

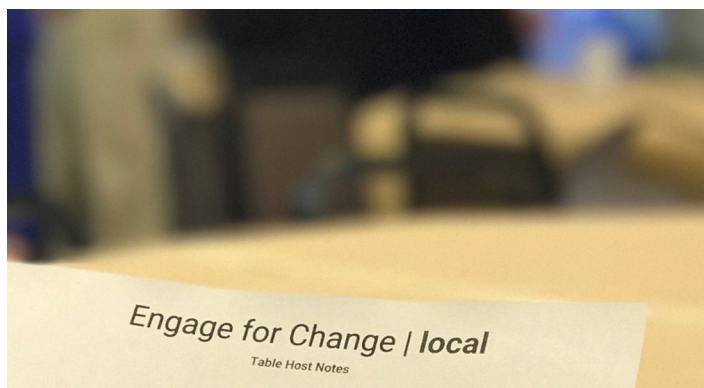
Engage for Change | local

a conversation in St. Louis, MO

May 30, 2017



NDC
National Deaf Center
on Postsecondary Outcomes



The Importance of Community Engagement

Effective change depends on involvement from all levels of the system we live in. Yet it can be challenging to bridge gaps between individuals, community members, institutions, and policymakers.

The National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes (NDC) is a federally funded project that works toward systemic change across all levels to increase quality of services and provide greater access to meaningful postsecondary opportunities for all deaf individuals. NDC is committed to increasing community engagement and bringing all parties together to create a successful model of how community involvement leads to improved postsecondary outcomes for all deaf individuals.

The Purpose of Engage for Change | local

Meaningful postsecondary experiences contribute greatly to quality of life for deaf individuals. Many obstacles, challenges, and misconceptions impede the capacity of deaf individuals to use their abilities and talents in postsecondary settings and beyond. These community conversations are a way to assess local needs in collaboration with community members. The discussion questions at these community conversations asked how the community can come together to strengthen meaningful postsecondary opportunities for deaf individuals on the local level.

What's Next?

After the St. Louis community conversations, NDC analyzed and summarized data collected from participants. This short report is intended to provide guidance to the St. Louis community as community members work to address the important challenges they face. The report concludes with a list of potential action items for the local community to consider when connecting with their networks to continue this important work.

NDC uses *deaf* in an all-inclusive manner to include people who identify as Deaf, deaf, deafblind, deafdisabled, hard of hearing, late-deafened, and hearing impaired. NDC recognizes that for many individuals, identity is fluid and can change over time or with setting. NDC has chosen to use one term, *deaf*, with the goal of recognizing experiences that are shared by all members of our diverse communities while also honoring all of our differences.



IDENTIFY BARRIERS AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Locate silos, gaps, or barriers that restrict employment, access to resources, parental involvement, and other opportunities for deaf individuals.
- Identify resources in the community to promote the following:
 - A greater sense of belonging
 - Healthy identity development
 - Social skills
 - Self-advocacy

CAPITALIZE ON EXISTING RESOURCES

- Strengthen online resources for deaf-related information.
- Create videos highlighting occupations held by deaf professionals.
- Encourage more deaf role models and mentors to receive SKI-HI training.
- Increase communication about the availability of various postsecondary settings, including colleges and universities, trade schools, and vocational and technical programs.



RAISE EXPECTATIONS

- Educate parents and deaf youth on the importance of language, access to language and communication, and their roles in education (i.e., individualized education programs).
- Provide information about opportunities and resources for schools to share with deaf students.
- Eradicate “at-risk” labels and self-fulfilling prophecies by elevating expectations for deaf youth to internalize and unlock their unlimited potential early.
- Educate corporations and employers to correct misconceptions and stigmas held against deaf individuals.

USE EFFECTIVE ETHICS, ACCOUNTABILITY, TRANSPARENCY, AND INTEGRITY PRACTICES

- Educate or remind audiologists and other health care professionals to maintain their ethical practice of allowing informed decision-making for families.
- To address limitations in vocational rehabilitation services, promote postsecondary readiness among deaf youth and cultural competency practices among vocational rehabilitation counselors.
- Consider all postsecondary settings but prioritize the ones with higher likelihood of meaningful and sustainable employment and careers for deaf individuals.
- Review and monitor Department of Elementary and Secondary Education inclusion policies and new bylaws to uphold the integrity of accessibility for all deaf youth.
- Promote identity development and stronger self-determination by integrating deaf culture, language, and peer support groups in schools.
- Have stakeholders conduct in-person evaluations of the quality and environment of education for deaf students.
- Sustain community accountability by promoting greater parental support, communication, involvement, and advocacy for deaf youth.
- Seek ethical and legal action when there is evidence of educational neglect.



CRAFT ACTION PLANS

- Before taking action, determine the “we.”
- Design career and postsecondary preparatory programs for deaf youth that start earlier (i.e., middle school).
- Set up grants and funding to increase postsecondary enrollment and support living situations during transition from high school.
- Replicate other successful mentorship programs for deaf youth in Missouri.
- Organize opportunities for job or career shadowing and mentoring and host panels with deaf adults from the community.
- Submit workshop proposals for conferences related to mental health, education, the medical field, etc.
- Organize a local listserv or a national directory listing available resources, including deaf mentors, role models, and local events.

EXPLORE POTENTIAL RESOURCES IN YOUR AREA

- Missouri Department of Mental Health
- Hands and Voices in Missouri
- National Black Deaf Advocates
- Missouri School for the Deaf
- Deaf Inc.
- St. Louis Community College
- Vocational rehabilitation services
- Rehabilitation services for the blind
- Paraquad
- Special School District
- SKI-HI Program
- Greater St. Louis Association of the Deaf
- Occupational Outlook Handbook
- RTR/DCC
- TAP IED
- TRIO
- Visual Art Institute
- Deaf Teen Club
- Mentorship models:
 - Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program
 - Wisconsin state-funded mentorship program

CONSIDER THESE FINAL THOUGHTS

- Preserve the spirit of this movement by always looking for ways to increase opportunities and educational outcomes for deaf youth.
- Consider potential ripple effects and their implications.
- Practice the **3 Rs**—Rethink, Revisit, and Remember.
- Continue to spark productive conversations for community engagement.
- Empower deaf individuals and their stakeholders by emphasizing that given the right tools, deaf youth can do anything.
- Stick with our mission to improve access to language by offering a steady stream of resources even when there is little to no caregiver involvement.
- **It takes a village to raise a child, and change starts with YOU.**

About the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes

NDC is a technical assistance and dissemination center funded by the Office of Special Education Programs. Our mission is to support postsecondary outcomes for individuals who are deaf, deafblind, deafdisabled, hard of hearing, or late deafened.

NDC activities draw on evidence-based strategies to educate and engage with stakeholders across the nation. We seek to create conditions for optimal success in a way that recognizes and honors the experiences, perspectives, and strengths of deaf individuals.

The NDC model for change includes impact across the system. NDC seeks to (a) collect critical data about policies, programming, and service provision for deaf individuals; (b) increase accessibility of postsecondary settings; (c) promote high expectations for success of deaf individuals; (d) strengthen community communication, investment, and networks; and (e) develop collaborative and integrated systems within states, institutions, programs, and communities.

RESOURCES

NDC: www.nationaldeafcenter.org

NDC Listserv: <https://utlists.utexas.edu/sympa/info/nationaldeafcenter>

NDC Help Desk: help@nationaldeafcenter.org

Office of Special Education Programs: www2.ed.gov



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