Definition of Deaf-Blindness under IDEA
Deaf-Blindness disability means concomitant [simultaneous] hearing and visual impairments, the combination of which causes such severe communication and other developmental and educational needs that they cannot be accommodated in special education pro-
grams solely for children with deafness or children with
blindness. 34 CFR 300.8(c)(2)

INCIDENCE
Approximately over 10,000 children between the ages
from birth through 22 years have been classified as
deaf-blind in the United States.
About 50 percent of people in the deaf-blind commu-
nity have Usher Syndrome. This is a genetic condition
where a person is born deaf or hard of hearing, or with
normal hearing, and loses his or her vision later on in
life from retinitis pigmentosa (RP).

POSSIBLE CAUSES

Syndromes
• Down
• Trisomy 13
• Usher

Post-natal Causes
• Asphyxia
• Encephalitis
• Head injury/trauma
• Meningitis
• Stroke

Multiple Congenital Anomalies
• CHARGE Syndrome
• Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS)
• Hydrocephaly
• Maternal drug abuse
• Microcephaly

Prematurity

Congenital Prenatal Dysfunction
• AIDS
• Herpes
• Rubella
• Syphilis
• Toxoplasmosis

TEACHING TIPS/INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES
Educators who work with individuals who are deaf-blind
have a unique challenge to ensure that the person
has access to the world beyond the limitations of their
reach. The most important challenge for teachers (as
well as parents and caregivers) is to meaningfully com-
municate. Some basic guidelines for communication
include:

Individuals who are deaf-blind will often need touch
in order for them to be sure that their partner shares
their focus of attention. Exploring objects should be
done in a “nondirective” way, allowing the individual
who is deaf-blind to have control. The individual may
have very slow response times. Therefore, the teacher
should allow time for the student to respond.
Symbolic communication can be utilized by individu-
als who are deaf-blind. The principal communication
systems include:

• Touch cues
• Object symbols
• Sign language
• Gestures
• Picture symbols
• Fingerspelling
• Signed English
• Braille
• American Sign Language
• Lip-reading
• Pidgin Signed English
• Tadoma (method of speech reading)
• Large print

This information developed from the following resources:
• American Association of the Deaf-Blind (AADB)
  www.aadb.org
• Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-Blind Youth and Adults (HKNC)
  www.hknc.org
• National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB)
  www.nationaldb.org
• National Family Association for Deaf-Blind (NFADB)
  www.nfadb.org
• Training and Educational Resources Program Perkins School for the Blink
  www.perkins.org