# Engage for Change | **local**

## *a conversation* in **Columbus, OH**

— October 9, 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. 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. 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.

# This Report

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

NDC offers a platform for continued work on Canvas if the Columbus 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 THREE COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS

1. Develop early kickstart transition programs with students to strengthen knowledge of postsecondary opportunities.

2. Develop and strengthen partnerships between communities, schools, organizations, and resource providers.

3. Create inclusive spaces accepting individual differences for all members of the community.

## TOP THREE STEPS FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

1. Identify and address causes of language deprivation with a plan for promoting strategies for strengthening language acquisition.

2. Develop and provide deaf mentorship for students and members of the community.

3. Establish a state-level commission to provide services for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deafblind community members.

## PROVIDE ROLE MODELS AND MENTORSHIP

**Support Postsecondary Transitions**

- Identify and increase community and student exposure to role models.
- Provide culturally responsive leadership training for role models and mentors.
- Establish a mentorship program for deaf, hard-of-hearing, deafblind, and deaf-plus individuals and cochlear implant users of all ages.
- Encourage mentors to help mentees identify and work toward goals.
- Centralize role model and mentor information through a registration system.

**Work Toward Successful Postsecondary Transitions**

- Begin transition plans at young ages.
- Develop a program for consistently tracking and checking in with postsecondary transition students.
- Support postsecondary transition in mainstream programs.
- Strengthen transition partnerships and information sharing with college support programs and vocational rehabilitation agencies.
- Expose students early and consistently to a variety of postsecondary educational and employment experiences.
- Provide job readiness and professional workplace skills training.

- Increase internship and apprenticeship opportunities.
- Develop a program providing functional assessment to ensure that students consistently meet transition benchmarks.

## Foster Inclusive Environments

- Create a community of inclusion for hard-of-hearing, mainstream, deaf-plus, and marginalized students.
- Identify and include those at risk for isolation.
- Provide outreach to deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals in suburban and rural areas.
- Encourage recognition and acceptance of generational differences within the community.

## Centralize Resources and Promote Awareness

- Create a centralized list of resources.
- Develop a call center to connect people with resources.
- Facilitate partnerships, information sharing, and networking between agencies and resource providers.
- Work with hospitals and medical professionals to provide deaf patients and parents of deaf children with resources.
- Spread awareness and foster acceptance of individual differences within the community.
- Consider using creative channels and social media to spread awareness of American Sign Language (ASL) and deaf culture.
- Create opportunities to educate others about deaf and hard-of-hearing culture.
- Spread awareness about available community resources.

## Advocate for System Change

- Advocate for the hiring of qualified, certified professionals, teachers, and interpreters.
- Advocate for deaf community needs and support at the state and national levels.
- Create a state commission for deaf, hard-of-hearing, and deafblind services.
- Establish a statewide interpreter and specialist licensure or certification standard.
- Increase deaf representation and influence on local, state, and national government agencies and committees.

## Support Educational Outcomes

- Improve standards for students' confidence and academic, linguistic, and cognitive outcomes.
- Provide tutoring and mentorship opportunities for students (i.e., STEM, English).
- Creatively seek and obtain government and grant funding to support programs.
- Provide awareness of deaf culture and mentorship support for teachers.
- Facilitate partnerships, information sharing, and networking between school programs and community.

**Strengthen Language Acquisition**

- Spread awareness of language deprivation and the benefits of early language acquisition.
- Create a shared reading and language acquisition program with consistent benchmarks.
- Provide opportunities for sign language and speech therapy.
- Provide ASL classes in mainstream and postsecondary education settings.

**Provide Access**

- Increase the number of certified community interpreters.
- Standardize expectations and requirements for access.
- Spread awareness of potential barriers to communication.
- Promote all-access public and educational environments.
- Identify and provide necessary resources for communication access and accommodations.

**Community Engagement**

- Establish a community-based deaf center.
- Develop a taskforce of representatives from different sectors of the community with a common goal.
- Foster high expectations for community members to strengthen communication habits and relationship maintenance.
- Work together to creatively seek and obtain funding for community programs and resources.
- Increase involvement with community programs and the hearing community.
- Provide mentorship and leadership training for the community.

**Build Communities of Support for Youth**

- Include deaf community members in high school programs.
- Expand and facilitate communication between youth programs.
- Provide volunteer and community support opportunities for students.
- Promote an environment of high expectations and standards.
- Teach students self-determination and advocacy skills to recognize and address systematic discrimination.
- Improve students' knowledge of the Americans with Disabilities Act and other relevant legal policies.

**Engage and Include Parents and Families**

- Provide outreach and early access to deaf culture and language acquisition resources.
- Encourage parents to instill self-advocacy skills and high expectations in their students.
- Educate parents and families on language accommodation needs and communication skills to connect with their children.
- Provide technological resources to connect parents with children.
- Educate parents on available resources and educational options.
- Connect parents with deaf role models and mentorship 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.

# 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**

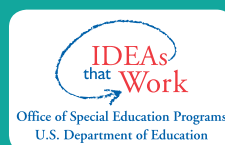Office of Special Education Programs: **www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html**

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