NORTH CAROLINA
DeafBlind Project

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DB INTERVENER NEWSLETTER

• JANUARY 2026 •

DOING WITH, NOT FOR: SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE THROUGH SHARED ACTION

Independence is not built overnight—it grows through shared action, trust, and small steps taken together. For individuals who are DeafBlind, the world can sometimes seem unpredictable or out of reach. As Interveners, we bridge that distance not by taking over, but by joining in.

"Doing with" rather than "doing for" is one of the most essential principles of our work. When we move together—hand-under-hand, side-by-side—we empower the learner to act, choose, and discover rather than simply receive. True learning and confidence come when the learner becomes an active partner in their own experience.

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CONNECTIONS

ECU DB Teacher Support Program Blogs

ECU TSP Website

NCDBP Facebook

NCDBP Resources

THE ‘DOING WITH’ PHILOSOPHY

It’s natural to want to help. When a task seems difficult, we often jump in to make it easier. But for a learner who is DeafBlind, the process itself is the learning.

“Doing with” means inviting participation, allowing time, and sharing control. It’s about guiding a learner through the experience, not around it.

For example:

- When helping a student put on a jacket, you might hold the zipper steady while waiting for their hands to find it.
- When preparing a snack, you guide their hands to the bowl rather than completing the task for them.

Over time, the learner develops not only the physical skill—but the confidence to act, the understanding of the sequence, and the ownership of the accomplishment.

“Doing For”	“Doing With”
Completing the task to “help” or save time	Guiding side-by-side through participation
Limits learner’s opportunity to explore or make mistakes	Encourages discovery and problem-solving
Builds dependence on adult support	Builds confidence and capability
Focuses on outcome	Focuses on process and connection

“Doing with” is not less help—it’s better help. It honors the learner’s right to grow through shared action.

TRY THIS:

Choose one familiar daily activity—like unpacking a lunchbox, turning on a light, or brushing hair. Focus on doing it with your learner instead of for them. Notice how much engagement and pride it brings.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT:BUILDING INDEPENDENCE THROUGH SHARED ACTION

Here are five practical ways to embed “doing with” into daily routines:

1. Use hand-under-hand guidance. Allow the learner to feel your movement, not be moved by it. This fosters trust and agency.
2. Wait for readiness. Pause before assisting. Silence and time give learners the chance to act first.
3. Fade support gradually. Offer just enough help to succeed, and then step back as confidence grows.
4. Celebrate effort, not perfection. A shared attempt—however small—is a step toward independence.
5. Ask before acting. Simple cues like “Would you like to try?” or “Your turn?” show respect and promote choice-making.

VOICES FROM THE FIELD

"When I stopped jumping in to fix things, I realized how capable my student was. We started buttoning shirts together—slowly, hand under hand. Now he smiles every time he does the last button himself."

— Intervener Reflection, North Carolina

These shared actions teach more than motor skills; they build identity, confidence, and trust.

REFLECT AND RESPOND

How can you turn tomorrow's routine into a meaningful experience that builds a new concept for your learner?

Think of one everyday moment—mealtime, outdoor play, or arrival at school—and plan a small, experience-rich change. You may be surprised at how much your learner discovers.

RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

The Open Hands, Open Access (OHOA) modules emphasize the importance of fading support and promoting self-determination. Learners build independence when they can safely explore, make choices, and participate fully.
"Interveners guide without taking over—ensuring the learner remains the actor in their own life." — NCDB Training Resource

RESOURCE ROUNDUP: TOOLS FOR INDEPENDENCE

- OHOA Module 7: Intervener Strategies for Fostering Independence — https://www.nationaldb.org/products/modules/ohoa/
- NCDB Self-Determination Resources: https://www.nationaldb.org/info-center/self-determination/
- Barbara Miles - Hand-Under-Hand Technique Guide: https://www.asharedvision.org/uploads/8/8/2/7/88271548/hand_under_hand.pdf
- TSBVI Active Learning Framework: How can you turn tomorrow's routine into a meaningful experience that builds a new concept for your learner?

REFLECT AND RESPOND

Think of one time today when you could pause, invite, and let your learner take the lead. What did you notice about their response—and your own?

FINAL THOUGHT

Every time we choose to “do with” instead of “do for,” we hand the learner a small piece of independence—and that piece grows stronger with every shared action.

REACH OUT!

Do you have questions about the role of Interveners or how they support learners with DeafBlindness? We'd love to hear from you! Contact us at: ecutsp@gmail.com

INTERESTED IN JOINING OUR COHORT?

If you know someone who would make a great addition to our DeafBlind Intervener Cohort, please share this information so they can learn more!
And if you've completed the Intervener I Training and are ready to take the next step toward your National Intervener Certification, we'd be happy to help you get started. Contact us today at: ecutsp@gmail.com.

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