Engage for Change | local

a conversation in Denver

— May 17, 2018 —

NDC
National Deaf Center
on Postsecondary Outcomes

Overview of the National Deaf Center

The National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes (NDC) is a federally funded project that works toward systemic change to increase the quality of services and access to meaningful postsecondary opportunities for all deaf individuals. Meaningful postsecondary experiences contribute greatly to deaf individuals' quality of life. However, deaf individuals face a number of misconceptions and challenges that impede their ability to use their skills and talents in postsecondary settings and beyond. We believe that change is possible and that local communities can contribute to that change. We are here to provide support and guidance. Email **help@nationaldeafcenter.org** if you have any questions.

Purpose of **Engage for Change** | local

For change to be effective, a broad range of stakeholders must be involved in the process. Yet it can be challenging to bridge the gaps between individuals, the community, institutions, and policymakers. NDC is committed to bringing together all parties to create a successful model of how community involvement leads to improved postsecondary outcomes for all deaf individuals.

> NDC uses the term *deaf* in an all-encompassing manner to include individuals who identify as Deaf, deafblind, hard of hearing, hearing impaired, late deafened, and deafdisabled.

Conversations led by members of the community explore challenges and solutions on the local level. Discussion questions focus on brainstorming solutions to local-level challenges that community members can implement to strengthen postsecondary opportunities for deaf individuals in their community.

What's Next?

This report summarizes key solutions and strategies that emerged from the discussions during the event, and it is intended to provide guidance for the Denver community to address important challenges. The report concludes with a list of action items for community members to consider as they connect with their networks to continue this important work.

NDC is offering a platform for continued work on Canvas if the Denver community chooses to take that route. Consider forming work groups to implement the strategies proposed at the event, on Canvas, or elsewhere.

Solutions and Strategies

TOP SIX TO CONSIDER

1. Plan and host a variety of community events (e.g., job fairs, college fairs, town halls) for deaf community members, students, families, and professional role models to network and share resources.
2. Design and implement strategies to increase awareness and visibility of deaf culture and testing accessibility needs on state-level education boards and committees.
3. Create a work/school program designed to train students in employment advocacy skills and provide a variety of work experience opportunities.
4. Establish a neutral, digital hub for local and state resources, calendar events, and a directory for collective use by the deaf community, families, organizations, and agencies.
5. Create a physical deaf center, with space for resources, for the community to use as a meeting area for local and statewide events.
6. Design and implement mentorship programs, partnering with the Colorado Department of Education for Regional Day School Programs to foster connections between and encourage leadership within each program.

MORE SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Improve Access to Connections and Resources

- Designate a point of contact for core curriculum and available resources for students.
- Strengthen partnerships between local and state resource agencies and the community.
- Provide vocational rehabilitation agencies with opportunities to visit schools to promote awareness of resources.
- Create a one-stop online directory and hub with resources for the community.
- Develop and maintain a calendar of upcoming community events.

Create Opportunities for Networking With Professionals

- Host networking events, panels, and mock interviews for students, to connect them with deaf professionals.
- Host career and college days to model a variety of postsecondary options.
- Develop opportunities for students to participate in co-ops, internships, and mentorships.

Develop Connections With Role Models and Mentors

- Establish a mentorship program connecting deaf role models and students.
- Develop a "safe place," or "safety net," program connecting students with a support system for mental preparation during higher education.
- Develop partnerships with state agency mentorship programs.

Strengthen Family Involvement

- Increase outreach efforts to families, encouraging attendance to community events.
- Host a deaf professional panel for parents and families to raise expectations of deaf youth by modeling successful futures.
- Implement a mentoring program for families to strengthen support networks and encourage stronger connections with the deaf community.

Improve Deaf Students' Self-Advocacy Skills

- Provide training for students on how to work with access providers and advocate for themselves.
- Increase visibility of disability offices for students to increase awareness of their services.
- Involve students in their Individualized Education Plan (IEP) and train them to advocate for their needs.
- Create an empowerment program for students to understand their rights within society.

Facilitate Successful Transition From School to Life

- Establish a program that includes sensitivity training and gives students opportunities to explore different aspects of their identity.
- Develop a curriculum for developing soft skills and understanding the expectations of functioning independently in day-to-day life.

Improve Community Relations

- Host networking events for deaf professionals and members of the community.
- Design and host a variety of activities and events for deaf youth and adults.
- Host monthly stakeholder meetings with representatives from communities and resource agencies to discuss upcoming events and strengthen partnerships.
- Develop and host a think tank or town hall meeting to increase involvement of deaf individuals within the community.

Establish a Deaf Center

- Develop a task force to discuss funding and establish a deaf center as a shared space for the community.
- Discuss the possibility of multiple agencies and organizations coming together and operating out of the same building.
- Promote the deaf center as a space for youth programs and community events and as a central hub for community resources.

Increase Academic Outreach and Representation

- Improve partnerships with local and state education boards and committees.
- Increase number of deaf representatives on education boards and committees.
- Provide feedback to the Colorado Department of Education about students' inequitable academic testing situations and encourage exploration of different testing modalities.

- Establish a task force involving the Colorado Department of Education to identify issues and discuss solutions.
- Involve school administrators and teachers in community events and panels to further develop relationships.

Comments From Community Members Who Attended the Event

"My organization and I are committed to changing outcomes for deaf/HH students."

"As a transition teacher at [a school], I want to be involved in the change happening in this community."

"I want to make a difference for the next generation because I do not want them to walk through the same experiences I had."

"I want to help create changes."

"Transition is the key to building futures!"

Now What?

Consider taking the following steps if you want to continue working with your local community members.

- Reconnect with your core team and attendees.
- Find out when everyone is available for a follow-up meeting.
- Review the Action Plan template and think about which strategies you could implement.
- Attend a follow-up meeting to discuss your notes and ideas.
- Form smaller work groups to focus on the action plan you are excited about.
- Think about how you can contribute to the action plan. Small contributions matter!
- Do your part!
- Be ready to support others in your work group or other groups.
- Observe the process and continue to meet with your group to discuss progress.
- If results motivate you, continue to the next goal!

Note: In 1 to 3 months after the follow-up meeting, NDC will send you a brief survey to learn more about your progress. We are excited to see the outcomes of your work! We believe that small changes can, and do, make a difference.

Drafting Your Action Plan

A good action plan is clear and specific, incorporates your community's ideas, and takes advantage of available resources. A clearly articulated and specific action plan ensures that everyone on your team remains focused on the same goal, and it enables you to better evaluate your progress and support your efforts based on what you learn along the way. It can also help you communicate and engage with others.

In articulating your action plan, make sure to address the following.

- **What:** What problem do you want to solve?
- **Why:** Why is it important to solve this problem?
- **Who:** Who will benefit from the solution?
- **How:** How will you implement it?
- **Expected Results:** What kind of change do you expect to see?
- **Action Steps:** Who will be part of the solution, when, and how?

Example

Suppose your local community believes there are not enough internships available for deaf youth. Employers say they are unable to find and hire deaf applicants, and they lack knowledge of how to accommodate deaf interns. Here is an example of an action plan related to building skills for deaf youth and increasing their opportunities in your local community.

- **What:** Limited internship opportunities exist for deaf youth; employers lack knowledge about how to accommodate deaf interns; and deaf youth have little experience with finding internships, interviewing, and self-advocating.

- **Why:** It's important for employers to become more aware of accommodations so that they can hire deaf applicants, and it's important for deaf youth to grow more confident in self-advocating so that they can enjoy more social and professional opportunities.

- **Who:** Deaf youth, employers, and community networks

- **How:** Organize a day of training sessions and workshops, including the following:
  - Job coaching workshop for deaf youth
  - Accommodations 101 for employers
  - Testimonial panel for deaf youth with employers in the audience
  - Networking opportunities

- **Expected Results:**
  - Deaf youth will gain hands-on experience in finding internships, going through interviews, and advocating for their accommodation needs.
  - Employers will report increased knowledge of accommodation resources.
  - Networks between deaf individuals, teachers, parents, and employers will strengthen.

- **Action Steps:**
  - Find partners for the event (e.g., local association for the deaf, vocational rehabilitation agency, transition specialists, deaf youth, families).
  - Choose a date and a venue (date, point person).
  - Develop an agenda (date, point person).
  - Invite stakeholders (date, point person).
  - Work with presenters (date, point person).

In putting together this series of workshops aimed at increasing internship opportunities in your local area, your goal might be to strengthen local networks, make local employers aware of how to recruit and retain deaf interns, and increase deaf youth's experience in obtaining and retaining an internship.

Action Plan Template

Action Plan for: _____

What *(What problem do you want to solve?)*	**Why** *(Why is it important to solve this problem?)*
Who *(Who will benefit from the solution?)*	**How** *(How will you implement it?)*

Expected Results *(What kind of change do you expect to see?)*

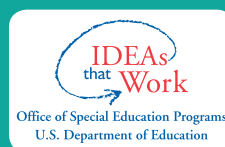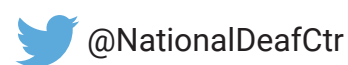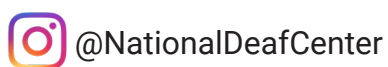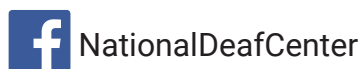**Action Steps** *(Who will be part of the solution, when, and how?)*

Resources

NDC: **www.nationaldeafcenter.org**

NDC Listerv: **https://utlists.utexas.edu/sympa/info/nationaldeafcenter**

NDC Help Desk: **help@nationaldeafcenter.org**

Office of Special Education Programs: **www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html**

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