

Engage for Change | **local**

a conversation in Chicago

— October 2, 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 provides evidence-based strategies for deaf individuals, family members, and professionals at the local, state, and national levels with the goal of closing education and employment gaps. 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. E-mail 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.

These community conversations explore challenges and solutions on the local level. Discussion questions focus on solutions and strategies that community members can implement to strengthen postsecondary opportunities for deaf individuals in their community.

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.

This Report

This report summarizes key solutions and strategies that emerged from the discussions at the event, and it is intended to help the Chicago community 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.

We suggest that community members consider forming work groups to implement the strategies proposed at the event.

Solutions and Strategies

TOP THREE COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

1. Promote collaboration between the community, organizations, and programs.
2. Facilitate stronger partnerships between community members, teachers, and families of deaf children.
3. Advocate for improvement of statewide educational systems and policies.

TOP THREE STEPS FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

1. Increase visibility and awareness of deaf culture through deaf representation on local and state-wide government agencies and boards.
2. Provide consistent early outreach to expose parents of deaf children to resources for language acquisition and community involvement.
3. Increase awareness of and provide a variety of options for vocational and educational pathways for deaf transition.

MORE SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Strengthen Youth Skills

- Develop self-advocacy skills by including students in teacher-parent conferences.
- Prioritize language foundations over hearing ability.
- Educate students on deaf culture and cultural responsiveness skills.
- Involve students in local organizations to foster community membership and leadership.
- Increase funding for and the number of out-of-school youth programs.

Advocate for Educational System Change

- Increase awareness of deaf education programs.
- Create a sustainable deafblind education program.
- Promote universality in high school settings.
- Advocate for the hiring of a deaf coordinator for statewide deaf education programs.
- Advocate for improved expectations and test equity in schools.
- Create a coalition of school board trustees and deaf community representatives to address issues in deaf programs.
- Increase the number of bilingual deaf teachers in deaf education programs.
- Improve communication and resource sharing between deaf education programs.
- Advocate for the hiring of qualified interpreters.

Prepare Students for Postsecondary Transition

- Identify and address gaps in students' language development and barriers to communication in postsecondary settings.
- Reach parents and deaf students early to begin transition planning.
- Instill independent living, decision-making, and problem-solving skills in students for a variety of postsecondary settings.
- Consider establishing a case manager to support students' postsecondary transitions.
- Educate students on a variety of postsecondary pathways.
- Improve transition programs in high school deaf education programs.

Support Postsecondary Transition to Employment

- Work with state agencies to increase deaf employment.
- Provide job-readiness skills training.
- Educate employers on deaf culture and communication accessibility needs.
- Provide job shadowing for deaf individuals to experience different professions.
- Host vocational workshops and training for students and community members.
- Develop partnerships with businesses to expose students to professional skills and experiences.
- Host career fairs, worksite visits, and professional panels.
- Train employers on deaf culture and accessibility needs.
- Improve understanding of and support students' applications to receive resources and support.

Support Postsecondary Transition to Educational Settings

- Provide college preparatory courses.
- Increase awareness of college experiences and outcomes.
- Host college visits.
- Share information on different pathways for attending college.
- Expose students to college alumni for information sharing.

Create a Supportive Environment for Families

- Provide American Sign Language classes for families with deaf children.
- Promote accessible communication habits at home.
- Identify and reach parents of deaf children early to provide resources.
- Create an inclusive community of support for parents and families of deaf children.
- Educate parents and families on deaf culture and language accessibility.
- Expose and connect parents with deaf role models, mentors, and members of the community.
- Encourage parents to set high expectations for their children.
- Create a parent and family support group with regular parents' nights for resource sharing, social connections, and networking.
- Encourage parents to be involved in their children's language acquisition, academics, and out-of-school activities.

Facilitate Partnerships and Resources

- Create a centralized digital hub to provide and spread awareness of resources and information.
- Promote collaboration and partnerships among organizations and programs.
- Strengthen relationships between schools and vocational rehabilitation offices.
- Strengthen partnerships between teachers and community organizations and educate them on deaf culture and language accessibility.

Encourage Community Engagement

- Host regular events and an annual summit that include representatives of different sectors of the community.
- Work collaboratively to break down negative stereotypes, raise expectations, and identify ongoing issues facing deaf youth.
- Establish a community deaf center.

Identify Role Models and Mentors

- Connect transition students with culturally responsive mentors.
- Identify and develop opportunities for transition students to visit with role models.
- Develop a statewide mentorship program for community members and students.
- Provide training on how to be a mentor.

Serve Marginalized Communities

- Identify and include mainstreamed and marginalized students in transition programs and community events.
- Reach students in rural and isolated areas for inclusion and sharing of technology and resources.
- Identify needs, resources, and a support system for undocumented students.
- Promote acceptance of individual differences in language and hearing abilities.
- Expose marginalized and mainstream students to deaf culture and American Sign Language.

Provide Professional Development

- Train mainstream administrators and educators on deaf culture and accessibility needs.
- Allow teachers to earn continuing education units for participating in conferences on deaf issues.
- Educate medical professionals and hospitals about alternatives to cochlear implants for deaf children.
- Train medical professionals and hospitals on deaf culture and accessibility needs.
- Provide deaf role models and mentors for interpreter training programs to improve cultural sensitivity and language comprehension.

Promote Deaf Representation and Leadership

- Increase visibility of deaf leaders through representation in legal offices, policy development, state boards, governmental agencies, and school administration oversight.
- Prioritize the deaf community's role as stakeholders in policies and systems.

Engage in Strategic and Long-Range Planning

- Track and collect data on transition successes and weaknesses.
- Observe and use other professional organizations as a model to strengthen the deaf community.
- Creatively seek and obtain funding for youth and community programs.

Now What?

Consider taking the following steps 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.

Photo by Pedro Szekely



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/osep/index.html



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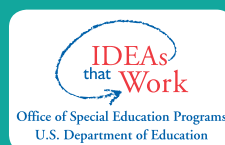
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