

Engage for Change | **local**

a conversation in
Dallas–Fort Worth, Texas

— November 15, 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 Dallas–Fort Worth 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 Dallas–Fort Worth 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. Work collaboratively to reduce community divisions through acceptance of and support for differences of beliefs.
2. Create a centralized hub of resources for community access and exchange.
3. Collectively bridge community divisions through the use of intersectional and intercultural networking and partnership.

TOP THREE STEPS FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

1. Establish community expectations for positive acceptance of individual differences.
2. Provide consistent early outreach to parents of deaf children to expose them to resources supporting students' educational options.
3. Promote understanding of deaf culture by increasing community knowledge of and exposure to deaf culture and American Sign Language.

MORE SOLUTIONS AND STRATEGIES

Support Deaf Youth

- Develop community allies with and for deaf children.
- Create and promote mentorship opportunities connecting deaf youth with deaf adults.
- Expose deaf youth to a variety of deaf role models.
- Increase opportunities for volunteerism.
- Begin students' transition planning early.

Promote Community Network and Collaboration

- Foster safe spaces for exchanging personal opinions and perspectives.
- Increase opportunities for community and professional collaboration.
- Reduce community divisions through acceptance of and support for different beliefs.
- Bridge community gaps by promoting intersectional and intercultural networking and reconciliation.

Increase Communication Access

- Promote and support communication access.
- Increase community knowledge of and exposure to deaf culture and American Sign Language.
- Support the education and development of certified interpreters.

Engage in Future-Oriented Strategic Planning

- Work together to identify current leaders and best practices for improvement.
- Seek and receive feedback on deaf professionals' experiences.
- Discuss professional definitions of deaf consumers and community.
- Use prior experiences to support future opportunities.
- Promote acceptance and positive change.

Support Educational Options

- Increase the number of accessible incidental learning opportunities.
- Consolidate local deaf school programs.
- Strengthen educational experiences by improving school programming.
- Provide and support opportunities for learning.
- Improve access to college preparatory information and courses.

Form Partnerships and Centralize Resources

- Create a centralized hub for community resources and use social media platforms to raise awareness about its existence.
- Establish a physical community-based center.
- Encourage business owners and community members to sponsor American Sign Language classes.
- Foster a community expectation of resource sharing and exchange.
- Increase opportunities for partnerships and the exchange of resources.
- Foster and support peer leadership.

Support Families

- Develop and host parent support groups.
- Encourage parents to be allies with their children.
- Reach out to and share resources with parents.

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 that not enough internships are available for deaf youth. Employers say they are unable to find and hire deaf applicants, and employers 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?)*



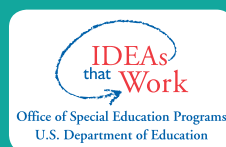
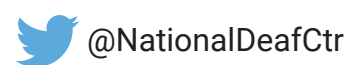
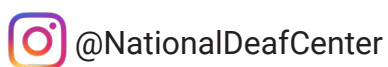
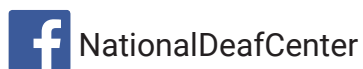
Resources

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/osep/index.html



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