

**Division of Elementary and Secondary Education – Office of Special Education
Advisory Council for the Education of Children with Disabilities
Children And Youth with Sensory Impairments (CAYSI), April 2023**

Highlights

- Children And Youth with Sensory Impairments (CAYSI) has received ten new referrals since January 2023. Seven students were found eligible for services during this time. There are twenty referrals outstanding.
- Preparation for the 2022 DeafBlind Child Count is nearing completion. Continuing the use of the database has allowed LEAs to electronically review and update records for students who are DeafBlind with streamlined processes.
- On March 13th, CAYSI submitted the application for the Technical Assistance and Dissemination to Improve Services and Results for Children with Disabilities-State Technical Assistance Projects to Improve Services and Results for DeafBlind Children and National Technical Assistance and Dissemination Center for DeafBlind Children. The February 17th deadline for the 5-year state DeafBlind grant was postponed to March 13th. This was largely due to an edit of the requirements and change in estimated funding that benefitted Arkansas. CAYSI paused most on-site technical assistance during this period to meet the deadline.
- CAYSI gained several collaborative agreements with various agencies in Arkansas while applying for the grant. These agencies included The Center for Exceptional Families, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services, Arkansas Transition Services, Division of Services for the Blind, Easterseals, and Educational Services for the Visually Impaired. The collaborations are aimed at providing events, trainings, and technical assistance (TA) to families, educators, and service providers for better employment experiences and learning opportunities. These collaborations are just a glimpse of the future plans for CAYSI.
- CAYSI attended the annual DeafBlind Summit in Cincinnati, OH sponsored by National Center for Deaf-Blindness and was able to share about the progress AR has made with systems change around transition services for the DeafBlind population.
- While in Cincinnati, CAYSI also attended the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) conference. CAYSI was able to attend the AR Stakeholders meeting to discuss early intervention efforts with other agencies and organizations to create stronger strategic partnerships.

Transitioning Students with Deafblindness out of High School

1. CAYSI Transition Pilot Program continues. Phase III is in collaboration with Arkansas Transition Services (ATS), Arkansas Rehabilitation Services (ARS), Division Services for the Blind (DSB), Helen Keller National Center (HKNC), the families of eight pilot students, and the associated school teams of the DeafBlind student.
 - In collaboration with the agencies listed above, CAYSI conducted training for Pre-ETS and VR counselors on February 15th to further address processes for students at the transition age to receive pre-ETS with a focus on students with DeafBlindness and the most complex needs. This training highlighted the unique needs of the population and reviewed processes for greater efficiency.
 - School teams of three CAYSI students in the pilot program who have more complex needs and no formal communication attended a Discovery training held February 16th. Two of the families attended the meeting with their respective teams.
 - Two Person-Centered Planning (PCP) meetings occurred as a direct result of the training.

- A third family attended a meeting held at the school to follow up with actions derived from their Transition action plan.
- An additional two families are being scheduled for their PCP with a third anticipated for Fall 2023.

Projected outcomes:

- Raise expectations for all supporting agencies, families, the community, and the young adult as the growth and inclusive opportunities of work experiences in high school show the student's strengths and abilities.
 - Establish a process for implementing Discovery with students with significant disabilities in Arkansas as part of Transition Planning (identify what Discovery activities will be completed, timelines, the embedding within Person Centered Planning, annual IEP, determining benchmarks and products, and agency/position responsible).
2. In partnership with HKNC, CAYSI is working with the Deafblind Employment Specialist and the South-Central Regional Representative to determine processes for collaboration and support for DeafBlind students at the transition age. CAYSI has continued an open dialogue regarding this new position and continues to support the additional role whenever appropriate.

Family Engagement

1. Two Communication Matrix reporting sessions have been completed by the CAYSI team involving families and professionals as the first step in creating a Personal Communication Dictionary for the child and to develop strategies and goals to better identify nonverbal cues. Additionally, the series of sessions allow for family leadership growth opportunities for the parent by furthering better child advocacy.
2. Three home visits were conducted for families to provide intensive technical assistance regarding transition and understanding and accessing additional resources. Other intensive and targeted technical assistance was provided to an additional 12 families for this quarter within the areas of newly diagnosed issues, grief and coping with the changes to a child's diagnoses, communication, educational placement, self-care, family leadership, potential legal issues, and the process of transition and accessing available resources. Follow up with support to families builds their advocacy skills and family leadership abilities.
3. At the request of the family, CAYSI attended an IEP meeting to support the family while they advocated the changing medical needs of their student.
4. A transition meeting was held with a school team prior to the Discovery training to ensure their ability to collaborate and fully support the family. CAYSI worked on behalf of the family to express their concerns. The presentation allowed for a positive outcome on meeting the needs of the student that both the family and school felt confident about creating better shared-decision making.
5. CAYSI has continued involvement with the monthly online meetings of Arkansas Empowering Families of Deaf-Blindness (AEFDB), the state's affiliate to National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB) to sustain and grow membership and provide other assistance and family-to-family support. Furthermore, CAYSI has spoken to potential family leaders to continue growing the group and developing a more sustainable plan for growth and development of the parent-led group.
6. Additional meetings and collaboration efforts have been conducted to establish and build strategic partnerships with state and national organizations such as Helen Keller National Center, EHDI, and AR Hands & Voices to continue to serve families across the state with consistency while providing a broader spectrum of supports.

7. The family consultant is now accredited to provide Level 2 and Level 3 training for Triple P, Positive Parenting Program. Triple P is a parenting and family support system designed to prevent and treat behavioral and emotional problems in children and teenagers. The program aims to prevent problems in the family, school, and community before they arise and to create environments that encourage children to realize their potential.

Educational Technical Assistance

1. Targeted TA was given to 8 students in Sherwood, Fayetteville, Springdale, Cave City, and Little Rock. The TA provided was in DeafBlind awareness and overview, early childhood developmental and conceptual strategies, literacy adaptations, active learning, communication strategies, access to the general education curriculum.
2. CAYSI provided intensive TA to two students to help them access FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education). Both students are receiving services in their home district and are making progress towards their goals. Additionally, CAYSI made five intensive visits to students, families, and staff in a transition pilot project. They also completed two Communication Matrix reports for students with complex communication needs. These reports involved the educational teams, families, and appropriate agencies to develop appropriate goals, strategies, and implementation for the students.
3. CAYSI has been actively working to raise awareness and provide training on Deafblindness to various groups and organizations. This includes early childhood center leaders, school psychologists, Pediatric Complex Care of Arkansas, and middle school students. The focus of these trainings and presentations is on strategies and resources for identifying and supporting students with Deafblindness in accessing the general education curriculum, developing concepts, and literacy. Overall, CAYSI is doing important work to increase awareness and understanding of Deafblindness and provide valuable resources and training to help support those who are affected by this condition.