DeafBlindness Leader Training

Created as part of "Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities" Gold Award Project by Alyssa Lee
Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama

girl scouts greater los angeles

Consultant:
Jennifer Oldenburg
Alabama DeafBlind Coord.

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Training Guide Contents

This training guide is intended to support troop leaders in providing the best Girl Scout experience for girls of all abilities. If you have a scout in your troop or service unit who is DeafBlind, this training guide will:

- Define DeafBlindness
- Explain difficulties your scout might encounter during meetings, outings, and overnight trips.
- Provide a list of strategies, techniques, or equipment that will assist you in providing the best Girl Scout experience for a scout with DeafBlindness.
- Provide a list of other resources that might be helpful.

Create a Welcoming Girl Scout Troop

Every scout connects with the world in her own way. By focusing on communication, consistency, and meaningful interaction, troop leaders can create an environment where scouts who are DeafBlind feel included, supported, and valued.

What is DeafBlindness?

DeafBlindness is a condition that involves a combination of vision and hearing loss. The levels of hearing and vision loss can vary widely from person to person.

A scout who is DeafBlind may not be completely deaf or completely blind but may have limited ability in both areas, which together can significantly impact communication and access to information.

Some scouts may use a variety of communication methods, including sign language (visual or tactile), object cues, gestures, communication devices, or support from an intervener (a trained person who helps provide access to communication and the environment).





Impacts of DeafBlindness

DeafBlindness can affect participation in troop meetings, activities, outings, and overnight trips in a variety of ways.

A scout who is DeafBlind may:

- Have difficulty accessing spoken or visual information without support
- Need additional time and assistance to understand communication and surroundings
- Rely on touch, routines, or consistent cues to understand what is happening
- Experience challenges with navigating unfamiliar environments
- Need support building connections and interacting with peers

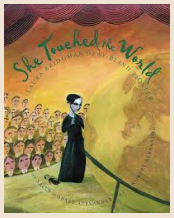
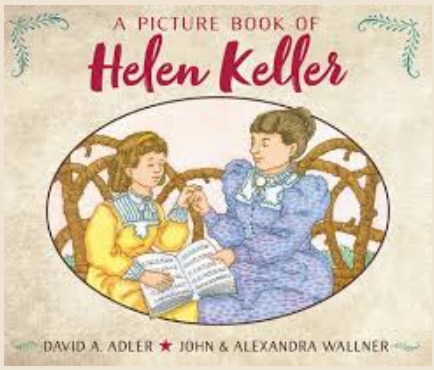
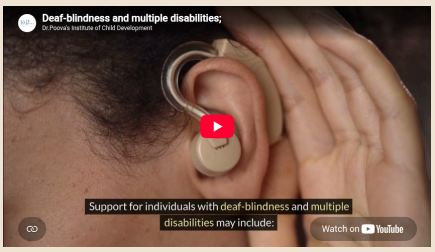
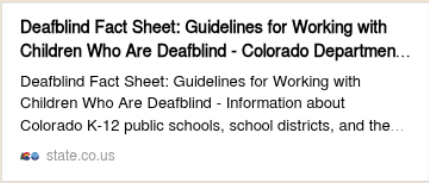
During group settings or outings, fast-paced communication, changes in environment, and unfamiliar routines may be especially challenging. With appropriate supports, consistency, and patience, scouts who are DeafBlind can fully participate and engage in meaningful experiences.

How to Help Mitigate Challenges Realated to DeafBlindness

In order to provide a scout who is DeafBlind equal access to being a Girl Scout, here are some helpful strategies:

1. **Communicate with the scout and her family (and support team)** to understand her specific communication methods, needs, and supports.
2. **Use consistent communication methods**, such as tactile signs, object cues, gestures, or assistive communication devices as appropriate.
3. **Allow extra time for communication and processing**, ensuring the scout has time to receive and respond.
4. **Provide hands-on experiences** so the scout can explore and understand activities through touch and direct interaction.
5. **Maintain consistent routines and clear expectations** to help build understanding and comfort.
6. **Support safe navigation of environments**, including guiding when appropriate and describing surroundings in accessible ways.
7. **Encourage peer interaction and inclusion**, helping other scouts learn how to communicate and engage respectfully.

Additional Resources for Leading Scouts with DeafBlindness

Books	Video Links	Websites
She Touched the World: Laura Bridgman, DeafBlind Pioneer by Robert Alexander  (Older Children's book- 10 years +)	 A look Inside a DeafBlind Classroom (Children's Resource)	 Include Me! (Adult Resource)
A Picture book of Helen Keller by David Adler  (Children's Book)	 DeafBlindness (Adult resource)	 DeafBlind Fact Sheet (Adult Resource)

Conclusion

The Girl Scout experience should be accessible for girls of all abilities. If you need additional support to help with inclusion, please contact your local service unit or council.



Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities

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