

Engage for Change | **local**

a conversation in **Tulsa, OK**

— April 9, 2019 —



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 Tulsa 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.

Consider forming workgroups to implement the strategies proposed at the event, connecting on an online platform, or starting an e-mail group.

Solutions and Strategies

TOP SIX RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MEANINGFUL CHANGE

1. Develop a program connecting deaf students and families with deaf mentors.
2. Include and strengthen parent involvement in deaf community events.
3. Strengthen reading literacy development for deaf students and community members.
4. Provide workshops on deaf culture and sign language to employers, businesses, and organizations.
5. Support employment searches, hires, and retention of deaf individuals through career fairs and skills workshops.
6. Foster partnerships between state agencies and resource providers to provide resources for strengthening deaf youth's self-determination.

SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Build Communities of Support for Deaf Youth

- Increase community involvement with deaf youth camps and clubs.
- Recognize and become involved with deaf school support systems.
- Identify and reach out to students in rural areas to improve knowledge of sign language and deaf culture.
- Provide culturally responsive support for students' goals and success.

Connect Youth With Role Models and Mentors

- Increase exposure to and knowledge of deaf role models.
- Develop and implement a big brother/big sister mentorship program connecting high school students with elementary students.
- Increase the number of and connection with deaf mentors for students up to age 21.

Promote High-Quality Accommodations

- Use professional note-taking services for students.
- Improve interpreters' knowledge of deaf culture through social exposure.
- Promote and support interpreters' specialization in specific fields.
- Train interpreters on the use of appropriate boundaries and roles in interpretive settings.

Promote Awareness and Knowledge of Deaf Culture and Sign Language

- Provide workshops on deaf culture and sign language to professionals, employers, businesses, and organizations.
- Use social media to spread awareness of and advocate for deaf culture.
- Educate employers on access rights and how to hire, pay, and work with American Sign Language (ASL) interpreters.

Strengthen Partnerships and Resource Sharing

- Reach out to mainstream and rural deaf students for networking and awareness of available resources.
- Encourage partnerships between resource providers to spread awareness of resources.
- Host a centralized virtual bulletin board, with corresponding social media accounts, to hold information about resources and upcoming community events.
- Foster and support partnerships between schools, vocational rehabilitation (VR) agencies, and the deaf community.
- Provide workshops for deaf individuals for awareness of differences between Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability (SSDI).

Strengthen Community Networking

- Host more community events to improve opportunities for networking, socialization, and community growth.
- Partner with libraries to host deaf-run storytelling events.
- Host monthly silent dinners for the deaf community and ASL students.
- Host community events for deaf youth.

Support Transition to Postsecondary Pathways

- Provide workshops on postsecondary application completion, interviewing skills, and financial aid.
- Provide career fairs and workshops focused on employment.
- Partner with VR agencies to provide job shadowing.
- Expose students to college and vocational technical school experiences.
- Expose deaf students to learning opportunities early.
- Expose deaf students to experiences common to life after graduation to develop knowledge of necessary independent living skills.



Increase Knowledge of and Advocacy for Access

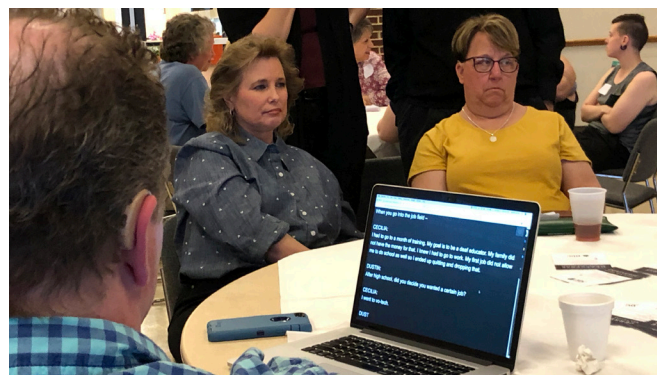
- Educate deaf students and community members on their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Provide workshops and training to strengthen deaf students' and community members' advocacy skills.
- Expose deaf students early to opportunities to develop self-determination skills.
- Teach deaf students skills for setting and meeting goals.

Strengthen Language Development

- Strengthen English literacy and reading levels for transition to postsecondary settings.
- Provide language development workshops in churches, workplaces, and schools for both English and sign language.
- Provide sign language classes for employers and co-workers of deaf adults.

Strengthen Inclusion of and Partnerships With Families

- Provide and connect deaf mentors with parents and families.
- Expose hearing parents and family members early to deaf culture, role models, community, and sign language.
- Encourage parents to take an active role in their children's education and social development.
- Increase parental involvement in deaf community activities, advocacy, and events.
- Share information with parents about available resources.
- Strengthen parents' and family members' use of sign language in the home.
- Provide a support system for parents of deaf children.



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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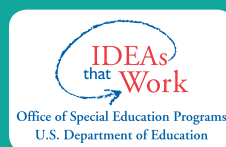
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