

In-School Predictors of Post-School Employment for Deaf-Blind Youth

What Were We Trying to Learn?

Many young people who are deaf-blind struggle to find and keep jobs after leaving school. Our study found a number of factors linked to better odds of deaf-blind youth finding a job and keeping that job for at least six months. Prior to this study, there was no research looking at employment among deaf-blind youth. Our study explores factors that are related to employment for young people who are deaf-blind. We focused on factors that occurred while these young people were in high school. We explored how these factors impact the odds of a youth finding a paid job and then keeping that job for at least six months.

What Are the Most Important Things We Learned?

Among the deaf-blind young people in our study, a little more than half (53.8%) had a paid job at some point within eight years of leaving high school. Only 38.5% had held a post-high school job for more than six months.

We found two factors linked to **higher odds of finding a paying job after leaving school:**

1. **Paid high school work experience:** Deaf-blind youth were more likely to find employment if they had worked for pay at some point while they were in high school. In fact, youth with work experience were almost three times more likely to find employment than youth with no work experience.
2. **Parent expectations:** The higher parents' expectations were that their child could get a paid job and earn enough to be self-supporting, the more likely their child was to find a job after leaving high school.

We found three factors linked to **higher odds of maintaining a post-high school job** for at least six months:

1. **Receiving vocational-education services:** Deaf-blind young people were more likely to maintain a job if they had received career counseling, help finding a job, job-skills training, or vocational-education services at some point during high school. The youth who received these services were more than twice as likely to maintain a job for at least six months than young people who did not get these services.
2. **Parent expectations:** The higher parents' expectations were that their child could get a paid job and earn enough to be self-supporting, the more likely their child was to maintain a job for at least six months.
3. **Number of additional disabilities:** Deaf-blind youth with a high number of additional disabilities whose parents had moderate to high expectations for them were very likely to keep a job for at least six months. On the other hand, deaf-blind youth with additional disabilities whose parents had low expectations for them were very unlikely to maintain a job.

Research Takeaway

Many young people who are deaf-blind struggle to find and keep jobs after leaving school. Our study found a number of factors linked to better odds of deaf-blind youth finding a job and keeping that job for at least six months.

How Do These Findings Relate to Me?

1. **Educate parents about employment possibilities for their children who are deaf-blind.**

Parental expectations were strongly related to whether a young person would find a job and whether they would keep a job for at least six months. For parents to hold their children to a high standard, they must know that employment is possible for their child. If parents learn early on that their child is fully capable of working, they can set high expectations for their child from a young age.

This is especially important for deaf-blind children with additional disabilities, who often require parental assistance and other supports to obtain and maintain a job. These parents in particular might have serious doubts about their child's ability to work. Our findings indicate that, if parents commit to the idea that their deaf-blind child with additional disabilities is able to work, that child is very likely to work.

Beginning in their child's elementary years, connect parents with people who are deaf-blind who have various types of jobs. Provide parents with information about how they can help prepare their child for employment. Be sure that employment-related materials for parents are accessible, understandable, and user-friendly. **Conversations about employment should occur early and often for maximum impact.**

2. **Connect youth who are deaf-blind with mentors.** When possible, link deaf-blind youth with individuals who are also deaf-blind and who work in a career field of interest to the youth. Exposure to working individuals who are also deaf-blind can help both parents and youth set high expectations for future employment. Connect parents and youth with consumer organizations for individuals who are deaf-blind; such groups are great places to meet mentors and role models.

3. **Encourage young people who are deaf-blind to gain paid work experience during high school.** Deaf-blind youth are one of the disability groups that are least likely to work during high school. Among the young people in our study, less than half (44.0%) held a paid job at any time during high school. Encourage the deaf-blind youth you work with to seek paid employment while they are in high school and help facilitate the job-search process.

Work with deaf-blind youth on the skills needed for employment, beginning at an early age. Ensure the individualized education programs of deaf-blind children include specialized services to prepare them to work. Whenever possible, these services should be provided by experts in deaf-blindness.

4. **Make sure deaf-blind youth have access to vocational-education services.** These services improved the odds of deaf-blind young people maintaining employment, and they should be a regular part of the high school curriculum for all young people who are deaf-blind. Deaf-blind youth should also be referred to their state vocational rehabilitation agency while in high school, where counselors can work with them to find and keep employment.

How Was This Project Carried Out?

We analyzed data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2), which explored the experiences of a nationally representative sample of youth with disabilities during secondary school and the transition to post-school life. Data were gathered from 2001-2009 and included interviews, surveys, and school transcripts. Our sample for this study included about 100 deaf-blind young people.

Learn More

Findings were taken from the following article:

Cmar, J. L., McDonnall, M. C., & Markoski, K. M. (2018). In-school predictors of post-school employment for youth who are deaf-blind. *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, 41(4), 223-233.

For more information about this project, visit the project overview page: Exploration of Secondary Data to Increase our Knowledge About Subpopulations of Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired and WIOA Impacts. For additional deaf-blindness resources, visit our products page.

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