

Trending Topic Tuesday: Deafblind Individuals and Access to Postsecondary Education and Employment



[image description: Icon symbol of a hand pointing upward - representing touch. The hand is white outlined in teal.]

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

ADDITIONAL DISABILITY STATUS	MEDIAN SALARY	EMPLOYMENT RATES
Deaf + no additional disabilities	\$50,000	71.9%
Deaf + ambulatory disability	\$44,000	24.7%
Deafblind	\$43,700	34.6%
Deaf + cognitive disability	\$42,000	27.2%
Deaf + independent living difficulty	\$40,000	19.9%
Deaf + self care difficulty	\$42,000	20.7%

[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 and last line reads "Deaf + self care difficulty" with their median salary being "\$42,000" and employment rate "20.7%". End image description.]

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:

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

[Image description: a chart with seven columns and seven lines total. On the first line are images: the first one is blank; the second has an image of a certificate with the label "high school diploma/GED"; the third an image of a rolled-up degree with the label "some college"; the fourth an image of a rolled-up degree with a feather above it, with "associate's degree"; the fifth an image of a rolled-up degree with a graduation cap with "bachelor's degree"; the sixth a semi-circle of leaves surrounding a graduation cap with "master's degree"; and the last a briefcase atop a ribbon, and "PhD, J.D. or M.D.". The second line is labeled "Deaf + no additional disabilities" with the respective figures for HS, some college, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree and PhD/JD/MD being: 89.3%; 57.9%; 34.2%; 24.6%; 8.8% and 0.9%. The third line reads "Deaf + additional disabilities" with the respective figures being 78.2%; 44.7%; 21.4%; 13.1%; 4.4% and 0.4%. The fourth line reads "Deaf + ambulatory disability" with 75.2%; 40.8%; 18.2%; 10.6%; 3.3% and 0.3%. The fifth line reads "Deafblind" with 73.1%; 40.9%; 19.7%; 12.3%; 4.0% and 0.4%. The sixth line reads "Deaf + cognitive disability" with 73.5%; 38.9%; 17.2%; 10.7%; 3.0% and 0.2%. The seventh and last line reads "Deaf + independent living difficulty" with 72.5%; 36.9%; 16.9%; 10.3%; 3.1% and 0.2%. End image description.]

For more information, refer to NDC's national data reports:

Deaf People and Educational Attainment in the United States: 2019 - nationaldeafcenter.org/educationdata

Deaf People and Employment in the United States: 2019 - nationaldeafcenter.org/employmentdata

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
 -

-
- Object/Picture symbols
-
-
- Assistive technology
-
-
- Electronic braillewriter
-
-
- Braille translation software and notetakers
-
-
- Screen reader
-

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.¹ 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/
 -
-
- 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).
 -
-
- 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.
-
-
- [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:

- 1.
2. Moore, C. L. (2001). Disparities
3. in job placement outcomes among deaf, late-deafened, and hard-of-hearing consumers.
4. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*,
5. 44(3), 144–150. Retrieved from www.tinyurl.com/coreymoore2001
- 6.
- 7.