



Communication Advocacy Network (CAN)

CAN Policy/Guidelines for Its Contracted SSPs

- **Be on time, be courteous and respect the deafblind client's privacy.**
- **Wear solid clothing for the deafblind who has limited ability to see.**
- **Allow the deaf blind client to make own decisions. Do not criticize, influence, force, persuade or advise her/him. Respect their decisions.**
- **Communicate effectively, according to each deaf-blind client's preferred communication mode.**
- **Do not work as an interpreter but just do the functions of the SSP.**
- **Allow time in advance to notify another SSP if you could not do the assignment that the deafblind client requests.**
- **Accept the fact if any deafblind client prefers not to use your service due to conflict of interest.**
- **Have a right to decline the request of the deafblind client for your services if necessary.**
- **If you say no to the deafblind client, you have to explain the reason so he/she would not be upset at you for being "personal" or he/she could make a complaint about you.**
- **Do not share any confidential information with the others unless you need to discuss the issue with the supervisor of CAN Deafblind Service.**
- **Comply with the standard rules of conduct/code of ethics that American Association of the DeafBlind (AADB) that adopted for any SSPs like you who work with the deafblind clients.**

- Do not chat for social pleasure only but do what the deafblind client needs to do own errands with your assistance such as food shopping, traveling to the medical appointments, etc.
- Stay in the waiting room, and allow the DB client to have her/his time visiting with the doctor with the assistance of the interpreter. Do not involve in the medical discussion but just help bring her/him to the office.
- Do not take any deafblind clients to any inappropriate places such as a drinking bar. Please check the CAN supervisor about taking her/him out of state for approval. That length of time/cost would reduce the client's service budget.
- Do not leave your own client alone unless he/she takes opportunity to interact with the others or involve in any activity.
- Discuss any issues with your deaf-blind clients for resolution first, and if there is no solution, let your client know that you are going to make a report to the CAN supervisor of the Deafblind Service. Keep your client informed so he/she is kept aware.
- Should attend any training workshops to enhance your knowledge and skills working with the deafblind.
- Attend any social functions at no cost to you but be responsible for your own meal including paying for it at the social affairs such as the banquet, etc. Do not expect them to pay for your restaurant meals.
- Do not call any CAN administrator at home after the working hours unless it is emergency.
- Submit the CAN Service Log by the 15th day of every month in order to receive the paycheck; otherwise you might receive the delayed paycheck.
- Have the proper driver's license, vehicle/auto registration and auto insurance coverage including appropriate medical and liability insurance coverage for the deafblind clients riding in your automobile while serving as contracted SSP.

Enclosure: Additional Information from American Association of DeafBlind

7/21/10 Approved by CAN Board 9/24/10

Additional Information from The American Association of DeafBlind

Definitions (www.AADB.org)

What is meant by “a person who is deaf-blind”?

A basic and concise definition of deaf-blindness is a concomitant loss of sight and hearing that is severe enough to limit a person’s ability to conduct many functions of daily life. People who are deaf-blind may be completely deaf and blind, or they may have some usable hearing and vision, yet it is the effects of a dual sensory loss that combine together to create a unique circumstance.

What is a Support Service Provider?

The term “support service provider,” or SSP, was coined in the 1980s during a convention of the American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB). The success of these conventions had always depended on the work of interpreters and guides to make it possible for the delegates who were deaf-blind to work and socialize in an unfamiliar environment. Most of these SSPs were volunteers. By developing the concept of support service providers, AADB began the work of defining the duties and responsibilities of SSPs, and ways to give them greater professional status. This in turn helped make it possible to set up programs and SSP services for people who are deaf-blind in their home communities.

A support service provider can be any person, volunteer or professional, trained to act as a link between persons who are deaf-blind and their environment. They typically work with a single individual, and act as a guide and communication facilitator. They may be hearing, deaf, blind, or deaf-blind. This paper will discuss the needs, requirements, and skill set for support service providers, as well as various approaches and programs to provide SSP services to people who are deaf-blind in local and state areas. The SSP serves as the eyes and ears of the person who is deaf-blind. There are two key components of an SSP’s function:

- 1. The SSP provides access to the community by making transportation available (by car, bus, or other conveyance), and serves as a human guide while walking.**
- 2. The SSP relays visual and environmental information that may not be heard or seen by the person who is deaf-blind. This is done in the person’s preferred language and communication mode.**

An important aspect of the relationship between the person who is deaf-blind and an SSP is that the former makes all decisions. The SSP can provide information to the individual to assist in considering options, but at no point should the SSP make choices and decisions. The professional SSP strives to be helpful but objective, supportive yet empowering, and sparing in expressing their personal preferences while providing services.

The Roles and Responsibilities of an SSP

The roles and responsibilities of spoken and signed language interpreters have long been established by professional organizations, codes of ethics and conduct, and university-based training programs. The corresponding duties and obligations for SSPs are not yet clearly articulated. Discussions have occurred in the interested communities, and some clarity is emerging (Jordan & Pope, 2004; Morgan, 2001).

Interpreter and SSP roles both differ and have numerous similarities. Some of the precepts they have in common include: remaining impartial, maintaining confidentiality, and working in a variety of settings. The differences fall into several areas. Interpreters work with people who are deaf, hard of hearing, *and* deaf-blind. SSPs work solely with people who are deaf-blind or have a combination of hearing and vision loss. Interpreter education is available from colleges and universities and can culminate in state and national certification. SSP training is presently less formal, often taught in hands-on workshop format or through life experiences working individually with a person who is deaf-blind. There are currently no state or national certifications or licensures for SSPs. While interpreters are paid based upon their certification and/or the rate established by the referring agency/community, SSPs often volunteer or barter their services. Several established SSP programs do compensate their service providers. In many respects, the role of the SSP is facing the same challenges that interpreters faced 20 or 30 years ago. The service provided by the SSP is of no less value to the person who is deaf-blind than that of an interpreter. Nonetheless, it has taken additional time for our society to recognize the SSP as a notable profession.

What SSPs can do:

- SSPs can serve as a guide when escorting a person to/from a meeting room, a restroom in an office, or through a lunch line during a workshop.

- SSPs should provide visual and environmental information which can take several forms: describing who is in a room, the activity and mood; reading the menu if the print is not legible and voicing/interpreting that to the person who is deaf-blind; or locating food items in a grocery store.
- SSPs can provide support to individuals who are deaf-blind in their homes, at their place of employment, in their own community or elsewhere.

As part of focus groups during the 2006 AADB Conference, delegates who are deaf-blind were asked to describe how they use SSP services. A wide variety of responses were elicited: shopping, reading mail, attending social, family, sports, theatrical events, camping, workshops, museum tours, and others.

What SSPs cannot do:

- SSPs cannot provide personal care, e.g., bathing and grooming.
- SSPs do not run errands alone for the person who is deaf-blind.
- SSPs do not make decisions for the person who is deaf-blind.
- SSPs do not teach or instruct.
- SSPs should refrain from formal interpreting in medical, legal, business, or other settings. An SSP who is also a professional interpreter should be careful to differentiate which role they are assuming in any particular situation.

Support service providers do not replace the roles of other professionals, including personal care attendants, teachers, and interpreters.

The Solution:

Support Service Providers (SSPs) are people who can give deaf-blind people needed vision, hearing and environmental information that will enable them to access their community more easily. Some of the roles that the SSPs do are:

1. Serve as sighted guides, i.e., escorting a person to or from a meeting room, or through a lunch line during a workshop.
2. Provide visual and environmental information in the deaf-blind person's communication preference by describing who is in a room, the activity, people's moods; reading a menu in a restaurant, or locating food items in a grocery store.
3. Provide support to individuals who are deaf-blind in their homes, at their place of employment, in their community or elsewhere.

4. Provide transportation or accompany the deaf-blind person on public transportation when they need transportation assistance.
5. Access to community functions; e.g., reading the candidates' names on voting ballots, attending city or county meetings, or participating in recreational activities.