The last week of June is commemorated as Deafblind Awareness Week. This is an opportunity for deafblind organizations to celebrate the achievements and accomplishments of individuals and professionals in the field. This is also a chance for relevant organizations to share resources and collaborate with others to promote and increase postsecondary opportunities for deafblind individuals. For today’s Trending Topic Tuesday, let's take a closer look at employment and education data as it relates to deafblind individuals and highlight positive solutions to increase postsecondary outcomes for deafblind individuals.

### Postsecondary Outcomes for Deafblind Individuals

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additional Disability Status</th>
<th>Median Salary</th>
<th>Employment Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deaf + no additional disabilities</td>
<td>$50,000</td>
<td>71.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf + ambulatory disability</td>
<td>$44,000</td>
<td>24.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deafblind</td>
<td>$43,700</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf + cognitive disability</td>
<td>$42,000</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf + independent living difficulty</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
<td>19.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deaf + self care difficulty</td>
<td>$42,000</td>
<td>20.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Image description: a text chart of different statistics with three columns and seven lines total. The first line indicates the legend and reads "Additional Disability Status", "Median Salary" and "Employment Rates". On the second line reads "Deaf + no additional disabilities" with their median salary being "$50,000" and employment rate being "71.9%". The third line reads "Deaf + ambulatory disability" with their median salary being "$44,000" and employment rate "24.7%". The fourth line reads "Deafblind" with their median salary being "$43,700" and employment rate "34.6%". The fifth line reads "Deaf + cognitive disability" with their median salary being "$42,000" and employment rate "27.2%". The sixth line reads "Deaf + independent living difficulty" with their median salary being "$40,000" and employment rate "19.9%". The seventh line reads "Deaf + self care difficulty" with their median salary being "$42,000" and employment rate "20.7%". ]
Among the deafdisabled population, deafblind people report the highest employment rate of 34.6%. Yet, there is a significant gap between deafblind individuals and deaf individuals without any additional disabilities who have an employment rate of 71.9%. These gaps are also apparent in terms of educational attainment:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Deaf + no additional disabilities</th>
<th>Deaf + additional disabilities</th>
<th>Deaf + ambulatory disability</th>
<th>Deafblind</th>
<th>Deaf + cognitive disability</th>
<th>Deaf + independent living difficulty</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA / GED</td>
<td>89.3%</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>75.2%</td>
<td>73.1%</td>
<td>73.5%</td>
<td>72.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOME COLLEGE</td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>44.7%</td>
<td>40.8%</td>
<td>40.9%</td>
<td>38.9%</td>
<td>36.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE</td>
<td>34.2%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>19.7%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td>16.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BACHELOR'S DEGREE</td>
<td>24.6%</td>
<td>13.1%</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
<td>12.3%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MASTER'S DEGREE</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
<td>4.4%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PH.D., J.D. OR M.D.</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more information, refer to NDC’s national data reports:
Increasing Postsecondary Outcomes with Transition Planning

Deaf students benefit from early preparation for life after high school which help students approach communication barriers, develop resiliency, and achieve success and independence. When a deafblind student transitions from high school to higher education and employment opportunities, it is critical for them to be aware of the support services available. Some key areas to consider discussing with the student:

Accommodations. Whether in higher education or employment settings, effective accommodations should be considered on a case-by-case basis. Deafblind individuals vary in the type and degree of vision and hearing loss which may require a combination of accommodations to effectively access spoken and written communication. Project IDEAL In Action offers an overview of deafblindness and considerations for the classroom including teaching strategies as well as assistive technology. It lists some basic guidelines for communication:

- Emphasis on the use of touch to guide focus of attention
- Nondirective ways of exploring objects
- Allowing additional time for response
- Symbolic communication systems such as…
  - [Tactile] Sign Language
  - Large print
  - Touch cues
When it comes to higher education needs, deafblind students may require a combination of accommodations to ensure effective access. Deafblind students, faculty, disability services professionals and service providers can work collaboratively to navigate accessibility in the postsecondary environment. The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) has a college readiness tool available here: nationaldb.org/products/ready-tool.

**Vocational Rehabilitation (VR).** VR provides counseling, guidance, referrals, and financial sponsorship for individuals with disabilities with the end goal of obtaining meaningful employment. Research findings indicate that deaf VR consumers are more likely to become competitively employed after receiving services ranging from postsecondary education, on-the-job training, assessment, counseling and guidance, restoration and other job-placement services. Deafblind individuals can connect with a VR professional as early as high school in most states. Read more about VR services:

- Vocational Rehabilitation:
  - An Introduction: nationaldeafcenter.org/vrintro
- Vocational Rehabilitation:
  - Understanding Service Options: nationaldeafcenter.org/vrservices

**Safe and Independent Travel.** In many cases, access to opportunities requires independent travel arrangements that are flexible and safe. Not only does this mean traveling to-and-from
home but safety also pertains to knowing one’s immediate surroundings. When being introduced to a new location, consider ways to teach a deafblind individual the layout of the area and how to navigate getting from one area to another.

**Additional Resources**

- Project IDEAL: Deaf-Blindness:
  [projectidealonline.org/v/deaf-blindness/](projectidealonline.org/v/deaf-blindness/)

- The National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) is a national technical assistance center funded by the Department of Education to improve the quality of life for children who are deaf-blind and their families. Their website contains information on current practices, policies, activities, supports and partnerships relevant to serving deafblind individuals.
- NCDB also has a community where people can collaborate and share information. Their page on transition may be useful to deafblind youth as they navigate post-high school opportunities (see [nationaldb.org/groups/page/13/transition](nationaldb.org/groups/page/13/transition)).

- The Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults (HKNC), authorized by an Act of Congress in 1967, is an organization that provides training and resources for deafblind individuals over the age of 16. HKNC operates a campus in Sands Point, New York to provide training in assistive technology, work readiness, orientation and mobility, communication and independent living. Additionally, their regional offices offer consultation, advocacy, assessment, training, referrals and other services.

- The DeafBlind Interpreting National Training and Resource Center (DBI) is part of the federally-funded
• Regional Resource Center on Deafness at Western Oregon University. The organization provides online and onsite protactile interpreting training and resources on current standards and practices for communication in the deafblind community.

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• iCanConnect
  • is an FCC program to connect deafblind individuals with assistive technology (AT) devices and equipment. They provide a range of AT options including braille devices, computers, mobile devices and signalers.

References:

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