1.A. What is Deaf-Blindness?

The Washington state educational definition of “deaf-blind” reads:

“Deaf-Blindness means concomitant hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education programs solely for students with deafness or students with blindness, and adversely affect a student’s educational performance.”

Functionally, any child or youth aged 3 to 21 with both an educationally significant hearing loss and visual impairment (combined hearing and vision loss) qualifies for supports from Washington Sensory Disability Service’s Deaf-Blind Project. A child aged birth to three with suspected hearing loss and visual impairment qualifies for supports.

Overview of Deaf-Blindness
- Describes a variety of combinations of vision and hearing levels
- Approximately 10,000 children in the U.S. (birth to 21 years old)
- Most have some residual vision and hearing
- At least 90% have additional disabilities
- Greatly impacts relationships, movement, communication and learning

Talking about Deaf-Blindness: Always Put the Child First!
- Child with combined vision impairment and hearing levels
- Child with deaf-blindness
- Child who is deaf-blind
- Child with dual sensory loss/losses
- Child with functional vision & hearing challenges
- Child with deaf-blind intervention needs

Identifying Young Children with Combined Vision and Hearing Loss
- Who are these little ones?
- How do we find them?
  - Know the risk factors
  - Review of medical records
  - Information from parents and caregivers
  - Observation & Screening
  - Follow-up evaluations
- Whose job is it to identify them?