

# FACT SHEET

## COMMUNICATION

*What is he trying to tell me?*

Some students with dual sensory impairments cannot express some or all of what they want to say through speech, sign language, fingerspelling, writing, or gestures. When students cannot express themselves in these traditional ways, they often choose other ways of expression. The students choose the way that is easiest to get their message across. This expression is communication. The student may communicate through facial expression, body movement, posture, vocalization, crying, tantrums, etc. Parents and/or professionals frequently see these reactions as behaviors that need to be eliminated, when in fact the student is trying to communicate and becomes more and more frustrated when his communication is misunderstood. If, instead, the student's attempt to communicate can be acknowledged and expanded, difficult behaviors may begin to decrease.

### Points to Remember:

1. Look at all of the student's behavior as an attempt to communicate.
2. Be sure the student has had medical problems eliminated.
3. Attempt to understand the student's communication efforts.
4. Teach the student a more acceptable way to communicate what he has to say, after showing you understand the effort.

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**The Project for New Mexico  
Children & Youth Who Are  
Deafblind**



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*Fact sheets from the Project for NM Children & Youth Who Are Deafblind are to be used by both families and professionals serving individuals with dual sensory impairments. The information applies to students 0 – 21 years of age. The purpose of the fact sheet is to give general information on a specific topic. More specific information for an individual student can be provided through individualized technical assistance. The fact sheet is a starting point for further information. Information for this Fact Sheet kindly supplied by California Deaf-Blind Services and the Nevada Dual Sensory Impairment Project.*