

Summary National SSP Survey on Curriculum & Training

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National Federation of the Blind's DeafBlind Division Business Meeting
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National SSP Survey on Curriculum & Training

- Support Service Provider - SSP
- Survey developed by the National SSP Development Alliance (formerly known as the National SSP Task Force)
- Survey circulated February – April 2017
 - Determine standards for SSP services
 - Better define
 - Role of the SSP
 - Training necessary to be a qualified SSP

National SSP Task Force

- Started Fall 2015 by Ryan Bondroff (Seattle)
- Goals
 - Develop a national curriculum and certification process for SSPs
 - Develop a term to replace “Support Service Provider”
 - More empowering term
 - Stronger awareness to agencies & legislatures

The National SSP Task Force officially folded in 2016, but a small group of the original members continued the work of the original Task Force with a new name: the National SSP Development Alliance.

Helen Keller National Center Biannual Survey of SSP Programs

- Most recent 2016
- 29 states and District of Columbia offer a total of 38 SSP programs
- Most programs are regional
- Approximately 1,200 people served by these 38 SSP programs
- HKNC estimates that approximately 2.5 million people live with combined loss of hearing and sight
- Only about 1 in 2,000 DeafBlind people have SSP services

What did we decide to do?

Survey experienced SSPs!

We defined “experienced SSP” as one who has:

- Worked at least 15 volunteer and/or paid assignments
- Worked with at least 5 different people
- Used a variety of language, mobility and communication skills

Development of the Survey

- 9 month process
- Established a team of 13 Peer Reviewers
 - DeafBlind individuals
 - SSPs
 - Interpreters
 - Family members
- Team provided review, creative problem solving, writing, critique, kudos, testing ... not once, not twice, but three times!
- Distribution
 - DeafBlind people, camps, organizations, SSP programs
 - Family, friends
 - Email, social media

Survey Content

- Demographics
- The work of SSPs
- How SSPs are trained
- Core Concepts SSPs believe are necessary
- Challenges on the job

274 SSPs took the survey.

Demographics of SSPs Who Took Survey

- Women = 73%
- Men = 26%

- Older than 30 = 87%
- Younger than 30 = 12%
- Older than 45 = 60%

- Hearing and sighted = 55%
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing = 43%
- DeafBlind = 2%
- Blind = 0%

Longevity of Experience

indicates a longtime commitment to the community

- 43% more than 10 years
- 20% more than 5 years

- 83% report a personal relationship/friendship with someone who is DeafBlind

Languages Used

- American Sign Language = 94%
- Tactile American Sign Language = 85%
- Spoken English = 63%
- Touch communication systems = 56%

States with the Highest SSP Survey Response

- Washington State = 20%
- New Jersey = 12%
- New York, Maryland, Ohio = 10% each

Pockets of SSP Services

- Seattle
- New York – New Jersey metropolitan area
- Washington, DC metropolitan area
- Ohio
- Smaller pockets in Florida, California, Minnesota

Typical SSP Activities

- Shopping
- Errands
- Travel
- Workshops/trainings
- Conferences
- Medical appointments
- Social activities
- Clubs/organizations

SSP Training

- More than 70% of the SSPs said they learned their skills in a variety of ways: from DeafBlind people, from multiple SSP training workshops and programs, and on their own.
- All of them – **every one** – felt that DeafBlind people should be involved in the training.
- The average ranking the SSPs gave their formal training program was 8 out of 10.

Core Concepts Surveyed

- Introduction to DeafBlind
- Role of the SSP
- Providing Visual & Environmental Information
- Communication
- Practicing Skills
- Mobility & Safe Travel
- DeafBlind Culture
- SSP Environments
- The Professional SSP

Where SSPs Wanted More Training

- All forms of communication & communication styles, including specifically touch communications (ProTactile, Haptics)
- Real-life practice
- O&M
- Dealing with challenging situations
- Spending more time with DB mentors
- Setting boundaries
- Taking care of themselves

SSP Comments on Their Work

- Making a positive difference
- Providing access that leads to inclusion in the greater community
- Exposure to a rich culture
- Making great lifelong friends
- Knowing that because they offered their time, another person can exercise their rights as an independent, self-empowered individual

Are SSPs interested in a national certification?

90% said

YES

Next Steps

- Finish compiling the survey data
- Crosstrain interpreters and interveners as SSPs
- Survey DeafBlind people
 - Role of the SSP
 - Expectations of SSP services
 - Training SSPs
- Build the National SSP Database
 - To use the database, email: NSSPCert@gmail.com