

FACT SHEET

Tips for Students With Usher Syndrome

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Classroom Accommodations and Adaptations:

Lighting:

- ◆ Lighting should be adequate without glare. Use full spectrum lighting whenever possible.

Seating:

- ◆ Teachers should provide group instruction from a non-cluttered background area, and avoid unneeded movement.
- ◆ Windows should be behind students. Teacher should never be in front of windows.
- ◆ Furniture should be arranged to provide easy movement in open space. Keep drawers and doors closed. Discuss all furniture rearrangement with students. Seat students where they are comfortable (e.g., possible front side so they can see the chalkboard and other students in the class).

Classroom Environment:

- ◆ Chalkboard should be cleared of unneeded marks, and regular printing (instead of all capital letters) used. Use white chalk only.
- ◆ Colors should be softly neutral, yet textured, in the background of the teaching area. Floors and carpets should not be dark red or brown.

Materials:

Learning Media:

- ◆ Conduct a learning media assessment to determine appropriate learning media and strategies.
- ◆ Print should be maximum contrast. Avoid dittos; if dittos must be used, give the student a yellow acetate overlay to use.
- ◆ Use non-glare paper, and evaluate the size of type which is most appropriate for individual students.
- ◆ Develop the use of tactile skills as early as possible.

Individualized Classroom Materials and Procedures:

- ◆ Students may need individual copies of wall-hung graphs or charts, or they may need time to examine these charts close-up.
- ◆ Tests may have to be adapted for individual use, including allowing students to mark answers on test booklets or providing the test in a different format.

Assistive Technology:

- ◆ Low-vision aids may eventually be prescribed, and assistive listening devices can be used.

Techniques:

Sign Language

- ◆ Others may have to adapt their sign language to adjust to the student's limited vision. Keep signs as small and concise as possible, and increase the duration of each sign. Eventually, tactile sign may be an option.
- ◆ Interpreting services may be necessary to allow access to instruction and interaction. Evaluate the need for these services on a regular basis, to ensure that the student is aware of what is happening around him or her.
- ◆ Begin including more and more tactile and olfactory materials and cues for the student. A vision teacher and/or an orientation and mobility specialist can recommend techniques to use during specific activities.

Orientation and Mobility:

- ◆ Document the assessment and support needs for the student to travel independently.
- ◆ Explore the use of sighted guide, self-protective techniques and trailing skills, and land marking skills and techniques.

Time Allowances:

- ◆ For all tasks, students may need "time and a half" to complete the same work as their peers. When doing repetitive academic work, students can be assigned half the questions or problems their peers are assigned to equalize the length of time spent in homework or academic drill.

Self Advocacy:

Adaptations and Accommodations:

- ◆ Assist the student in developing strategies to discuss necessary adaptations and accommodations, or to communicate other needs.

Independence:

- ◆ Encourage the student and family to link with others for support and networking.

References:

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**The Project for New Mexico
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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.