



Child Count Tips for New State Deaf-Blind Project Staff

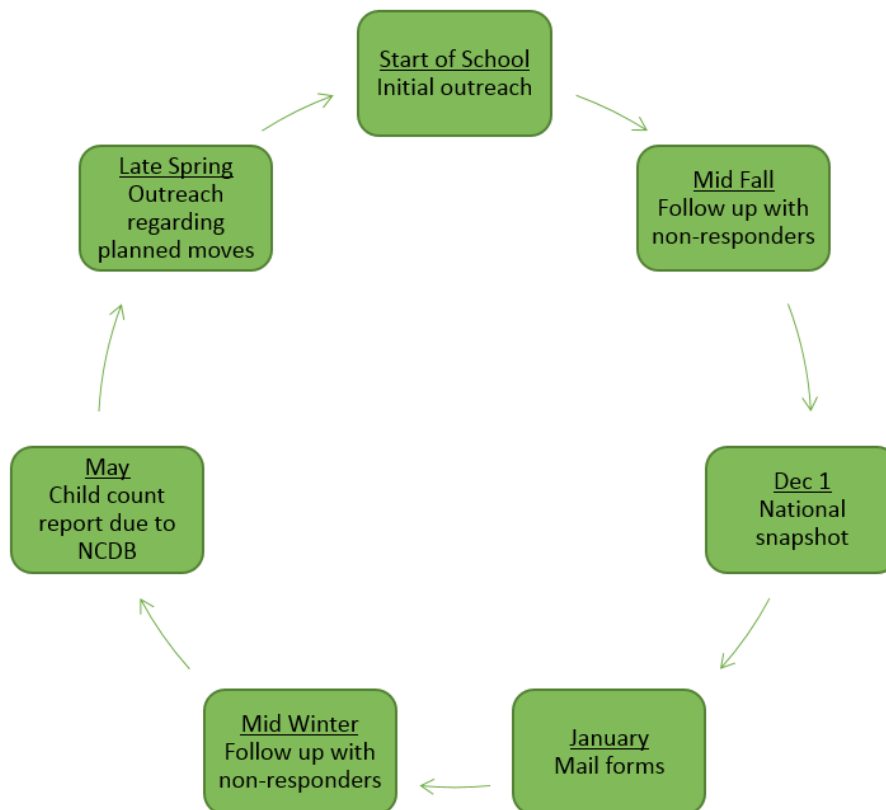
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One of the main administrative tasks for state deaf-blind projects is collecting and maintaining information for the deaf-blind child count in their state(s). This document contains tips and advice on how to do this from current and former state deaf-blind project directors and coordinators.

It's organized according to a typical school-year calendar into activities that projects are likely to engage in at specific times. All state systems are different, so projects need to determine the best methods to gather information within their own states. A potential timeline of activities including the deadline for submission is shown below.

Annual child count outreach activities improve local early intervention and education agency engagement with your project and increase the likelihood that individuals, families, and districts will report children to include on the December 1 count.

Overview of the Process



Throughout the Year

- Be prepared to add and follow up on new referrals at any time. You may want to consider using a short referral form for these contacts ([example form](#)) and then reach out to the same individuals later to complete the full census form. Include children who have a documented single loss (vision *or* hearing) in combination with a suspected loss in the remaining sense. They can be included on the count as “Further testing needed.”
- Provide parents with information about transition from Part C to Part B at least 3 months prior to age three. Include advice about the importance of letting your state project know where their child will be receiving educational services the following year so you can communicate with the new agency/school ([see Resources for Part C to Part B Transitions](#)).

Before the School Year Begins (Summer)

- If you haven't done so already, familiarize yourself with your state's special education eligibility regulations. This is especially important for visual impairments, hearing impairments, and deaf-blindness. The eligibility regulations that school districts operate under will impact which children are likely to be identified as deaf-blind and which have a confirmed loss in one sense and a suspected loss in the second.
- Make sure your current database and forms are up to date, including the addition of new variables and changes in coding for existing variables.
- Review all children on your census to make sure they are still eligible for inclusion. Children should be kept on your census for one year AFTER they exit the school system so exiting information can be shared with NCDB. Beyond that one year you should consider removing them, especially if they have aged out or passed away.
- Familiarize yourself with required informed parental consent procedures in your state and agency as they apply to FERPA and HIPPA rules and exemptions. Prepare to collect parental consent at the time of initial referral and make sure the consent forms cover expected uses ([child count resources](#)).

Beginning of the School Year

- At the beginning of the school year, email the individual listed as the current contact for each child (the person who submitted the form the previous year). Ask them if the student is still in attendance at their school/agency. You will need this information to know where to send child count forms later in the year.
- Include a description of planned TA activities for the year to encourage engagement with your project and increase the likelihood that service providers and families will

report children for the count (because they know the project has something to offer and is not just reaching out to fulfill a reporting requirement).

Mid-Fall

- Follow up with individuals contacted in the previous step who have not yet replied. If needed, contact someone else at the district or agency. Try to make contact before the official child count begins.
- Participate in NCDB Webinars on the Deaf-Blind Child Count or watch the most recent [archived webinar](#) to stay up to date with the latest changes.
- Closely review and download [all instructions](#) and forms from the Child Count Management section of the NCDB website.

December 1

- There are no specific tasks for state projects on this date, but it is included in this outline because of its importance. Each year state departments of education submit data to the U.S. Department of Education for all children receiving special education services. The department includes this data in an Annual Report to Congress on Special Education. Historically, December 1 of each year is the date of this snapshot.
- The deaf-blind child count is designed to supplement the Annual Report and thus December 1 is the date for the deaf-blind child count snapshot as well. This is explained in the [Deaf-Blind Child Count Instructions](#) made available each year.

January

- January is typically when official data collection begins. Mail child count materials to individuals who referred children sometime during the previous year (either at the time of the actual child count or another time). Explore the feasibility of disseminating your forms in conjunction with other state data collection efforts such as APH Quota Registration, Special Education Child Count, etc.
- State projects carry out this dissemination effort in different ways to best meet their needs. Strategies include the following:
 - Ask the State Department of Education to send your child count letter and forms to LEA superintendents
 - Include the [OSEP "Dear Colleague" letter](#) encouraging cooperation in conducting the deaf-blind child count
 - Send the letters and forms to the person who submitted the form the previous year

- If disseminating via regular mail, include a prepaid envelope to increase return rate
- Include a due date
- States interpret confidentiality rules differently and this dictates how information can be disseminated. Some states have an online system, while others can accept submissions by email. Some can only accept forms by regular mail.

Mid-Winter/Early Spring

- Follow up with districts that have not responded.

May

- Child count report due to NCDB. The actual date fluctuates slightly from year to year. Review the [Child Count Management page](#) on the NCDB website for submission requirements.
- Request an extension if you need additional time.

Late Spring/Early Summer

- Follow up with your district contacts to determine whether students or staff are planning moves. This will give you a jumpstart on fall activities by letting you know the placement of students for the next school year.
- Information about personnel moves is also useful. It helps you determine if specific individuals will be worthwhile contacts in the future. You may learn, for example, that it won't be necessary to contact them because they will no longer be associated with a child who is deaf-blind. Alternatively, they may be a potential contact in their new location.



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