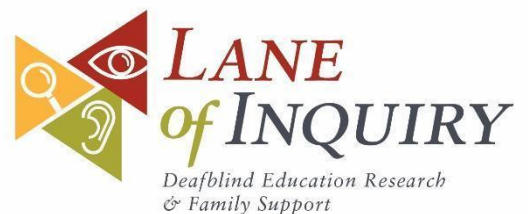


# Parent Perceptions of Early Deafblind Student Involvement in the IEP

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# Parent Perceptions of Early Deafblind Student Involvement in the IEP

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## ► ABSTRACT

- Having students actively participate in their IEP meetings helps ensure IEP meetings are student-focused, which may help prevent conflict and increase parent satisfaction. In practice, students are often not invited to their IEP meetings until they are transition age. Learn about parent perceptions on early student involvement for their children who are deafblind. Findings from interviews from 10 parents will be discussed.

## ► BACKGROUND

- Parent and student involvement are recognized as part of the IDEA (IDEA, 2004).
- Parents often report having low satisfaction with the IEP process
- Having students actively participate in their IEP meetings helps ensure IEP meetings are student-focused, which may help prevent conflict and increase satisfaction.
- In practice, however, students are often not invited to their IEP meetings until they are transition age, or they are not invited at all.
- Student involvement in the IEP helps foster a child's self-determination, which can lead to increased individual quality of life and family quality of life.
- There is a gap in research involving young students who are deafblind in their IEP meetings.



- Mothers of children who are deafblind reported less pressure to advocate and to "be the most knowledgeable" on the IEP team when their children were actively involved in meetings. These families involved their children in the IEP meetings at a young age as an advocacy strategy to get their child's needs met (McKittrick, 2019).

## ► METHODOLOGY

- The purpose of this study was to explore parent perceptions of student involvement in educational planning considering (a) how student involvement in educational planning impacts family satisfaction with partnership and (b) how students gain knowledge to self-advocate and actively participate in their IEP meetings.
- The following research questions were considered:
  - What are the parent-perceived barriers to including children who are deafblind in their IEP before the age of 16?
  - What are parent reported strategies for including children who are deafblind in their IEP before the age of 16?
  - What are the parent reported benefits to including their child who is deafblind in their IEP before the age of 16?
- 10 parents of children who are deafblind were interviewed.
- 5 had involved their children in the IEP at a young age
- 5 wanted to but hadn't yet.

## ► FINDINGS

- Biggest reason for not involving children is challenges with the IEP meeting itself:  
Not student focused, deficit based, too procedural



- Involvement preparation usually started with parents: beginning with self-advocacy (i.e. going over accommodations in advance).
- All 5 parents who had involved their children early were glad they did. All parents felt like it was up to them to make it happen and they wanted support.
- One hesitation of parents is how much to share with their kids about the diagnosis and when.
- Even children with significant support needs can participate.

#### ► QUOTES

- “I can’t imagine what it would be like for a young girl to sit there. Oh and with the interpreters. For her to sit there and listen to ‘These are all the deficits that you have that you need to work on.’ I think I’d burst into tears if it was me. I think it’s very intimidating as an adult even.”
- “I think it makes a difference when the team sees that the family communicates directly to the kid and not about the kid. Even if it’s the kids coming to the beginning of the meeting, however impacted they may be. You could have them share their favorite toy, comfort item, or just show some pictures of things they like. It humanizes that child, especially when we are going to fight for services.”
- “Let it just be part of their life and be part of just knowing what’s going on and letting them have a voice early on, even if it’s a small voice. But just to be able to even just sign their name on that paper and to just be there.”

#### ► DISCUSSION

- One of the biggest barriers is the structure of the IEP and how it feels deficit-based.
- There needs to be trust between parents and the rest of the team for parents to want to bring their children to the meeting.
- The team needs to deliberately plan for what student involvement and preparation will look like, not just leaving it for parents.



- Even the most impacted children can participate in their IEP.
- Use of interpreters, captioning, interveners in IEP meetings needs to be considered.
- One way to start is to add self-advocacy goals to the IEP at a young age.
- Student involvement is a great way to work on self-determination skills, part of the Expanded Core Curriculum.

