

# 2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education

## Convergence: Embracing New Beginnings with Presence and Connections

February 27-March 1, 2025

Austin Marriott North



Presented by  
Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Outreach Programs  
and the  
Texas Deafblind Project



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## **Announcements**

Welcome to the 2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education. The theme for the 2025 symposium is *Convergence: Embracing New Beginnings with Presence and Connections*. As we move closer to September 2025, reality is setting in as Deafblind Certification in Texas is officially beginning. This is a new profession with a new take on qualified personnel, and a giant step toward creating equitable access for all students. Join us as we share, learn, and reflect on how this new certification can bring about change while we also consider practical ways to bring the following quote to life: "Every child, every person, has the right to be their own person with thoughts and opinions that others listen to; likewise, to exist in communicative and social contexts in which they are given the opportunity to express themselves." (Malmgren, Sofi. 2019).

## **Sign-in and Continuing Education Credits**

Please sign in each morning of the Pre-Symposium and Symposium. This is necessary to receive credit for attendance along with the code(s) that will be announced at the end of each session by the room monitors.

The codes can be recorded on the last pages of this Session Guide. Please enter these codes when you complete the conference evaluation. Do not lose these codes or you will not be given credit for the sessions you have attended.

ACVREP Continuing Education (CE) hours or SBEC credits are provided to the participants who complete the conference evaluation. Other types of CEUs must be applied for by the individual participant through their preferred certifying agency.

## **Certificates of Attendance**

When the Symposium concludes, you will receive an email with a web link to the conference evaluation. Complete and submit the evaluation to receive a certificate confirming your attendance of the Pre-Symposium and/or Symposium. Then, log on to your account on the TSBVI escWorks registration site, and download your certificate. No paper certificates will be provided.

## **Need Help?**

If you have a question or need help, please stop by the registration table any time during the Symposium to request help.

## **Interpreters**

Both sign language and foreign language interpreters are available for those who requested them when they registered for the Symposium. Please go to the designated area in the La Frontera Ballroom foyer to let your interpreters know you have arrived.

## **Restaurants and Entertainment**

Austin is known for its great restaurants and good times. Check with the concierge at the hotel front desk to get maps and suggestions. If you are looking for a particular type of food or recommendation, you may also check with anyone at the Symposium registration table.

## Medical Emergency

If there is an emergency requiring medical assistance, call 911 or check for doctor and hospital locations with the staff at the hotel front desk.

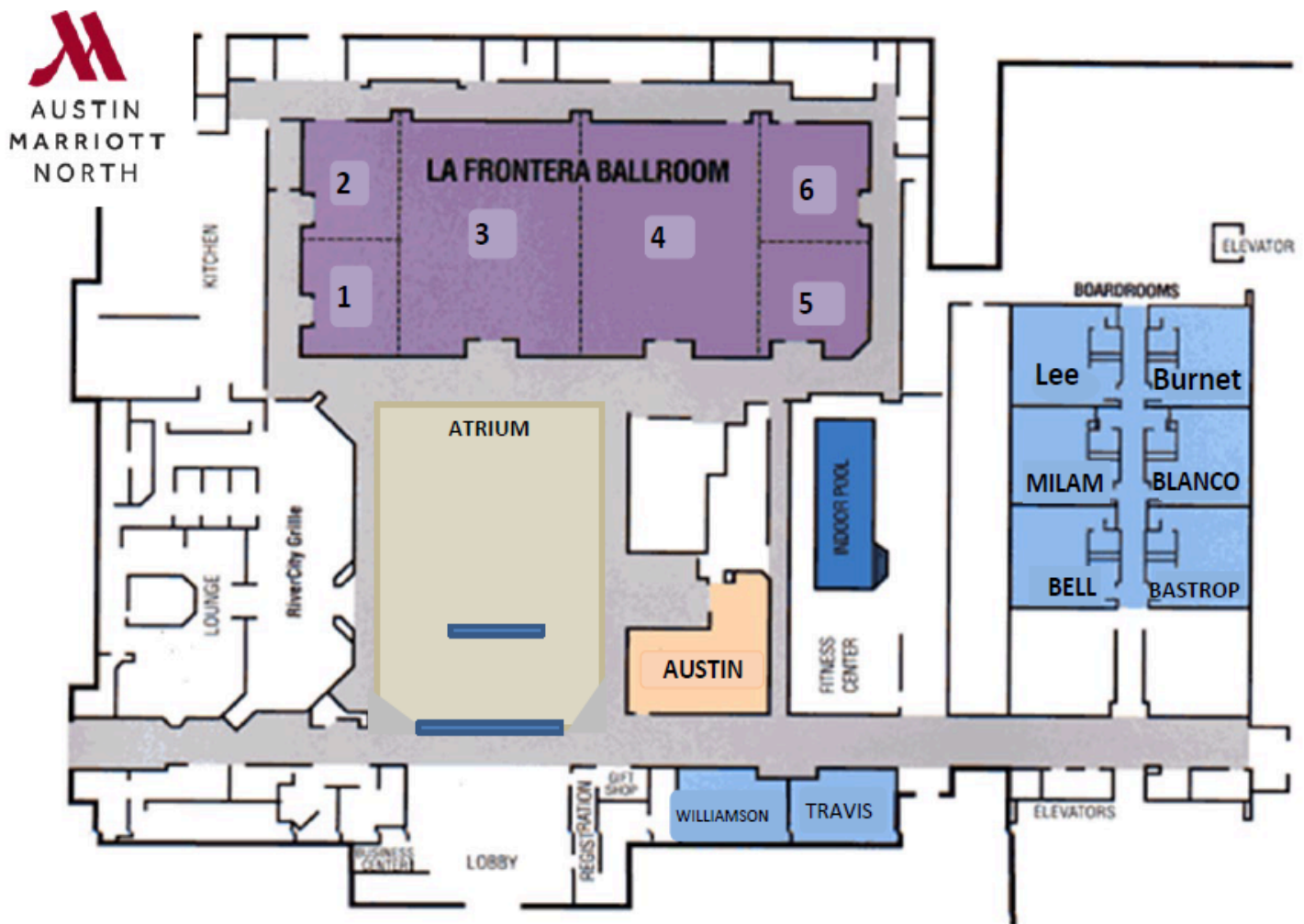
## Dog Guide Relief Area

An outside area has been designated for the use of dog guides during the Symposium. If you need assistance, please check with someone at the Symposium registration desk or at the hotel registration desk.

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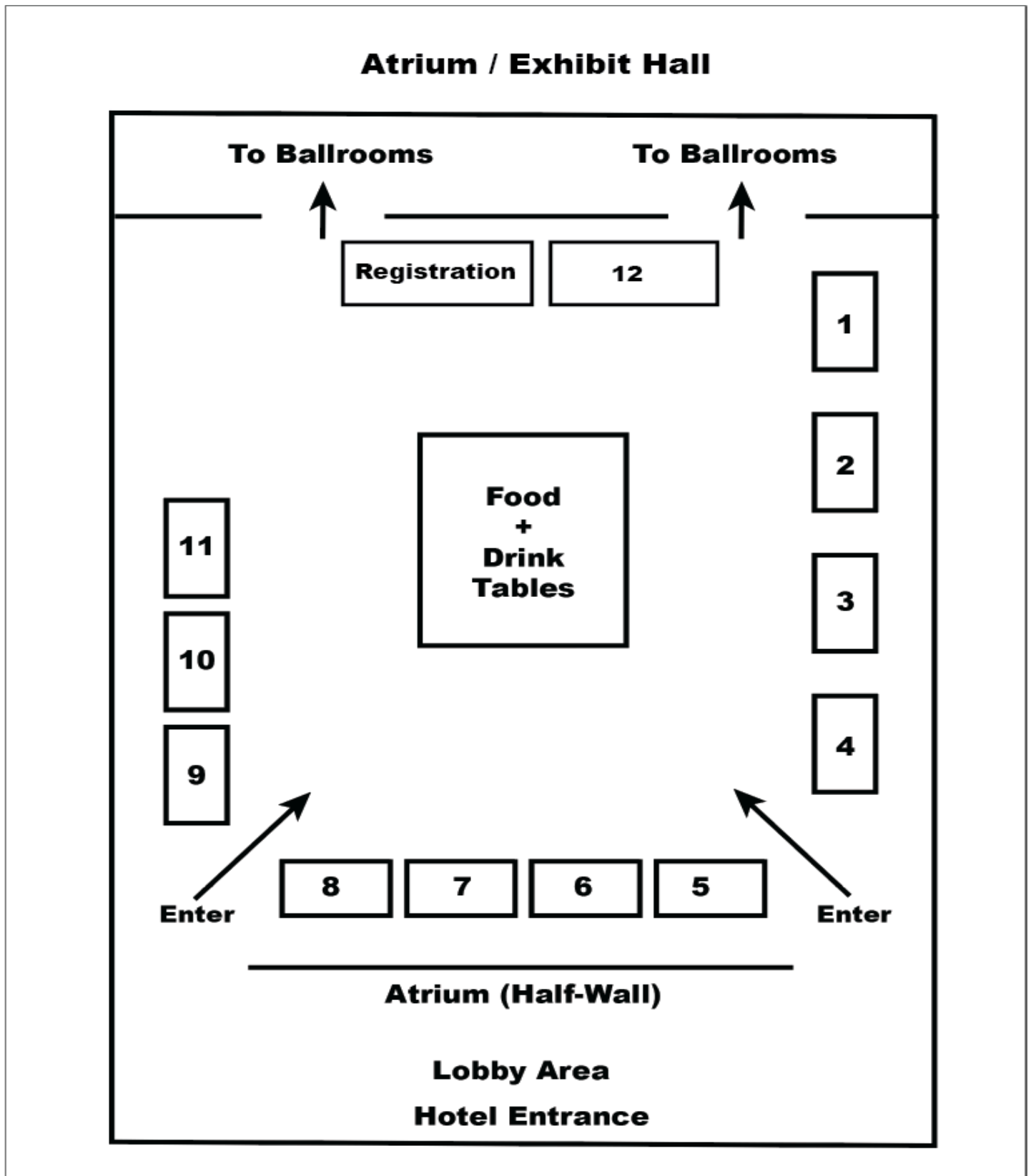
## Map of Conference Rooms and Atrium

A tactile map of the hotel will be available at the hotel registration desk and conference registration table.



## Map of Exhibit Hall

A tactile map of the Exhibit Hall will be available at the hotel registration desk and conference registration table.



## Location of Exhibitors

The following Table Numbers correspond to the Map of the Exhibit Hall

- 1 DeafBlind Community of Texas | Partners Resource Network
- 2 Texas Workforce Commission-Office of Blind Services | HHS Blind Children's Vocational Discovery & Development Program
- 3 Texas Tech University | Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired Curriculum Department
- 4 National Family Association for DeafBlind | National Center on Deafblindness
- 5 American Society for Deaf Children | TSBVI Family Lynx
- 6 Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas | Touch Base Center for the Deafblind, Houston
- 7 Texas CHARGERS, Inc. | All Blind Children of Texas
- 8 Texas Hands & Voices | Statewide Outreach Center at the Texas School for the Deaf
- 9 Texas Parent to Parent | Early Childhood Intervention
- 10 Touch Seeds | Hellen Keller National Center
- 11 Job & General Postings Area (Bulletin Boards & Conversational Area)
- 12 Texas Deafblind Project Products

# **2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education**

## **Pre-Symposium Agenda**

**Thursday, February 27, 2025**

**11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.**

Sign-in / Registration

Location: Atrium

**1:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.**

**Deafblind 101: Laying the Foundation for a Meaningful Conference**

**Session ID 42120**

**Location: La Frontera 5 & 6**

Presenters: Beth Kennedy, Director of MI State DB Project (DB Central) and CMU DeafBlind Intervener Training Program

People attending the Symposium who are new to deafblindness will benefit from pre-teaching in some areas in order to be more fully engaged in the content covered in subsequent days of the conference. This presentation will include an overview of deafblindness and key components of support for children and young adults who are DeafBlind.

Objectives:

1. Participants will have an understanding of the range and impact of deafblindness.
2. Participants will have an understanding of qualified personnel, such as Teachers of the DeafBlind and Interveners.
3. Participants will have the foundational knowledge to help them to better understand content covered in conference sessions.

**1:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m.**

**Autism or Deafblindness: Consideration for Assessment and Intervention for Learners with Sensory Losses**

**Session ID 42121**

**Location: La Frontera 1, 2, & 3**

Presenters: Julie Maier, Project Coordinator, CA Deafblind Services

This presentation considers the profiles of learners with autism or deafblindness and considers why these learners may share similar features. We'll unpack evidence-based practices for autism and compare those practices to recognized field-based best practices related to deafblind education. We'll discuss how to match and tailor those ASD practices with deafblind practices when planning instruction for a learner.

Objectives:

1. Understand the difference between a sensory processing difference and sensory loss or impairment and explain how certain behaviors demonstrated by an individual may be

a response to missing, reduced, or distorted sensory information rather than autism.

2. Recognize and explain: 1) the potential benefits and concerns related to dual diagnosis of deafblindness and autism and 2) the limitations and concerns related to exclusive use of evidence-based ASD interventions for a learner.



## Awards for Excellence in Deafblind Education

The presentation of awards to individuals whose efforts have made a significant contribution to the field of deafblindness and/or who have contributed to improving the lives of Texans with deafblindness is one of the highlights of the Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education.

With our theme of "Convergence: Embracing New Beginnings with Presence and Connections" in mind, individuals were asked to nominate family members, paraprofessionals, and professionals who demonstrate excellence in deafblind education as well as support and advocacy for individuals who are deafblind and their families.

Please take time to congratulate our 2025 award recipients.



### Trail Blazer Award

This award is given to a family member(s) who has, through their advocacy or efforts on behalf of their family member with deafblindness, blazed a trail that has made it easier for other families who follow. This year's recipient is Christine Givens.

Christine Givens lives in Spring, Texas, with her husband, George, and is a mother of 3 girls, Skye-27, Leili-20 (adopted from China), and Rachel-17 (adopted from China - profoundly deaf). She has been a member of The Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT) for 20+ years! Currently, she serves as a board member for the DBMAT. She advocated for Skye her entire life, starting in NICU through 22 school years with Klein ISD, Texas Workforce Commission, and most recently Medically Fragile Option under Star+Waiver. She is a graduate of TSBVI's Family Leadership Training and TSBVI's Systems Leadership Training. She volunteered as a parent participant on the Governmental Affairs Committee with the Arc of Texas in Austin, Texas. She is a current board member of the Society for the Advancement of Floral Design.



### **Home and Community Intervener Award**

This award is given to an intervener who has demonstrated excellence in their role of support at home or in the community to a child or adult who is deafblind, and whose efforts have contributed to the success of the intervener model in Texas. This year's recipient is Mary Collins.

Hello! My name is Mary Collins, and I am a Deafblind intervener and interpreter. I have worked in an ISD for twelve years. Seven years ago, I met a student who was DeafBlind, and I knew nothing of DeafBlindness. I just knew they needed extra patience and a different way to approach things. As I was seeking out resources and help, I learned about interveners and became one. That has been my focus for the last seven years. I enjoy volunteering for camps while learning new perspectives and techniques to use in the future. My family is my life. I love hanging out with them, playing board games, going on adventures, making connections, and just being silly.



### **Educational Intervener Award**

This award is to an intervener who has demonstrated excellence in their role of support in educational settings to a child who is deafblind, and whose efforts have contributed to the success of the intervener model in Texas. This year's recipient is Rhonda Cole.

Rhonda Cole is a Deafblind Intervener at Mesquite ISD, currently in her third year with her student. She attended West Texas State University (now affiliated with A & M University) and she holds a Deafblind Intervener Certificate from Central Michigan University. She has over 25 years of experience in Deaf Education. Previously, Rhonda worked as a Communication Facilitator and Interpreter in Washington County, Pennsylvania, and Wheeling, West Virginia, from 1999 to 2014. She returned to her home state of Texas, and in 2015, joined the Mesquite Regional Day School Program for the Deaf, where she continues to work.



### **Marty Murrell Excellence in Education Award**

This award is given to a professional in education who has made a long-term commitment to excellence in education for Texas students who are deafblind. This year's award is given to Jennifer Wilson.

Jennifer Wilson has been a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments for the majority of her 20 years as an educator. In 2018, she recognized that the unique needs of her students who were Deafblind were not being properly addressed so she completed the graduate certificate program in DB to learn how to better serve these students. Through her work with these students, she was lucky enough to meet the staff at the Mesquite Regional Day School Program for the Deaf where she now has the privilege of serving as the TDB. In this role her favorite part is helping others recognize the amazing personalities and abilities of these students as they bloom and come out of their shells to connect with the people and environment around them!



### **Ann Silverrain Award**

This award is given to an individual who has made an extraordinary commitment to improving the lives of individuals who are deafblind in Texas. This year's award is presented to Kelly Torrey.

Kelly Torrey currently serves as a Test Development Specialist with the Texas Education Agency's Educator Standards and Testing team. Kelly's work at the agency centers on special education-related standards development and certification exams, as well as related rulemaking. Prior to joining the agency Kelly was a special education teacher and administrator in the Austin area for 9 years. She lives in Round Rock with her husband and 5-year-old son, Arthur.

## Family Social Co-Hosts

The Texas Deafblind Project extends our heartfelt thanks to our Family & Community Organizations for co-hosting the Friday Family Social and for their partnership in making the 2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education a success.

We encourage you to visit their tables in the Marriott Atrium to learn more about their incredible work and discover how you can get involved. Your support and connection with these organizations make a meaningful difference!



**Figure 1 Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas (DBMAT) promoting and improving the quality of life for all Texans who are deaf-blind multi-handicapped, deaf multi-handicapped, and blind multi-handicapped since 1973.**



**National Family  
Association  
for DeafBlind**

Empowering Success for Families  
of the DeafBlind Community

**Figure 2 NFADB: National Family Association for Deaf-Blind. Empowering Success for Families of the DeafBlind Community**



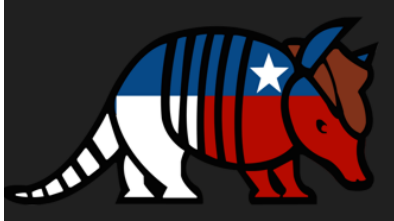
**Figure 1 Partners Resource Network, Empowerment Through Education**



**Figure 4 Texas Chargers, Encourage-Educate-Enrich**



**Figure 5 Texas Hands & Voices, Support for Families with Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing**



**Figure 6 DeafBlind Community of Texas, DeafBlind Experience It All**



**Figure 7 American Society for Deaf Children, Bringing Families Together Through American Sign Language**

# **2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education**

## **Agenda**

**Friday, February 28, 2025**

**7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.**

### **Exhibits**

Location: Atrium

**7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.**

### **Sign-in / Registration**

Location: Atrium

**8:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. General Session I**

### **Welcome, State of the State, Nation, and World in Deafblind Education**

**Session ID 42123**

**Location: Ballroom (La Frontera 3-6)**

Presenters: Erica Cairns, TSBVI Outreach Director; Julie Durando, National Center on Deafblindness Director; Brandi Hitzelberger, National Family Association for DeafBlind; Julie Maier, California Deafblind Services Project Coordinator

Come listen to representatives from state, national, and world levels discuss the State of Deafblind Education!

#### **Objectives:**

1. Learn about Texas deafblind education initiatives, including Teacher of Students who are Deafblind (TDB) certification.
2. Learn about national initiatives, including family engagement and deafblind education.
3. Gain insight into what is happening within the global deafblind community.

**10:00 a.m. – 10:30**

### **Break / Visit the Exhibitors**

**10:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. General Session II**

### **Tactile Sensations - A Basis for Language Development**

**Session ID 42124**

**Location: Ballroom (La Frontera 3-6)**

Presenter: Caroline Lindström, Special Education Consultant for Deafblindness

Active touch, bodily movements and postures are the primary source of communication and learning for many children with congenital deafblindness. To support language development, one's own experience and knowledge of the tactile sense is needed. Communication partners must try to move closer to the perceptual world of the child.

#### **Objectives:**

1. To create interest, curiosity and awareness for the tactile sense.

2. To promote understanding of expressions emerging from tactile sensations.

**12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.**

**Lunch** (on your own)

**1:30 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. General Session III**

**Achieving Success for Every Student: Working in Partnership with Families as You Launch Your Family Engagement Strategies**

**Session ID 42125**

**Location: Ballroom (La Frontera 3-6)**

Presenters: Sherri Wilson (NAFSCE), Jana Villimez (NCDB), Jennifer Vincent, Alaine Hinds, & Family Leaders

Every child deserves the opportunity to learn and thrive in their school and community. Strong partnerships between families, schools, and communities are essential in fostering student success. This session will explore national family engagement efforts in general education, aligned with the National Deaf-Blind Network, and showcase how families are creating a good life for their children.

Objectives:

1. Understand how the four NAFSCE Core Competencies align with the Deafblind Value of Family Engagement report.
2. Learn how families, educators, and community partners all play an important role in ensuring the success of students.
3. Learn research-based practical strategies families, schools, and communities use to bring about systems change.

**3:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.**

**Break / Visit the Exhibitors**

**3:30 p.m. - 4:45 p.m. Breakout Session I**

**Behavior: Shifting Our Perspective For Positive Change**

**Session ID 42126**

**Location: La Frontera 3**

Presenters: Rachel Collins and Sarah Mossberger, Deafblind Education Consultants, Texas Deafblind Project

When considering a Behavior Intervention Plan for our students who are deafblind, it is crucial to consider their vision and access needs in relation to behaviors. In the Guidance for Planning Behavior Intervention publication, four pillars must be addressed to prevent distressed behavior: Safety, Success, Independence, and Connectedness. In this session, participants will get an overview of this publication.

Objectives:

1. Participants will become familiar with the steps of the behavior planning process.

2. Participants will learn proactive and responsive strategies for the four pillars to prevent distressed behaviors.
3. Participants will be able to apply proactive and responsive strategies in the home, school, and community.

### **Play is Not Just Child's Work**

**Session ID 42127**

**Location: La Frontera 4**

Presenters: Hillary Keys, Early Childhood Deafblind Consultant, TSBVI Outreach; Dr. Layne Pethick, Behavior & Autism Master Consultant

Play is a child's work, but it is also the work of all the adults in a child's life to ensure that play remains part of a child's world. This session will take a playfully serious look at play, what it is, how play is important to learning and thriving, and ways to facilitate play for children who are deafblind.

Objectives:

1. List at least five characteristics of play.
2. Explain how play is connected to and important for learning.
3. Identify at least three strategies to facilitate play for students who are deafblind.

### **It Takes a Village: Team Collaboration for Students who are Deafblind**

**Session ID 42128**

**Location: La Frontera 5 & 6**

Presenters: Kate Borg, Principal at Utah School for the Deaf and the Blind, and Kaycee Bennett, Deafblind Education Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project

This session will define the roles of the members of the students' sensory teams and discuss strategies for positive collaboration, including how to define roles, how to implement efficient and effective educational programming, and utilizing role-release strategies.

Objectives:

1. The participants will understand the roles of the members of the sensory team (TSVI, TDHH, COMS, TDB, intervener, etc.)
2. The participants will understand the benefits of role release and gain strategies to utilize with various team members.
3. The participants will gain real-life strategies for implementing positive collaboration strategies with team members.

### **Touch Base Center for the Deafblind: Tips on how to have a Meaningful Day Program for People Who Are Deafblind in Your Area**

**Session ID 42129**

**Location: La Frontera 1 & 2**

Presenters: Vivecca Hartman, Rubina Khan, MiiLeah Morrison, and Khatia Paz



Join us in hearing about Touch Base Center for the Deafblind, an innovative day activity center for deafblind people in the Houston area. Together, we'll explore what makes this model Impactive for the community.

Objectives:

1. Share about a successful alternative for after the school years.
2. Share tips on how to create a Sustainable Day Activity Center for people who are deafblind.
3. Collaborate on what your hopes are for the future!

**5:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m. Family Social (for families only)**

**Session ID 42142**

**Location: Ballroom (La Frontera 3 & 4)**

Family members are welcome to join us for an optional social. Beverages and hors d'oeuvres will be served. Come socialize and meet other families at the symposium!

**NOTE:** The social event is for **family members only**. Only participants who are registered as 'Family Member' can select this session. We kindly ask that all other participants respect this space that has been set aside. If you have any questions, please contact Edgenie Bellah at [bellahe@tsbvi.edu](mailto:bellahe@tsbvi.edu).

## Advertisements



# TOUCH BASE

## CENTER FOR THE DEAFBLIND

### Our Mission Statement



For people with deafblindness, and those who support them, to build connections with the community, promote self-respect, and improve communication and daily living skills, while creating moments of joy.

### Our History



Touch Base is the dream of the parents of two deafblind children. These parents feared that their children would regress after graduation without the daily structure and consistency that their schools had provided. They decided to create a specialized post-school resource that would provide services to deafblind individuals and their families.

Find us on our Website: [www.touchbasecenter.org](http://www.touchbasecenter.org)

Call for more info and to schedule a tour:

832-877-3333 – We are in Houston, Texas

**We are an Adult Day Hab Center year-round. We also have Summer Fun Activities available to school age individuals. BYOI – Bring your own Intervener!**



**Keep up with us on Facebook!**







DeafBlind Community  
of Texas

# COME TO CAMP!

## OUR MISSION

To empower people who are DeafBlind through equal opportunities to live full and productive lives, including full access to employment, technology, education, and socialization to reduce isolation.

## OUR VISION

To create a world where DeafBlind individuals explore their environment, make empowered autonomous decisions, and have access to the world around them.



Camp Jr. - June, 2025  
Ages 14-22

Adult Retreat - August 2025  
Ages 18 and up

Year-Round Events for All Ages!

**VISIT [WWW.DBCTX.ORG](http://WWW.DBCTX.ORG) TODAY  
TO BECOME A MEMBER!**





# DBMAT

**Families and Professionals  
supporting each other  
Since 1973**



**[www.dbmat-tx.org](http://www.dbmat-tx.org)**



The National Center on Deafblindness Presents

## A NEW MODULE SERIES



### Teaching Children Who Are Deafblind

#### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR EDUCATORS

Ideal for those who want to improve their knowledge of deafblindness and gain practical skills that can be put to use right away in the home or classroom.



#### ESSENTIAL, PRACTICAL, NEED-TO-KNOW INFORMATION

Each module delivers more than 2 hours of content through short, engaging lessons.

- ✓ Videos of authentic teaching and learning with children who are deafblind, their families, and educators
- ✓ Interviews with experts, families, and children who are deafblind
- ✓ Practical skills and strategies
- ✓ Collaborative and individual activities
- ✓ Links to resources

Modules can be used in a variety of professional development platforms or for self-guided learning.



Scan this code or  
visit [nationaldb.org](https://nationaldb.org)  
to learn more.



**National Center  
on Deafblindness**



# All Blind Children of Texas

## Building Brighter Futures

Since 2004, All Blind Children of Texas has been a volunteer nonprofit organization that raises funds to sponsor learning and recreational activities for children and youth with severe vision loss and offer support to their teachers and families.

The Board of Trustees at ABCTX is made up of experts in the field of special education, including several members who are blind themselves or are parents of visually impaired children. We live our mission:

- ✓ All blind children in Texas deserve a quality life
- ✓ Physical, mental, emotional, and social development
- ✓ We aim to maximize the potential of All Blind Children

### GET IN TOUCH

☎ + (512) 387-5070  
✉ [hello@abctx.com](mailto:hello@abctx.com)  
🌐 [www.abctx.org](http://www.abctx.org)  
📍 900 Blackson Ave. #16305, Austin, TX.

## How We Serve



### The ECC Grant

The Expanded Core Curriculum Grant funds Texas K-12 students and younger.



### The Bennett Grant

Is designed to aid 18-22 year old Texas youth, transitioning into modern society.



### Become a Donor to ABCTX

Visit [ABCTX.org](http://ABCTX.org) and become a contributing member of the ABC family.

# **2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education**

## **Agenda**

**Saturday, March 1, 2025**

**7:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.**

### **Exhibits**

Location: Atrium

**7:30 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.**

### **Sign-in / Registration**

Location: Atrium

**8:30 a.m. - 9:45 a.m. Breakout Session II**

### **Learning Together: Sharing Insights from Travelers Who Are DeafBlind and Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists**

**Session ID 42143**

**Location: La Frontera 5 & 6**

Presenters: Heather Withrow, TX DB Project Transition Consultant, Edgenie Bellah, TX DB Project Family Engagement Coordinator, and Scott Turner, TSBVI Outreach Orientation & Mobility Specialist

This forum explores specialized O&M strategies for travelers who are deafblind, focusing on touch, trust, communication, and technology integration. Participants will share insights from working with children and adults who are deafblind and discuss recent research shaping the evolving field of Deafblind O&M, highlighting the need to expand qualified personnel to include Deafblind COMS.

#### **Objectives:**

1. Learn from travelers who are deafblind about the unique elements of Deafblind O&M instruction.
2. Introduce participants to deafblind travelers and professionals who can provide guidance and support in learning more about O&M services to travelers who are deafblind.
3. Discover different philosophies of developing independence for travelers who are deafblind.

### **What In The World Is a Functional Tactile-Bodily Assessment?**

**Session ID 42144**

**Location: La Frontera 1 & 2**

Presenters: Kaycee Bennett and Rachel Collins, Deafblind Education Consultants, Texas Deafblind Project



For most individuals, vision and hearing are the most dominant senses. As one works to discover the perspective of the person whose vision and hearing are not fully intact, one must be empathetic to a world view from a tactile experience. Please join us as we learn about the Functional Tactile-Bodily Evaluation tool; its components and its importance when evaluating students who are deafblind.

**Objectives:**

1. Participants will learn about the 4 components of the Functional Tactile-Bodily Evaluation.
2. Participants will learn how to complete a Functional Tactile-Bodily Evaluation through analyzing video.
3. Participants will learn how to incorporate this data into the FIE.

**Deafblind, The Brain, Learning, and Behavior**

**Session ID 42145**

**Location: La Frontera 4**

Presenter: Dr. Layne Pethick, Behavior and Autism Master Consultant, Education Service Center Region 10

This interactive session will discuss recent brain research and its impact on learning and behavior outcomes for the Deafblind community.

**Objectives:**

1. Participants will gain new knowledge on brain research and deafblind outcomes.
2. Participants will gain information on brain research and learning and behavior outcomes.

**Tactile Strategies - Developing Communication and Cognition**

**Session ID 42146**

**Location: La Frontera 3**

Presenters: Caroline Lindström & Sofia Hansdotter, Special education consultant for deafblindness

This breakout session is based on a longitudinal case study involving a boy with congenital deafblindness and his teachers. The case explores how communication partners adapt strategies to a bodily tactile modality to facilitate the development of a conventional tactile sign language. The presenters will add a social and cognitive perspective to the case study and the strategies used.

**Objectives:**

1. To provide insight into different strategies that have been used over time to develop a form and understanding for tactile sign language.
2. To demonstrate and emphasize the importance of using strategies that contribute to cognitive development.



**9:45 a.m. - 10:15 a.m.**  
**Break / Visit the Exhibitors**

**10:15 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. Breakout Session III**

**Recognizing and Mitigating Communication-related Stressors Across Multiple Settings in Deafblind Students**

**Session ID 42147**

**Location: La Frontera 3**

Presenters: Claire Ryan and Sarah Schoffstall, Pediatric Psychologists

Deafblind youth often navigate an array of less than fully accessible environments in their everyday lives. This can result in increased fatigue and distress in home and school settings and may be misinterpreted by those unfamiliar with listening fatigue and communication stressors. The presentation discusses strategies to identify and address listening fatigue and communication stressors.

Objectives:

1. Identify how listening fatigue & communication-related stressors affect cognitive load, emotional regulation, & overall well-being.
2. Recognize behavioral, social, & psychological indicators of listening fatigue and will list assessment tools that can help to identify deafblind youth experiencing significant communication-related distress.
3. Describe strategies to create supportive environments to reduce fatigue, improve communication at home & school, fostering better academic & social outcomes.

**Expanded Core Curriculum Considerations for Students who are Deafblind**

**Session ID 42148**

**Location: La Frontera 4**

Presenters: Kaycee Bennett and Sarah Mossberger, Deafblind Education Consultants, Texas Deafblind Project

As part of the publication, "Essential Tools of the Trade for Teachers of Students who are Deafblind: A How-To Guide for Completing Evaluation," seven considerations for additional expanded core curriculum areas were developed and proposed. This session will review the seven areas, the considerations connected to them, and will provide the opportunity for discussion around each of the proposed areas

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify the seven proposed areas of consideration provided in the Expanded Core Curriculum Considerations for Students who are Deafblind.
2. Participants will be able to identify multiple items for considerations within each of the seven proposed areas.
3. Participants will actively engage in a discussion around each of the proposed areas.

## **Who Are Proficient Communicators and How Can We Support Them?**

**Session ID 42149**

**Location: La Frontera 1 & 2**

Presenters: Rachel Collins, Deafblind Education Consultant, Texas Deafblind Project

In recent years there has been a shift in the population of students on the Texas Deafblind Child Count indicating an increasing number of congenital deafblind students who are taking standardized state testing with or without accommodations. In this session, participants will learn how to identify Proficient Communicators and discuss 12 important considerations to be addressed within their IEP.

### **Objectives**

1. Participants will be able to identify the six common characteristics shared among Proficient Communicators.
2. Participants will be able to identify the 12 Considerations for Specialized Instruction for Proficient Communicators.
3. Participants will become familiar with the IEP Checklist for Proficient Communicators.

## **Access to Language is a Human Right**

**Session ID 42150**

**Location: La Frontera 5 & 6**

Presenter: Brenna Brillhart, Educational Diagnostician, Certified Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Through interactive activities, participants will explore how legislation such as the Texas Deaf Children's Bill of Rights and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) can be used to advocate for accessible language in the education setting.

### **Objectives:**

1. Participants will summarize specific laws, like the Texas Deaf Children's Bill of Rights and IDEA, that ensure deafblind children have access to their preferred communication mode.
2. Participants will compose and practice using advocacy statements that reference the law to support communication access.
3. Participants will discuss why advocating for communication access using the law is essential to support the learning and development of deafblind children.

**11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.**

**Break / Visit the Exhibitors**

**12:30 p.m. - 2:00 p.m. Luncheon and Awards Ceremony**

**Location: Ballroom (La Frontera 3 & 4)**

Join us for lunch as we present awards to individuals whose efforts have made a significant contribution to the field of deafblind education and/or who have contributed to improving the lives of Texans who are deafblind. This will be one of the highlights of the Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education!

**2:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m. General Session IV**  
**Mental Health: Deafblind**  
**Session ID 42152**  
**Location: Ballroom (La Frontera 3 & 4)**

Presenter: Keva Richmond, Evolve Access, CEO, Consultant

Join us to hear from our presenter's journey as a DeafBlind individual, including the impact with new identities and with the community. Learn about acceptance, tolerance, and rejection, and how it applies to the individual and the community such as family, partners, co-workers, and friends.

Objectives:

1. Identities impact and effect on the presenter and community.
2. Learn more on acceptance, tolerance, and rejection.
3. Learn the presenter's journey experience as a DeafBlind individual.

## 2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education

### Sessions at a Glance: Pre-Symposium

**Thursday, February 27, 2025**

**Table 1 Sessions at-a-Glance for Pre-Symposium**

| <b>Time</b>        | <b>Location</b>       | <b>Session</b>                                                                                                                    |
|--------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 11:30 am – 1:00 am | Atrium                | Sign-in / Registration                                                                                                            |
| 1:00 pm – 4:15 pm  | La Frontera 5 & 6     | Deafblind 101: Laying the Foundation for a Meaningful Conference<br>Presenter: Beth Kennedy                                       |
| 1:00 pm – 4:15 pm  | La Frontera 1, 2, & 3 | Autism or Deafblindness: Consideration for Assessment and Intervention for Learners with Sensory Losses<br>Presenter: Julie Maier |

# 2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education

## Sessions at a Glance: Symposium Day 1

**Friday, February 28, 2025**

**Table 2 Sessions at-a-Glance for Symposium**

| <b>Time</b>         | <b>Location</b>               | <b>Session</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|---------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 7:30 am – 4:00 pm   | Atrium                        | Exhibits                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 7:00 am – 8:30 am   | Atrium                        | Sign-in / Registration                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 8:30 am – 10:00 am  | Ballroom<br>(La Frontera 3-6) | Welcome and State of the State, Nation, and World in Deafblind Education<br>Presenters: Julie Durando, Brandi Hitzelberger, Julie Maier                                                                               |
| 10:00 am – 10:30 am |                               | <i>Break / Visit Exhibitors</i>                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 10:30 am – 12:00 pm | Ballroom<br>(La Frontera 3-6) | Tactile Sensations - a Basis for Language Development<br>Presenter: Caroline Lindström                                                                                                                                |
| 12:00 pm – 1:30 pm  |                               | <i>Lunch (on your own)</i>                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 1:30 pm – 3:00 pm   | Ballroom<br>(La Frontera 3-6) | Achieving Success for Every Student: Working in Partnership with Families as You Launch Your Family Engagement Strategies<br>Presenters: Sherri Wilson, Jana Villimez, Jennifer Vincent, Alaine Hinds, Family Leaders |
| 3:00 pm – 3:30 pm   |                               | <i>Break / Visit Exhibitors</i>                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm   | La Frontera 3                 | Behavior: Shifting Our Perspective For Positive Change<br>Presenters: Rachel Collins, Sarah Mossberger                                                                                                                |
| 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm   | La Frontera 4                 | Play is Not Just Child's Work<br>Presenters: Hillary Keys, Layne Pethick                                                                                                                                              |
| 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm   | La Frontera 5 & 6             | It Takes a Village: Team Collaboration for Students who are Deafblind<br>Presenters: Kate Borg, Kaycee Bennett                                                                                                        |
| 3:30 pm – 4:45 pm   | La Frontera 1 & 2             | Touch Base Center for the Deafblind: Tips on how to have a Meaningful Day Program for People Who Are Deafblind in Your Area<br>Presenters: Vivecca Hartman, Rubina Khan, MiiLeah Morrison, Khatia Paz                 |

| <b>Time</b>       | <b>Location</b>              | <b>Session</b>                    |
|-------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 5:30 pm – 7:30 pm | Ballroom (La Frontera 3 & 4) | Family Social (for families only) |



## 2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education

### Sessions at a Glance: Symposium Day 2

**Saturday, March 1, 2025**

**Table 3 Sessions at-a-Glance for Symposium**

| <b>Time</b>                | <b>Location</b>   | <b>Session</b>                                                                                                                                                                     |
|----------------------------|-------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>7:30 am – 12:30 pm</b>  | Atrium            | Exhibits                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>7:30 am – 8:30 am</b>   | Atrium            | Sign-in / Registration                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>8:30 am – 9:45 am</b>   | La Frontera 5 & 6 | Learning Together: Sharing Insights from Travelers Who Are DeafBlind and Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists<br>Presenters: Heather Withrow, Edgenie Bellah, Scott Turner |
|                            | La Frontera 1 & 2 | What In The World Is a Functional Tactile-Bodily Assessment?<br>Presenter: Kaycee Bennett                                                                                          |
|                            | La Frontera 4     | Deafblind, The Brain, Learning, and Behavior<br>Presenter: Layne Pethick                                                                                                           |
|                            | La Frontera 3     | Tactile Strategies - Developing Communication and Cognition<br>Presenters: Caroline Lindström, Sofia Hansdotter                                                                    |
| <b>9:45 am – 10:15 am</b>  |                   | <i>Break / Visit Exhibitors</i>                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>10:15 am – 11:30 am</b> | La Frontera 3     | Recognizing and mitigating communication-related stressors Across Multiple Settings in Deafblind students<br>Presenters: Claire Ryan, Sarah Schoffstall                            |
|                            | La Frontera 4     | Expanded Core Curriculum Considerations for Students who are Deafblind<br>Presenters: Kaycee Bennett, Sarah Mossberger                                                             |
|                            | La Frontera 1 & 2 | Who Are Proficient Communicators and How Can We Support Them?<br>Presenter: Rachel Collins                                                                                         |
|                            | La Frontera 5 & 6 | Access to Language is a Human Right<br>Presenter: Brenna Brillhart                                                                                                                 |
| <b>11:30 pm – 12:30 pm</b> |                   | <i>Break / Visit Exhibitors</i>                                                                                                                                                    |
| <b>12:30 pm – 2:00 pm</b>  | Ballroom          | Luncheon and Awards Ceremony                                                                                                                                                       |

| Time                     | Location                           | Session                                              |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
|                          | (La Frontera<br>3 & 4)             |                                                      |
| <b>2:00 pm – 3:00 pm</b> | Ballroom<br>(La Frontera<br>3 & 4) | Mental Health: Deafblind<br>Presenter: Keva Richmond |

## **Exhibitors**

[All Blind Children of Texas](#)

[American Society of Deaf Children](#)

[Deafblind Community of Texas](#)

[Deaf-Blind Multihandicapped Association of Texas](#) (DBMAT)

[HHSC Blind Children's Program](#)

[Helen Keller National Center for Deafblind Youths and Adults](#)

[National Family Association for Deaf-Blind](#) (NFADB)

[National Center on Deafblindness](#) (NCDB)

[Partners Resource Network](#)

[Texas Chargers, Inc.](#)

[Texas Hands & Voices™](#)

[Texas Parent to Parent](#)

[Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired Curriculum Department](#)

[Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired – Family Lynx](#)

[Texas School for the Deaf Statewide Outreach Center](#)

[Texas Tech University: Special Education – Deafblindness](#)

[Texas Workforce Commission – Blind Services Division – DeafBlind Program](#)

[Touch Base Center for the Deafblind](#)

[Touch Seeds](#)

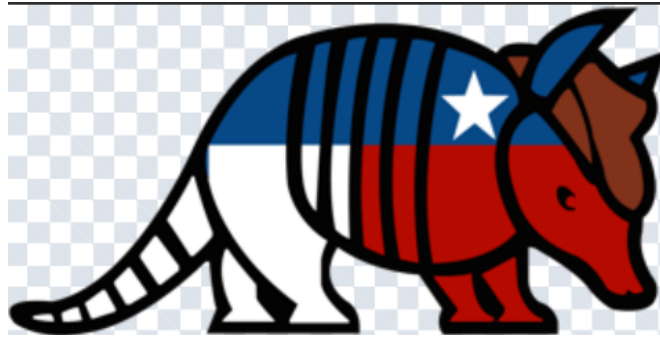
## Sponsors

We would like to thank the following sponsors of the 2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education.



**Touch Base: Center for the Deafblind**

[www.touchbasecenter.org](http://www.touchbasecenter.org) 832-877-3333 Houston, Texas



**Figure 2 Deafblind Community of Texas**



**Figure 3 TSBVI logo**

## Session Code Form

Session codes will be provided at the end of each session. Enter the codes in the online evaluation to receive credit for attending the conference and obtain CEUs.

### Pre-Symposium: Thursday, February 27, 2025

Table 4 Sessions for February 27th

| Time                  | Session Title                                                                                           | Session ID | Room                  | Code |
|-----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|-----------------------|------|
| 1:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. | Deafblind 101: Laying the Foundation for a Meaning Conference                                           | 42120      | La Frontera 5 & 6     |      |
| 1:00 p.m. – 4:15 p.m. | Autism or Deafblindness: Consideration for Assessment and Intervention for Learners with Sensory Losses | 42121      | La Frontera 1, 2, & 3 |      |

**Maximum total CEUs for Thursday 3.00**

## Friday, February 28, 2025

Table 5 Sessions for Friday, February 28th

| Time                                                 | Session Title                                                                                                               | Session ID | Room                       | Code |
|------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|----------------------------|------|
| <b>General Session I</b><br>8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.   | Welcome, State of the State, Nation, and World in Deafblind Education                                                       | 42123      | Ballroom (La Frontera 3-6) |      |
| <b>General Session II</b><br>10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. | Tactile Sensations - a Basis for Language Development                                                                       | 42124      | Ballroom (La Frontera 3-6) |      |
| <b>General Session III</b><br>1:30 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.  | Achieving Success for Every Student: Working in Partnership with Families as You Launch Your Family Engagement Strategies   | 42125      | Ballroom (La Frontera 3-6) |      |
| <b>Breakout Session I</b><br>3:30 p.m. – 4:45 p.m.   | Behavior: Shifting Our Perspective For Positive Change                                                                      | 42126      | La Frontera 3              |      |
|                                                      | Play is Not Just Child's Work                                                                                               | 42127      | La Frontera 4              |      |
|                                                      | It Takes a Village: Team Collaboration for Students who are Deafblind                                                       | 42128      | La Frontera 5 & 6          |      |
|                                                      | Touch Base Center for the Deafblind: Tips on how to have a Meaningful Day Program for People Who Are Deafblind in Your Area | 42129      | La Frontera 1 & 2          |      |

**Maximum total CEUs for Friday 5.75**



## Saturday, March 1, 2025

**Table 6 Sessions for Saturday, March 1st**

| Time                                                   | Session Title                                                                                                         | Session ID | Room                         | Code |
|--------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|------|
| <b>Breakout Session II</b><br>8:30 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.    | Learning Together: Sharing Insights from Travelers Who Are DeafBlind and Certified Orientation & Mobility Specialists | 42143      | La Frontera 5 & 6            |      |
|                                                        | What In The World Is a Functional Tactile-Bodily Assessment?                                                          | 42144      | La Frontera 1 & 2            |      |
|                                                        | Deafblind, The Brain, Learning, and Behavior                                                                          | 42145      | La Frontera 4                |      |
|                                                        | Tactile Strategies - Developing Communication and Cognition                                                           | 42146      | La Frontera 3                |      |
| <b>Breakout Session III</b><br>10:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. | Recognizing and mitigating communication-related stressors Across Multiple Settings in Deafblind students             | 42147      | La Frontera 3                |      |
|                                                        | Expanded Core Curriculum Considerations for Students who are Deafblind                                                | 42148      | La Frontera 4                |      |
|                                                        | Who Are Proficient Communicators and How Can We Support Them?                                                         | 42149      | La Frontera 1 & 2            |      |
|                                                        | Access to Language is a Human Right                                                                                   | 42150      | La Frontera 5 & 6            |      |
| <b>General Session IV</b><br>2:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.     | Mental Health: Deafblind                                                                                              | 42152      | Ballroom (La Frontera 3 & 4) |      |

**Maximum total CEUs for Saturday 3.50**

**Maximum total CEUs for symposium: 12.25**