Strategies that promote development and use of residual vision and hearing

7.4 The impact of deafblindness on sensory integration

7.5 The role of the other senses (taste, smell, touch, proprioception).

**Individual Specific Competencies**

*Intervenors should have knowledge of:*

7.6 The individual's audiological (hearing) and ophthalmological (vision) abilities

7.7 The individual's eye and ear conditions and disorders, their implications, and strategies to address them

7.8 Use and maintenance of amplification, cochlear implants and assistive listening devices, as appropriate

7.9 Use and maintenance of glasses, low vision devices, and prostheses, as appropriate.

*Intervenors should have the ability to:*

7.10 Encourage the individual's use of residual vision and hearing

7.11 Make adaptations for auditory needs (noise, positioning, etc.)

7.12 Make adaptations for visual needs (contrast, clothing, lighting, positioning, etc.)

7.13 Use touch to supplement auditory and visual input and to convey information to the individual, as appropriate

7.14 Facilitate the individual's use of touch for learning and interaction

7.15 Facilitate the individual's use of other senses to supplement auditory, visual and tactile information

7.16 Utilize strategies to promote sensory integration.



**Standard 8: Demonstrate knowledge of motor, movement, and orientation and mobility skills, and have the ability to facilitate these strategies.**

**Core Competencies**

*Intervenors should have knowledge of:*

- 8.1 The impact of deafblindness on motor development, independent movement, positioning in space and exploration of the environment
- 8.2 The impact of deafblindness on body awareness and on the sense of how the body relates to the environment
- 8.3 The importance of learning through movement (proprioception and vestibular)
- 8.4 Basic techniques of orientation and mobility (including sighted guide, cane use, dog guide, wheelchair, trailing, and environmental orientation).

**Individual-specific competencies**

*Intervenors should have the ability to:*

- 8.5 Utilize strategies that promote independent, safe movement and active exploration of the environment
- 8.6 Utilize movement strategies such as tactual modeling, natural movement and gestures
- 8.7 Implement positioning and handling to promote learning, independent movement, and physical well-being, as recommended by the Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist, and Orientation & Mobility (O&M) Specialist
- 8.8 Promote and provide sighted guide and promote the use of trailing and protective techniques, as recommended by an O&M Specialist
- 8.9 Implement strategies to promote travel routes and the utilization of environmental cues and landmarks, as appropriate to the individual and as recommended by an O&M Specialist
- 8.10 Implement the use of appropriate mobility devices as recommended by an O&M Specialist.

**Standard 9: Demonstrate knowledge of the impact of additional disabilities, health issues and aging on the individual and have the ability to provide appropriate deafblind intervention and support.**

**Core Competencies**

*Intervenors should have knowledge of:*

- 9.1 The impact of additional disabilities, health issues and later manifestations of specific etiologies on individuals
- 9.2 The impact of an individual being deafblind and medically fragile
- 9.3 Brain development and the neurological implications of combined vision and hearing loss (e.g., brain plasticity, physiological and emotional stress, biobehavioural states)
- 9.4 The complex effects of additional disabilities on learning and interaction
- 9.5 The impact of aging on individuals
- 9.6 The impact of deafblindness on healthy lifestyles and wellness.

**Individual Specific Competencies**

*Intervenors should have the ability to:*

- 9.7 Make adaptations appropriate for cognitive and physical needs of the individual
- 9.8 Make adaptations appropriate for the medical needs of the individual
- 9.9 Utilize appropriate health and safety practices
- 9.10 Provide support to the individual in maintaining a healthy lifestyle and good health, including facilitating physical exercise and access to medical services
- 9.11 Identify impact of aging issues and make adaptations in deafblind intervention strategies and techniques, as needed.

<b>Standard 10: Demonstrate professionalism and ethical practices</b>	
<b>Core Competencies</b>	
<i>Intervenors should have knowledge of:</i>	
10.1	The roles and responsibilities of the intervenor working in a variety of settings
10.2	The roles and responsibilities of the intervenor as an effective member of an interdisciplinary team
10.3	A Code of Ethics for Intervenors and understand its application
10.4	The importance of confidentiality regarding the individual, the family and organizations.
10.5	The importance of appropriate personal presentation reflecting the individual's needs, the setting, the employer's standards, and the profession of deafblind intervention
<b>Individual Specific competencies</b>	
<i>Intervenors should have the ability to:</i>	
10.6	Adhere to a Code of Ethics for intervenors
10.7	Abide by the confidentiality requirements of the employer
10.8	Work effectively within a multidisciplinary team
10.9	Complete documentation in a manner that is professional, accurate, pertinent, respectful and objective
10.10	Pursue relevant information and resources
10.11	Interact respectfully and professionally with families and/or support network
10.12	Interact appropriately and professionally with the community and the public at large
10.13	Ensure personal presentation is appropriate for the individual's sensory needs (clothing, jewelry, nails, hygiene, scented products, etc.)
10.14	Pursue ongoing professional development activities.