NCDB ANNUAL SURVEY

Findings from the March 2020 Annual Survey

National Center on Deaf-Blindness

"NCDB has been a tremendous support and partner. Well done on the new website - ease of navigation and access to resources has significantly been enhanced. Thank you!"

Executive Summary

In all, 82 professionals responded to the National Center on Deaf-Blindness evaluation survey about the time period of March 2019 – February 2020. The following major strengths of NCDB were found.

- Relationships between NCDB staff and state Deaf-Blind project staff are strong. Respondents are appreciative of the collaboration and the helpfulness of NCDB staff, and no problems or issues were presented.
- The NCDB website resources are comprehensive, useful, relevant, and informative. Several respondents commented about the website's accessibility, organization of materials and resources, the usefulness of state-specific information, and up-to-date information.
- Information received from NCDB staff is timely, relevant, useful, and of high quality. Respondents praised specific NCDB staff and NCDB in general, and noted their helpfulness, responsiveness, and timeliness.
- Consultations with NCDB are timely, relevant, high quality, and useful for work with educators, families, and systems change.
- Most use the Open Hands, Open Access modules, which they most often use to support child-specific technical assistance, for presentations/trainings, and to support universal TA activities.
- Most have read the *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* resource, which they are most likely to use to support families and to support universal TA.

Some challenges became apparent, including:
- Many Deaf-Blind project staff did not participate in the annual survey.
- The previous, now updated, NCDB website was not well-organized.
- The differences between informal information-sharing, information services, and consultations were unclear for many respondents.
- Two resources—Open Hands Open Access module and the *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* have limited usefulness for some purposes, such as for course work and on-line learning.

While the vast majority of respondents offered no suggestions for improvement, a few made the following recommendations.
- More training on the Communication Matrix.
- Consider offering more products.
- Consider ways to incentivize professional development of interveners.

Additional study would allow greater understanding of the impact of NCDB services and products on state projects and on children who are deafblind.
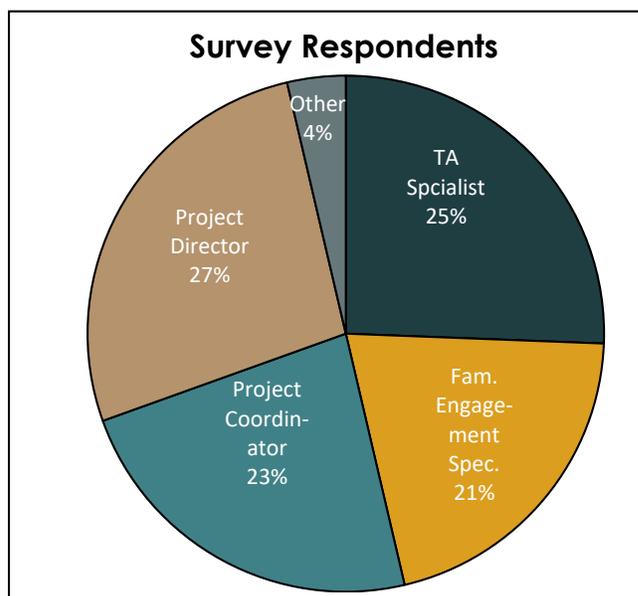
NCDB Annual Survey Results

In March 2020, an email was sent from the National Center on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) to state Deaf-Blind project staff throughout the country, inviting them to participate in an evaluation survey. The email included a link to the online survey through Survey Gizmo. The survey contained 13 questions, of which six questions gave participants an opportunity to answer open-ended questions about their experiences and needs. The goal of the survey was to measure the overall quality, relevance, and usefulness of NCDB products and services during the evaluation time period of March 1, 2019 - February 29, 2020. The following report summarizes the findings and highlights major strengths and challenges facing the specialists, coordinators, directors, and Board members who are involved in Improving services, results, and quality of life for children who are deaf-blind.

Respondents

A total of 82 professionals in state Deaf-Blind projects participated in the survey. The respondents include Educational Consultants/Technical Assistance specialists (TA), Family Engagement specialists, Project coordinators, and Project Directors, with each role representing about one-fourth of the respondents. Other roles include Board members and program evaluators.

	N	Percent
Educational Consultant/ Technical Assistance Specialist	21	25%
Family Engagement Specialist	17	21%
Project Coordinator	19	23%
Project Director	22	27%
Other	3	4%
TOTAL	82	100%

Survey Respondents

- Other 4%
- TA Spcialist 25%
- Fam. Engagement Spec. 21%
- Project Coordinator 23%
- Project Director 27%

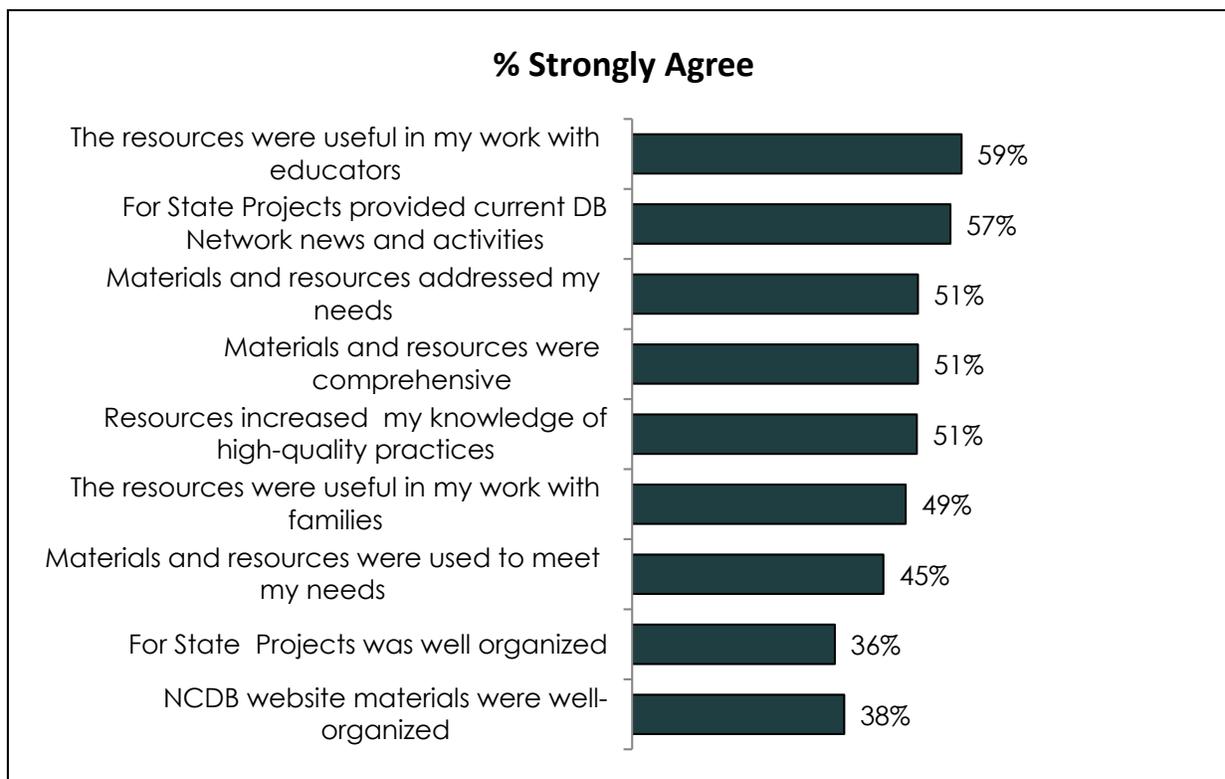## National Center on Deaf-Blindness Website

All respondents (100%) accessed the National Center on Deaf-Blindness website https://www.nationaldb.org during March 2019 – Feb. 2020 and most (95%) accessed the "For State Projects" (also called the State Project Portal) section. Excluding the Not Applicable responses, at least 94% agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

- Materials and resources were well organized on the NCDB website.

- Materials and resources were comprehensive.

- Materials and resources addressed my needs.

- The resources were useful in my work with families.

- The resources were useful in my work with educators.

- Materials and resources were used to meet my needs.

- The "For State Projects" (also called the State Project Portal) section provided content to stay up to date with Deaf-Blind Network news and activities.

- The "For State Projects" (also called the State Project Portal) section was well organized.

- The materials and resources increased my knowledge of high-quality practices.

Further, over half of the respondents strongly agreed that resources were useful to educators, that the "For State Projects" section provided up-to-date news and activities, that materials and resources were comprehensive and addressed the respondents' needs, and that resources increased their knowledge about high-quality practices. In comparison to Family Engagement Specialists, other professionals were significantly more likely ($p < .03$) to strongly agree with statements that the NCDB website *resources were useful in my work with educators* and *the materials and resources increased my knowledge of high-quality practices.*

% Strongly Agree

Category	%
The resources were useful in my work with educators	59%
For State Projects provided current DB Network news and activities	57%
Materials and resources addressed my needs	51%
Materials and resources were comprehensive	51%
Resources increased my knowledge of high-quality practices	51%
The resources were useful in my work with families	49%
Materials and resources were used to meet my needs	45%
For State Projects was well organized	36%
NCDB website materials were well-organized	38%

In addition, several respondents identified features of the website that were particularly helpful—its accessibility, the organization of materials and resources, the usefulness of state-specific information, and up-to-date information.

> "I feel like the website is up to date, fast at communicating with state projects, and give us all a place to go when we need assistance."

> "The NCDB website has been and continues to be one of the most accessible, comprehensive and useful resources for all of our various TA."

> "The selection of materials in Spanish had been a great asset in working with our constituents. The knowledge base on Deaf Blindness is well organizado within the materials available."

> "NCDB is my go to location for information to share with families and professionals. It saves me a lot of time as a TA provider in identifying up to date resources. I appreciate the PLCs and workgroups that help to inform and develop skills in our work as DB projects. Great job keeping us engaged as a network."

"So much useful information is housed on this site and portal. Comprehensive in breadth and depth. I share lots of these materials in my TA & training activities. So much useful information is housed on this site and portal."

"NCDB is proactive in anticipating state project need and preparing specialized webinars to address those concerns."

During the time that the survey was open, the NCDB website was updated and reorganized. Several respondents that accessed the website in its previous iteration criticized the earlier version of the NCDB website, primarily due to the difficulty in locating some resources and the extensive volume of material. Similarly, 6% disagreed with the statement, "**Materials and resources were well organized on the NCDB website**" and 4% disagreed that "**The For State Projects section was well organized.**"

"Organization of website at times is overwhelming."

"Hard to find specific topics."

"The website is very comprehensive, but it is often difficult to find things."

"There are so many items it is sometimes hard to find items - the search function helps."

A few respondents accessed the revised website and noted the changes. All three respondents who referred to the website changes were very pleased with the changes.

"NCDB has been a tremendous support and partner. Well done on the new website - ease of navigation and access to resources has significantly been enhanced. Thank you!"

"Glad the website received an overhaul. It was challenging to search for information on the old site. I haven't had much of an opportunity to use the new site yet. Fingers crossed."

"[I]like new site better."

PREVIOUS WEBSITE

NEW WEBSITE

NCDB Staff

Six respondents skipped questions about NCDB staff because they had no NCDB staff interactions during March 2019 - February 2020, or they were unaware that their interaction was considered technical assistance. Among the 93% of respondents who interacted with NCDB staff, nearly all agreed, and most strongly agreed, with the following statements:

- The information I received from NCDB staff was timely.

- The information I received from NCDB staff was relevant.

- The information I received from NCDB staff proved useful.

- The information I received from NCDB staff was high quality.

As shown in the following chart, at least two-thirds of the respondents strongly agreed with these statements, and 2% or fewer disagreed. Ratings did not differ significantly based on role.

Information Received from NCDB Staff

	Timely	Relevant	Useful	High Quality
Strongly Agree	68%	72%	74%	72%
Agree	29%	26%	24%	26%
Disagree/ Strongly Disagree	2%	1%	2%	2%

Survey respondents were also asked to share any additional comments to be considered in the evaluation of the information services provided by NCDB staff. The comments most frequently written identified specific staff, including:

"I am a participant on a monthly community call for Transition. [Technical Assistance staff] has consistently addressed questions/technical difficulties I have encountered in a thoughtful, timely manner."

"Appreciate all of the Staff, but as an FEC, especially [Technical Assistance staff] and {Information Services and Technology staff]."

"In particular, I'd like to commend [Technical Assistance staff] for all the support and information they provided to me over the past year via Family Engagement and Partnerships with Families Group and the resources they provide to share with the families I support."

"[Technical Assistance staff] does a phenomenal job! Her zest and positivity are contagious and engaging! She is extremely supportive and responsive and is able to pivot gracefully and competently to each need as it arises."

"Outstanding collaborative team! I worked most closely with [Technical Assistance staff] on 2 different workgroups. They connected us to excellent presenters and resources and kept us focused. Appreciate how they took our input to develop materials that can be shared across the network. Kudos!"

Others complimented NCDB staff as a whole:

"NCDB staff are stellar, hardworking people. Thank you so much for your help this year and ongoing!"

"The NCDB staff are very knowledgeable and informed. All of them are willing to provide resources and support who needed or just to brainstorm. I also appreciate that they seem to accept and appreciate feedback from SDBP staff about the information they provide."

"The NCDB staff are highly knowledgeable, easy to work with, and very responsive."

"It has been a great pleasure collaborating with all NCDB staff and participating in PLCs."

Staff were noted for their helpfulness.

"If they didn't know they helped me find answers and supports."

"NCDB staff help me do my job at the state level, and meet the needs of the families and professionals I serve."

"The help on the continuation application and on our OHOA module use has been excellent!"

Others appreciated the responsiveness and timeliness of the services NCDB staff provided. Comments include:

"I received help from NCDB staff for locating a resource which I wasn't able to locate anywhere else on the web but was previously used in a PowerPoint for a presentation was related to types of technical assistance. The service was quick and efficient."

"I reached out to NCDB staff for assistance to 'set up' an account for an OHOA participant in a format that enabled me to provide feedback on her assignments. My request for help was responded to quickly and the guidance was much appreciated!"

Words most commonly used to describe the information services provided by NCDB staff are the following. None of the respondents noted any problems.

1. Help/helped
2. Support
3. Appreciate
4. Resources
5. Information
6. Responsive
7. Knowledgeable
8. Timely
9. Excellent/great
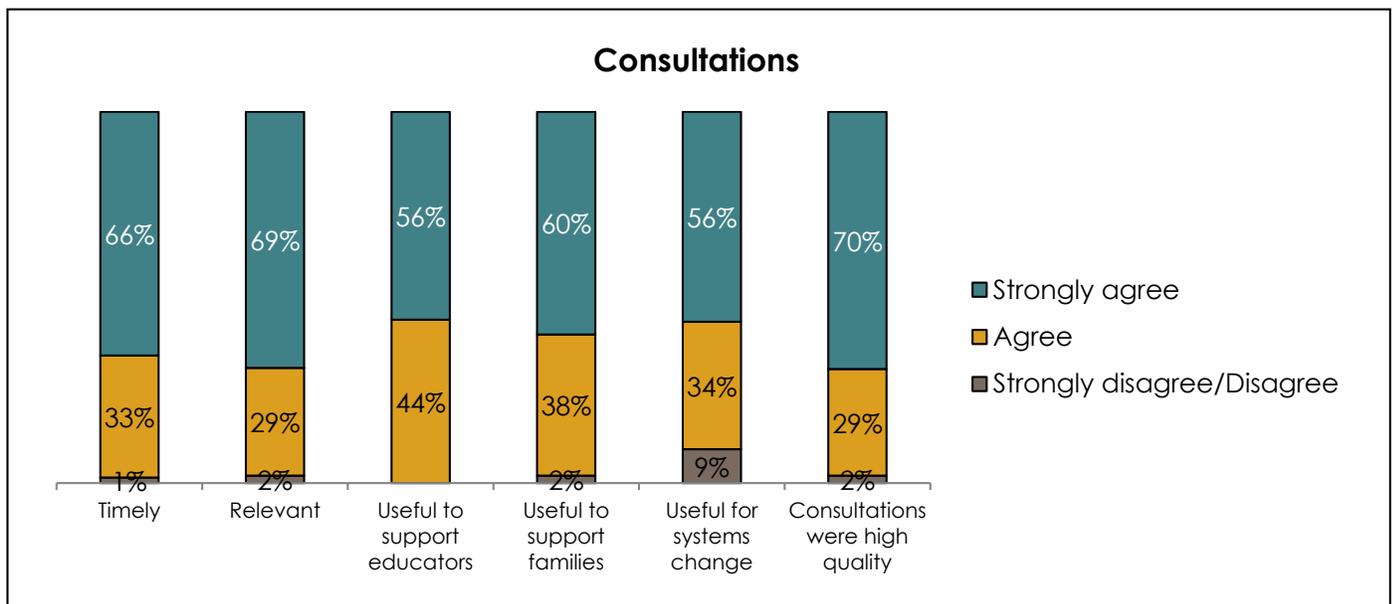10. Collaborating
11. Informed

Consultations

Fourteen respondents skipped questions about consultations because they had no consultative interactions with NCDB staff during March 2019 - February 2020, or they had misunderstood the reference to "consultation." Among the 83% of respondents who consulted with NCDB staff, nearly all agreed, and most strongly agreed, with the following statements:

- Overall, the responses I received from NCDB staff were timely.

- Overall, the consultations I received from NCDB staff were relevant to my work.

- Overall, the consultations I received from NCDB staff proved useful in my work to support educators.

- Overall, the consultations I received from NCDB staff proved useful in my work to support families.

- Overall, the consultations I received from NCDB staff proved useful in my work in systems change.

- Overall, the consultations I received from NCDB staff were high quality.

As shown in the following chart, at least two-thirds of the respondents strongly agreed with these statements, and 2% or fewer disagreed.

Project Coordinators were slightly more likely to have consultations with NCDB staff than did other professionals, and they were slightly more likely to rate the usefulness, timeliness, and quality of consultations highly.

Comments about NCDB Technical Assistance Services

Survey respondents were also asked to share any additional comments, experiences, outcomes, or needs that to be considered in the evaluation of the consultation services provided by NCDB staff. The comments most frequently written identified specific staff, including:

"[Technical Assistance staff] have been very helpful in providing guidance on how our project can use the resources from NCDB to facilitate some of our network initiatives."

"Really appreciated [Technical Assistance staff]'s calm and supportive assistance as we worked through preparation and submittal of census data using a new database."

"[Technical Assistance staff] has been very helpful in considering options for designing a new TA model.

"[Technical Assistance staff] and {Information Services and Technology staff] have all been extremely helpful, knowledgeable and professional. I have not had the opportunity to work with other NCDB staff in the last year."

"{Information Services and Technology staff] has been so very helpful and in a very timely manner."

"The guidance from NCDB staff, specially from [Technical Assistance staff] has helped us to achieve our goals, and to better serve our students and their families."

"[Technical Assistance staff] is AWESOME and VERY EFFECTIVE!!!"

Others offered gratitude to the staff as a whole:

"Knowledgeable, professional, friendly and highly responsive."

"As I stated, the NCDB staff are very knowledgeable and informed. All of them are willing to provide support right away and brainstorm solutions to challenges. I think the way they have set up work groups to gain knowledge of SDBP needs and resources has been organized and helpful in sharing the wealth from all of the projects. I also appreciate that they seem to accept and appreciate feedback from SDBP staff about the information they provide."

In fact, all comments were positive and demonstrate a strong allegiance and collaboration between state projects and NCDB staff. For example:

"Excellent! You make my job easier!"

"NCDB consultation has helped our project advance in our outcomes."

"The assistance I have received has been invaluable. I would be lost without NCDB."

"The support my state project is receiving is incredible. I love the intensive TA we are getting for developing our TA system. I also love the PLCs that are led by NCDB staff."

Words most commonly used to describe the consultation services provided by NCDB staff are the following, nearly identical to words used to describe information services. None of the respondents noted any problems.

1. Helpful
2. Knowledgeable
3. TA
4. Support
5. Resources
6. Appreciate
7. Professional
8. Guidance
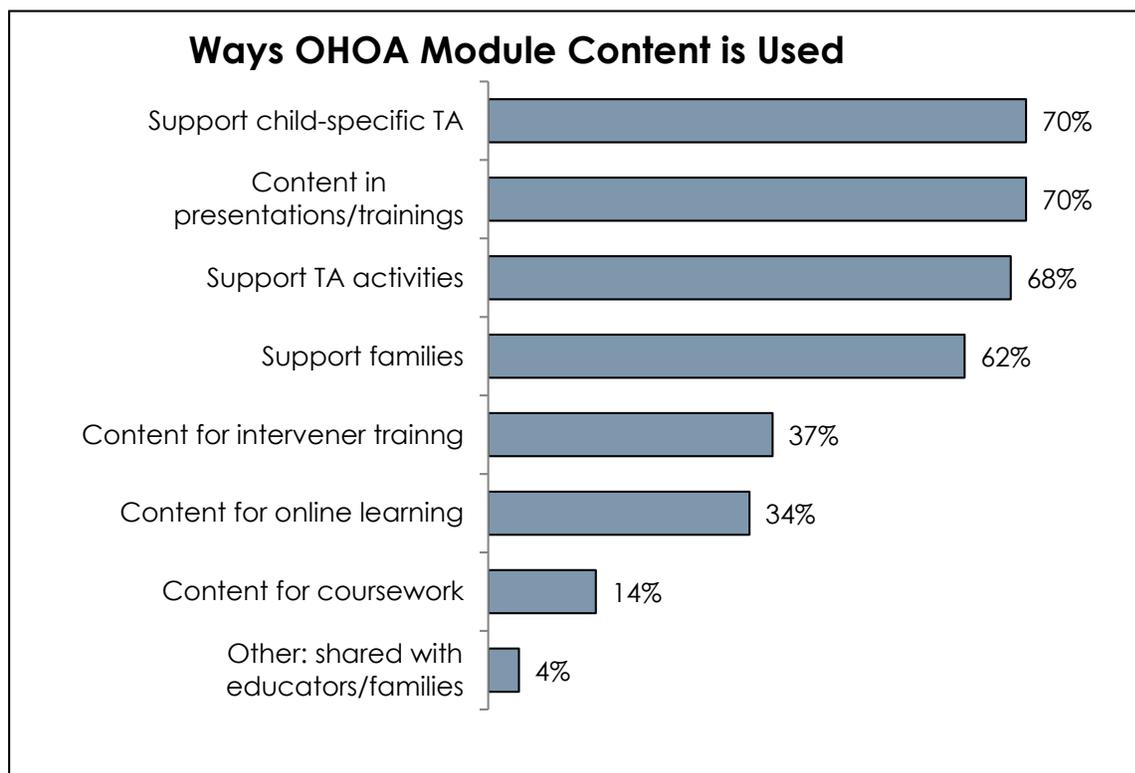9. Informed
10. Brainstorm solutions

One respondent wrote a question, though, that may be reflective of what many survey participants wondered:

"I am not sure what consultations are - what makes that different than other services?"

Open Hands Open Access **Module**

The Open Hands, Open Access (OHOA) Module is a no-cost, open-access module geared primarily to training interveners and para-professionals. In response to the survey question "In what ways have you used the Open Hands, Open Access (OHOA) Module content that is publicly available on the NCDB website between March 1, 2019 and Feb 29, 2020?", 87% of respondents identified at least one way they used OHOA content and many (49%) identified 3 – 5 different ways of using the content. Only 11 respondents (13%), mostly Project Directors, have not used the module.

As shown in the following chart, those who use OHOA content typically use it to support child-specific technical assistance, for presentations/trainings, and to support universal TA activities (e.g., shared as a resource in a newsletter).

Ways OHOA Module Content is Used

Category	Percentage
Support child-specific TA	70%
Content in presentations/trainings	70%
Support TA activities	68%
Support families	62%
Content for intervener trainng	37%
Content for online learning	34%
Content for coursework	14%
Other: shared with educators/families	4%

While only 14% use the module for credit-bearing coursework, over one-third use the module for online training and professional development using a learning management system (e g , Blackboard, Google Classroom), either in general or to target interveners.

Project Coordinators are more likely than respondents in other roles to use the OHOA for multiple purposes. Project Coordinators are also more likely to use the OHOA module content for intervener training, for professional development using a learning management system, and for presentations and trainings.

Family Engagement Specialists, not surprisingly, are most likely to use the *Open Hands Open Access* Modules to support families. Seventy-one percent of Family Engagement Specialists use OHOA modules to support families, in contrast to about half (49%) of other professionals.

Praise about the *Open Hands Open Access* Modules

In response to an open-ended question about the Open Hands Open Access modules, respondents wrote that they enjoy the module content, that the module is a valuable resource, and they appreciate that it is available online, allowing families and interveners access. Some comments include:

> *"I find it's a great resource for our families to learn more about Interveners and for the support staff of people who are deaf-blind."*

> *"I have only accolades to share on the OHOA modules. It's great that the modules have been opened to the public. This enables professionals, families, and individuals who work with children with sensory loss and significant disabilities to access material that will support their work. The organization of the modules, (the video clips and the assignments), provides opportunities for reflection and an understanding of the modifications and teaching strategies available to support learning."*

> *"I love that they are available online! They are GREAT resources!"*

> *"OHOA modules are a gold mine. I've had a lot of success using these materials for PD and training. The web-based version is easy to use and share. So glad all modules are now available in Spanish."*

"The modules are well written and I use them often in my work."

"The OHOA modules are critical to my work with interveners!"

"The OHOA Modules, which we use in Moodle to host in our state, continue to increase the ability of our small team to provide high-quality training statewide, including to rural districts and those with limited travel funds."

"The trimmed down version is more user friendly."

"After the training given to EI specialists, using OHOA Modules, early identification of young children with DB has increased. We are receiving more referrals from EHS/HS and from Part C."

Concerns about the *Open Hands Open Access* Modules

Despite the open access, some respondents had concerns about the ability of projects to utilize the modules for professional development.

"Continue it as technical assistance and wonderful training but still feel it's a challenge to create qualified interveners from this set up. It does create a more qualified professional with skills and strategies though."

"It would be nice to have copies of all of the modules on Moodle and the ability to enter people into the modules myself as a DB Project Coordinator rather than having to request through NCDB."
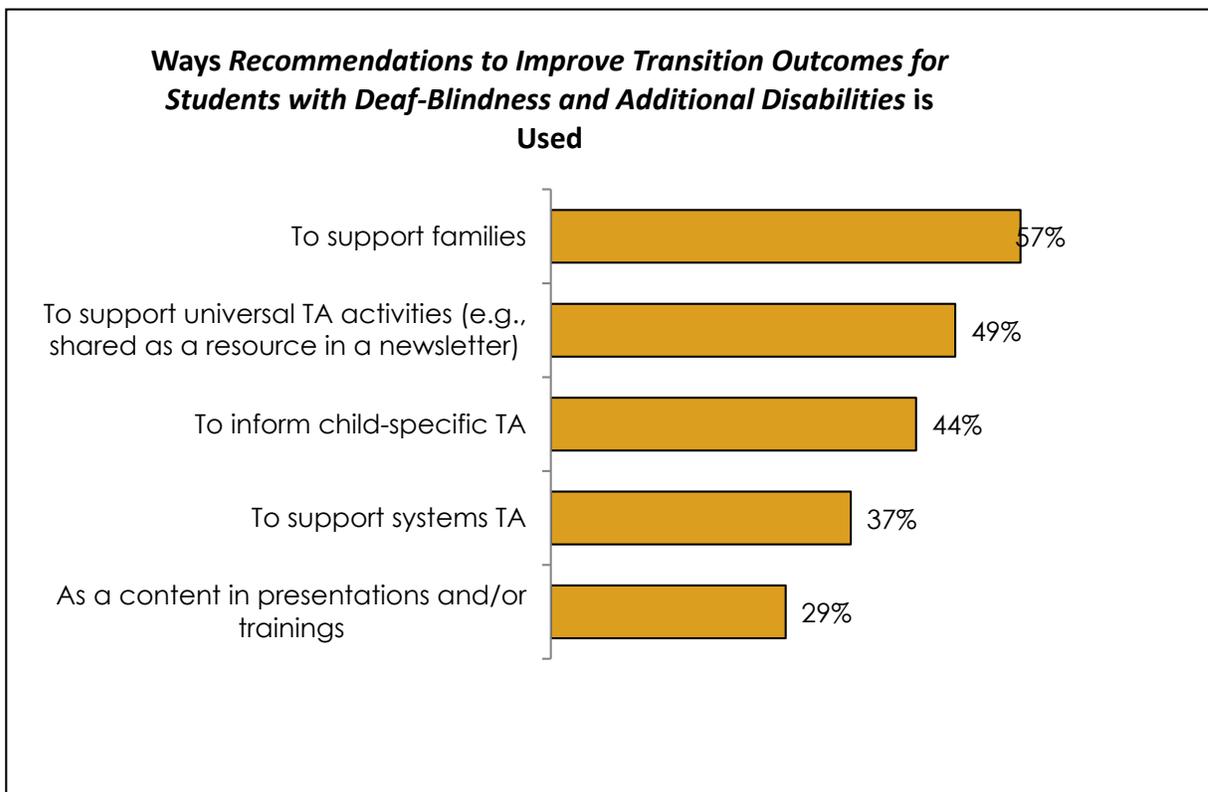
"Love this module, use it often. Would do more with it if not for my state not accepting/supporting Interveners (bec not in IDEA)."

"We have attempted to use the OHOA modules in a variety of TA activities over the years. I have found that it has been difficult to encourage or incentivize people to complete the modules even when we have had a dedicated staff member to facilitate the completion of activities and discussion within the modules."

Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities

Of the 82 respondents, 63 (77%) read the *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* online PDF between March 2019 and Feb. 2020. As shown in the following chart, respondents are most likely to use the *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* resource to support families and to support universal TA activities (e.g., shared as a resource in a newsletter).

While respondents in all roles are about equally likely to use the Transition Outcomes resource, Project Directors are most likely to use the resource in multiple ways, and are more likely to use it to support universal TA and for presentations/trainings.

Ways *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* is Used

Way Used	Percent
To support families	57%
To support universal TA activities (e.g., shared as a resource in a newsletter)	49%
To inform child-specific TA	44%
To support systems TA	37%
As a content in presentations and/or trainings	29%

Respondents also use the *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* for their own children and use the resource with staff to plan activities. None of the

respondents used the *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* in the following ways:

- As content in a for professional development using learning management system (Blackboard, Google Classroom)

- As content in a for intervener training using learning management system (Blackboard, Google Classroom)

- As content in a for credit bearing coursework

Comments about Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities

Comments in response to an open-ended question about *Recommendations to Improve Transition Outcomes for Students with Deaf-Blindness and Additional Disabilities* can be categorized into three themes—1) how they liked the resource; 2) the usefulness of the resource; and 3) recommendations to improve the resource. Comments include the following.

Themes	Some Comments
Respondents like the resource	- *"I particularly liked the READY tool and how our families were asked to field test it for usefulness."* - *"Nice library of resources."*
Usefulness of the resource	- *"Helpful to share with student's teams."* - *"Info helpful for inclusion in family consultation process."* - *"I like the Transition Ready Tool and have used it when providing TA to school teams for students 14 and older. It offers an organized and systematic guide for providing support to transition age students in order to actualize their future visions. It also allows for data collection to compare from year to year the progress that has been made toward the 'future visions'. This year I have also used this tool to support staff who provide services to 2 young adults (over the age of 21) with significant disabilities, in addition to*

	sensory loss, who have moved into residential living situations and who participate in community programs. I belief this tool has helped staff, support teams, the young adult consumers, and families to prioritize goals and to plan steps to achieve the future goals."
A recommend-ation	• *"Plan to use more. Wish there was information on life course materials and person centered transition assessment."*

Summit Planning

The planning committee is considering holding the DB Summit either before or after one of the national conferences. In all, 62 respondents provided non-duplicative responses to a question about preferred timing of the DB Summit. The clear preference and top choice is right before/after the Charge Conference (July 16-19, 2021 in Phoenix). In fact, 18 of the respondents (29%) listed this as their first choice. Converting the choices to weights and factoring the data identifies the following preferences in timing, from most-preferred to least preferred.

1. Charge Conference (July 16-19, 2021 in Phoenix)

2. OSEP Leadership (July 2021 in DC)

3. Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) Convention and Expo (March 3-6, 2021 in Baltimore)

4. Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Conference (Feb 28-Mar 2, 2021 in Cincinnati)

5. Western Region EI Conference (WREIC) (Sept 16-18, 2021 in Salt Lake City)

6. TASH Conference (Dec 3-5, 2020 in Baltimore)

Additional Comments

Twelve responses commented in response to the survey question "**Please share any additional comments, experiences, outcomes, or needs that you would like us to consider in our evaluation of any other products and services provided by NCDB between March 1, 2019 and Feb 29, 2020.**" Of these 12 respondents, seven wrote words of gratitude for the NCDB staff and resources. Other comments referred to needs of respondents and recommendations.   Comments include the following.

Themes	Some Comments
Respondents express appreciation for NCDB staff and resources	• *"I appreciate the products and support NCDB has provided our state projects and the ways they have supported cross-collaboration across state projects."* • *"Staff are up to date and responsive."* • *"I appreciated the state project portal. Though I wasn't extremely active on it, I felt like it was a good way to reach out to other people in the network for guidance and advice."* • *"I just want to say again, thank you for all you do, NCDB! I appreciate all of you and your hard work so much! I couldn't manage my Project without your help!"* • *"I appreciate the resources on the web site and the availability of the staff when I need assistance."* • *"NCDB staff have been responsive and knowledgeable regarding systems change planning, and have offered webinars on relevant topics, including implementation of communication systems for children and youth."*
Respondents have additional needs	• *"Disability employment trends based on impact of COVID-19 in 2020 and beyond."* • *"More training on Communication Matrix, specifically following administration of the CM and generating a report, then what?*

	The customized reports do not make suggestions regarding what type of communication mode may be best. Visual icons? Sign language? Tactile sign? Object calendar system? The CM doesn't seem to be very useful in practical terms of where to go next or what to do for a child's communication mode. Help, please." • *"Wish there were more new products. Know this is being worked on."*
Other recommendations	• *"Best Practices need to be better highlighted and easier to access/provide to constituents and teams."* • *"I would like for NCDB to consider taking the sole lead on PLC's."*

Recommendations

Additional study through targeted interviews with DB project staff would enable NCDB to have greater context and knowledge about how NCDB products and services contribute to project improvements and better outcomes. Additional study would allow greater understanding of the impact of NCDB services and products on state projects and on children who are deafblind.