***Parent Shared Advocacy for a***

***Deaf Blind School Age Child***

This is a Parent shared summary of advocacy, based on experience; for a school aged deaf-blind loved one.   Everybody can make it their own and of course highlight what you identify you, or any other Parent you are sharing this with, is ready to address.

This is likely too much information to be absorbed in one sitting, so take it in steps and read over it at different intervals in time.

If you are sharing this with another Parent, please ensure you allow the parent time to talk and share their story too :-)

Basic 5 step list to share with parents is:

1. TSBVI

    - Outreach

       (Serve differing ages, can visit home at parent request and school with

School invites, and they host trainings)

    -Their website has a wealth of knowledge

       (The Intervener college program in Canada uses a lot of info our Outreach

Team put together, because they are so AWESOME :-)

    -Edgenie Bellah is the Family support contact. You can contact her at bellahe@tsbvi.edu and 512.206.9423

2) DARS/DBS

    - They host trainings and parent support meetings in local areas

    - They can attend ARDs - helpful because they can listen in without being emotionally distracted

    - They lead into the adult DB services in the future, so it is good to get to know them

**3) Call to get on the Interest Lists for the WAIVERS: 1-877-438-5658**

    - This provides funding for services and good pay for trained Interveners outside the school system.

    - The wait time can be over 10 years - so call ASAP!

4) DBMAT

 - Annual Camp, all about us, planning more local socials, the committees,

    we are for all ages, Intervener Scholarships & an Annual Golf Tournament

5) About the school system

    - ARDs (what they are and who can attend, they will often out number you - don't be intimidated)

    - IEP's (I have not gotten to this level detail with a new parent, but have covered

      with a parent about to have an ARD.  I often recommend the TSBVI IEP

 Indicators:

        <http://www.tsbvi.edu/attachments/1800_IEP_Indicators.pdf>

    - It is good to know the tiered system

        a) Texas Education Agency (TEA) - Brent Pitt is over Special Ed

        b) Texas has 20 Regions - <http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Special_Education/Programs_and_Services/Sensory_Impairments/Sensory_Impairments>

    - Each Region hosts trainings (sometimes they let Parents attend trainings that are

 for educators)

    - Has assigned a person to be a Deafblind Specialist (make a positive contact)

        c) Each ISD Is assigned to a Region

        d) Each ISD has a Board and a Superintendent

    - Where possible attend some board meetings and get to know the members,

          stay and chat afterwards, when you are comfortable enough :-)

        e) Special Education Department - Director and Administrators

        f) School Principals

        g) Teacher

        h) Intervener

        i) All the various Itinerants (AI, VI, O&M, Speech, OT, PT, etc...)

With regard to the school system: This hierarchy is all intended to get to know these people (before anything has gone "bad") so they know you and your family exist in the area, that you are a level headed and positive/friendly person.  Keep in mind they have all taken these roles because they care about children!  Express your gratitude for what they do for the system and all the kids in it :-)  (Life is a give and take...we/our kids may be on the receiving end a lot, so when and where possible offer to give your time or talent back :-)

As far as advocating for an intervener, my new "spiel" is likely to be like this:

1) Review the National Deafblind Intervener Initiative (NDBII) parent packet (available to be printed off [www.intervener.org](http://www.intervener.org) website or ordered in a colorful pamphlet too)

2) Print off the TSBVI website info about an Intervener and highlight or underline the parts that seem to apply to your child, all of which led you to believe your child would benefit from an Intervener. TSBVI even has a checklist that can be used to determine if an Intervener is needed!  (Much of the terminology school administrators follow and respect the use of it well - I've seen this with regard to a number of Outreach published things.)

 I personally liked the coverage of info on this link (as it was informative about the "why" perspective in more of a lay man's terminology):

    <http://www.tsbvi.edu/deaf-blind-project/1886-interveners-for-students-with-deafblindness-in-texas#what>

3) Share the marked up info with the Education Team members to ask for them to read and give you feedback as to if they think that would benefit your child.  The Goal is to find good info that is so compelling that anyone would say "of course" your child would benefit from that (if $ was not an issue - which they can never say!).

4) Share with them the definition of Intervener found on TEA's website - which validates that the State Education Agency recognizes its existence:

<http://tea.texas.gov/Curriculum_and_Instructional_Programs/Special_Education/Programs_and_Services/Sensory_Impairments/Sensory_Impairments>

 5) Reach their minds through their hearts - implore them to give your child the chance to start with a solid education foundation, like is so well established already for all the other children!  We can all learn together and make use of the Intervener resources available (i.e. Outreach training and Intervener training on-line)!

As all of you know there is so much more to be shared :-)

Keep it positive, we can all get through for our loved ones and with supporting each other!