



MEMORANDUM

To: Local Directors of Special Education
Directors of Nonpublic Schools and State Operated Programs

From: Marcella E. Franczkowski, M.S.
Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services

Date: December 14, 2016

Re: National Child Count / Annual Census of Students with Deaf-Blindness

Annually, the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services (DSE/EIS) requests that you complete the Maryland Census of Students with Deaf-Blindness. This census is important for the following reasons:

- It is a ***federal requirement*** that the MSDE report the information annually to the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs;
- The information is used by legislators to determine the national need for training and funding priorities; and
- To provide technical assistance and support to the student's educational team, including the family, it is imperative to know the location of this population of children.

The data you submit are used to support the MSDE's funding proposal for *Connections Beyond Sight and Sound*, the Maryland and DC Deaf-Blind Project. The Project has enabled the provision of technical assistance and training to professional staff, and the families of children with Deaf-Blindness. Since 1990, the number of children reported on the census has increased from sixty-three (63) to one hundred sixty three (193). It is important that all children from birth through age 21 who have both a vision and hearing impairment are identified on the census.

Children should be included on the census even if they are not receiving services in the areas of hearing and vision on their Individual Education Plan (IEP) or if the student is listed under a different category on the birth through age 21 annual Child Count.

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The federal definition of “deaf-blind” is:

“A child who has both auditory and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational problems that he/she cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with hearing impairments, visual impairments, or severe disabilities without supplemental assistance for these dual sensory impairments”.

We know that there are some students who may not be able to be assessed with formal vision and hearing tests. If, in your professional opinion, a student appears to be functioning as if he/she has hearing and vision challenges, it is appropriate for you to include them in this year’s census.

Also consider the following additional criteria when determining if the student should be included in the census; that is, include students who:

- have hearing and vision impairments as demonstrated by accurate vision and hearing tests;
- have vision impairment and diagnosed moderate to severe unilateral hearing impairment (loss of 50dB or greater);
- have hearing and vision impairments of a mild-to-severe degree and additional disabilities;
- have either a hearing impairment or a vision impairment, and demonstrate inconsistent or inconclusive responses in an assessment of the other sensory area;
- have multiple disabilities and demonstrate inconclusive responses in both sensory areas during formal evaluation and/or in educational settings;
- have either a hearing impairment or vision impairment and have a degenerative disease or pathology that affects the acuity of the other sensory area, e.g. Usher Syndrome; or,
- have been diagnosed as having a condition that impacts both hearing and vision such as CHARGE Syndrome.

In addition, children birth through age two who are experiencing developmental delays in vision and hearing are also eligible to be included in the census.

In anticipation of your concern about whether disclosure of the information requested, without parental consent, would violate the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), please be assured that the information requested is for the purposes outlined in 34 CFR 99.31 (ca) (6) and shall be utilized and disposed of as provided therein. Reg. 99.31 (*Prior Consent for Disclosure NOT Required*) provides as follows:

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(a) An educational agency or institution may disclose personally identifiable information from education records of a student without the written consent of the parent of the student or the eligible student if the disclosure is:

*(6) To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, educational agencies or institutions for the purpose of developing, validating, or administering predictive tests, administering student aid programs, and improving instruction...
[T]he terms (sic) "organizations" includes, but is not limited to, Federal, State, and local agencies, and independent organizations...*

The census information will assist in timely decision-making that benefits all Maryland students with Deaf-Blindness. It will also ensure that resources intended for children with Deaf-Blindness are used appropriately. Included with this memorandum are:

- *Census Reporting Form: 2016-2017 Registration of Students with Deaf-Blindness*: Must be completed for each new student identified as Deaf-Blind (reproduce as needed);
- *List of Students Previously Reported*: (Copy of 2015-2016 Deaf-Blind Census Report from your agency);
- *Instructions*: Maryland National Child Count of Students With Deaf-Blindness, formerly the Census (Attachment 1)
- *Deaf-Blind Census*: Definitions (Attachment 2)
- *2016-2017 Registration of Students with Deaf-Blindness*: Report Form: No Students with Deaf-Blindness (Attachment 3)

You are encouraged to consult with your local vision program specialist when completing the *Census Reporting Form: 2016-2017 Registration of Students with Deaf-Blindness* and the *2015-2016 Registration of Students with Deaf-Blindness* Report Form: No Students with Deaf-Blindness (Attachment 3). Please return the completed Census Reporting Form, and Attachment 3, if applicable, by **February 22, 2017** to:

Donna Riccobono,
Project Director
Connections Beyond Sight and Sound
University of Maryland
Department of Special Education
3214 Benjamin Building
College Park, MD 20742

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Thank you in advance for your cooperation and assistance with this very important task. If you have any questions, please call Donna Riccobono (301-405-0482), Project Director, *Connections Beyond Sight and Sound*, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland.

MEF/DJR/MH

Attachments

cc: Local Superintendents of Schools
Maryland State Steering Committee for Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Students
Maryland State Steering Committee for Programs of the Visually Impaired
Branch Chiefs/Section Chiefs
Donna Riccobono, *Connections Beyond Sight and Sound*
Marny Helfrich, MSDE