



The Illinois Family Leaders Collaboration Group Presents the Second Annual New Dreams Conference at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield on April 12, 2008.

This year Project Reach is having the Parent Weekend in conjunction with the New Dreams Conference in Springfield. We will sponsor 20 families to attend this conference. Philip Rock Center is donating money to the Illinois Family Leaders Collaboration Group to sponsor a speaker of the conference. Project Reach will pay for the hotel room for 2 nights and reimburse expenses for travel @ .48 ½ cents per mile.

We will provide a room for the parent chat on Saturday night from 7:00 – 10:00 pm on April 12, 2007.

Parents from the New Dream Conference will be invited to join our parent chat.

Childcare will not be provided.

Watch the mail for information from Project Reach/Philip Rock Center to register. For more information about the conference contact Family Matters – www.fmptic.org 866-436-7842.

Project Reach - Parent Weekend
has a
NEW LOOK: We are joining the New
Dreams Conference.
Save the Date...

NEW DREAMS CONFERENCE
Resources and Inspiration
for Adult Family Members
and Caregivers
of Children with Disabilities
April 12, 2008
At the Crowne Plaza
in Springfield

SAVE THE DATE!

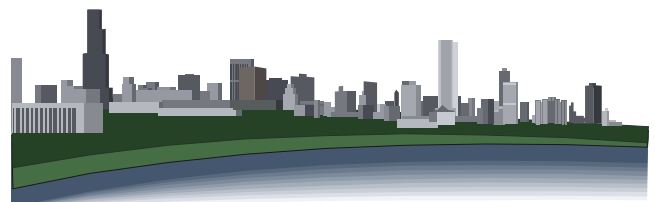
CHICAGO: My AER Kind of Town
July 22-27, 2008
AER International Conference
Downtown Marriott Hotel
Chicago, IL

It's time to save the dates: July 22-27, 2008! Your AER International Conference Committee wants to let you know that work is already well underway for our 2008 International Conference. The setting is one of America's premier cities, Chicago, and the hotel is the Downtown Marriott located close to Chicago's famed Miracle Mile Shopping, convenient to the Navy Pier, and situated on major public transportation routes. A few of the highlights you can expect are:

- The conference theme is: Chicago: My AER Kind of Town signifying the welcoming of our host chapter to Chicago and that each AER attendee is part of their conference.
- The city offers much for conference attendees to do and see.
- The conference will also offer a wonderful professional experience starting with the MacFarland Seminar. The seminar's theme is "Prosthetic Vision." It's not yet the world envisioned in science fiction, but the science fact is remarkable. By the time the conference meets it is likely that several companies will be in Phase III clinical trials of retinal implants and there may be as many as two or three hundred people using prosthetic vision as part of those clinical trials. This science fact is emerging quickly and we as professionals need to understand the technology and what a person using these prosthetics will "see". The MacFarland Seminar will provide you a forum to learn the technology, understand how its being

disseminated, and begin to understand our roles as professionals in forming consumers and meet those developing and using the systems so that we can begin to learn how our professionals expertise can be applied in working with new recipients of this technology and integrate their regained sight into their lives.

- Division Day offers AER Division an opportunity to develop a one day educational program for their members.
- The 2008 International Conference will offer a full program of applied and research presentations. The call for papers for this program will go out soon with the submission time frame being September through October.
- A unique feature of this conference will be the inclusion of the O & M conference within the AER conference. This will allow an expansive O & M program that his Division felt was very necessary, as well as the breadth of programming that the AER conference will offer. If feedback from attendees is positive about the benefit of this model it may become a continuing format wherein Divisions can have the time necessary to address their unique and comprehensive needs.
- Host night will provide Chicago's unique brand of entertainment to attendees and there will also be a "free night on the town" so that we ensure you at least have an evening to enjoy one or more of the city highlights.
- This conference is our fields premier event and a unique opportunity for networking, meeting old friends and making new friends.
- This is AER's conference and we hope you can take advantage of this membership benefit.
- And, AER welcomes all our colleagues from allied fields to share in this event and join AER in working to improve services for all blind and low vision consumers.



Project Reach: Illinois Deaf-Blind Specialists

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- Call: Philip J. Rock Center (630)790-2474
- Email: michelleclyne@sbcglobal.net

Karen Windy - Northwest/Central part of Illinois

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Jean Osterby - Assists with Northwestern part of the state

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New Law in Illinois Requires Eye Exams For Children Entering School

On October 10, 2007, the Illinois General Assembly passed SB 641 into law. This new law requires comprehensive eye examinations for children entering kindergarten or enrolling for the first time in public, private, or parochial elementary schools in Illinois. Only examinations completed by “qualified eye doctors” (optometrists and ophthalmologists) are acceptable.

The law officially takes effect January 1, 2008. Proof of the required examination must be given to the school by October 15 of the school year. Illinois is the third state to enact such a law. Kentucky and Missouri currently have laws in place.



The Importance of Orientation And Mobility Skills For Students Who Are Deaf-Blind

D. Jay Gense, Ed.S. & Marilyn Gense, M.A.
(Article reprinted from *D-B Link* – Revised October 2004)

Children learn about their environment as they move through it—about people and objects, sizes, shapes, and distances. For typically developing children the senses of sight and hearing provide the greatest motivation for exploration. These children will use their vision and hearing to gather information about their surroundings while growing in understanding of their own bodies and their own capabilities of movement. The sight of toys or people and the sounds of voices or objects encourage them to move and discover. As they do so, they gather, recognize, and interpret an amazing array of sensory information.

A child who is deafblind must learn to understand his or her environment with minimal or distorted visual and auditory information. Limited sight and/or hearing may inhibit natural curiosity and the motivation to move about.

Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instruction provides students who are deafblind with a set of foundational skills to use residual visual, auditory and other sensory information to understand his or her environment. For the child who is deaf-blind, movement is an opportunity to gather sensory information, to communicate, and to make choices. O&M instruction provides opportunities and skills that can broaden the student's awareness of the environment, resulting in increased motivation, independence and safety.

What is O&M for the Child Who Is Deaf-Blind?

Orientation skills allow us to know where we are, where we are going, and how to think about and plan strategies for getting to a destination. **Mobility** involves the actual movement from place to place.

Along with communication skills and daily living skills, O&M skills are essential for all children who are deaf-blind. The ability to understand the environment and to move safely within it is an important component of future development, success, and independence.

O&M instruction for individuals who are deaf-blind is designed to teach them to move as independently and as purposefully as they are able. For some children who are deaf-blind, it is reasonable and desirable to expect that they will move about independently in both indoor and outdoor environments. This independence may mean using a long white cane to cross streets successfully and learning to use city transportation systems. For others, O&M instruction will provide the skills necessary to allow independent movement within the classroom or within the home. At a more basic level, and for children with limited motoric capabilities, increased independence will mean that they have better developed residual senses and can more fully understand and interpret information from their environments. They may come to understand where an object is located and where the object is in relation to their own bodies. They will have the ability to move with purpose, perhaps to extend an arm or roll to obtain that object.

While outcomes and expectations may be different for the student who is deaf-blind, the instruction is similar to that for a child with only visual impairment or blindness. The most important adaptations are those related to **communication**. The O&M instructor will need to ensure that instructions are given to the student in his or her primary language. This may require the use of an interpreter and the development of touch cues or object cues. Certain accommodations that enable the student to interact with the public also need to be developed. \

For some children, the lack of auditory and visual input may have severely limited opportunities to learn about his/her environment and to develop the language to talk about it. O&M instruction must often be augmented by hands-on learning to make up for the child's lack of prior experience. Language instruction is an integral part of any O&M training experience.

Instructional Strategies

It is best to view O&M instruction, as identified in the student's IEP or IFSP, as a process that begins with assessment. The process is cyclical and ongoing.

Once a program is developed and implemented, the evaluation is ongoing, with data used to inform decisions about changes that may be necessary for instruction. All instructional components of each child's program must be continuously evaluated for effectiveness, with modifications made as necessary.

Assessment

Initial assessment of O&M skills provide the foundation for future program planning. The O&M specialist will work closely with other team members to identify and implement appropriate assessment techniques. Assessment may include the following:

- Informal student observation, conducted in natural environments in which the student interacts (home, school, etc.).
- Assessment of communication skills and necessary adaptations.
- Parent/caretaker interviews.
- Formal assessment of orientation and mobility skills.
- Assessment of learning modalities.
- Developmental assessment of: Sensory Skills, Cognition & Motor skills (gross and fine).
- Environmental analysis. Environment analysis is a key component of the assessment process. The various environments in which the student is involved should be assessed for safety. The need for any modifications that may enhance a child's ability to travel in and understand the environment should also be assessed.

Program Development and Implementation

Communication. Developing ways to communicate presents the most significant challenge for children who are deaf-blind. Communication issues must be addressed in every aspect of instruction. For example, planning for instruction in areas such as concept development must take into account that although the child may be able to perceive the shape or configuration of a hallway

intersection, he or she may need to be taught the specific language ("triangle" or "corner") for that perception.

Children who are deaf-blind use a variety of communication methods including tactile sign language or American Sign Language (ASL), speech, gestures, fingerspelling, augmentative devices, pictures, objects, body movements, behavior, and facial expressions. Instruction strategies must incorporate the child's primary communication methods.

Motor development includes both gross and fine motor skills and focuses on developing and/or enhancing a student's motor abilities. These skills involve large muscle movements such as walking or running, as well as the finer skills associated with hand and wrist movements.

Concept development is closely linked to general cognitive development. It involves the understanding of sizes, shapes, and functions of objects, as well as spatial and positional relationships. It includes the awareness and knowledge of one's own and another's body, an understanding of the body parts, of their movement capabilities, and of body part relationships.

Concept development also incorporates an understanding of and knowledge about the environment. For example, a child who is deaf-blind may not understand the concept of a

“multistory” building without specific instruction. He may know that he’s walked up a flight of stairs, but does he understand that he is “above” the hallway he just was in? Does he know that there may be several stories still above him?

Sensory development optimizes a student’s ability to utilize the senses of residual sight and hearing, as well as the tactile, olfactory, and kinesthetic senses. Most students who are deaf-blind have residual hearing and/or sight, and instruction can be provided to help them learn to use this sensory information to understand and interpret information they are gathering through their senses. It is important to teach the child to interpret sensory information, assisting him or her to use this information for purposeful movement.

Orientation skills enable the student to use sensory information to move purposefully in the environment. Orientation skills instruction is designed to teach the student to use environmental cues (e.g., sounds, smells, and visual or tactile stimuli) to provide information about the present location and information about this location relative to other locales. For example, a child may learn to recognize that she is in the kitchen from the smell of coffee brewing or the living room because of the sensation of the carpet beneath her feet. This information enhances her understanding about the environment and how to move within it.

Mobility skills incorporate those O&M techniques that promote movement through the environment with safety and ease. These skills include walking with another person (guided travel), self-protection skills, and cane travel. For some, these also include the use of dog guides and electronic travel aids. For young children, these mobility skills will include early purposeful movements such as crawling and walking. **U**

Parent Support Group

The University of
Medical Center
Support Group
Hearing Impaired
Children ...



Chicago
Parent
Support Group
for Parents of
Hearing Impaired
Children ...

is a group open to any family with hearing impaired or deaf children. The group meets on the second Saturday of each month from 10:00 a.m. to noon.

Their mission is “to optimize communication and education of hearing impaired children by providing professional services and support to parents including but not limited to the following areas of care as they relate to hearing and hearing loss: Medical/surgical, audiology, hearing aid and cochlear implant technology, speech/language pathology, aural rehabilitation, education, SSI benefits, and legal advice”.

Meetings are held at the Center for Advanced Medicine, 5758 S. Maryland Avenue, Room DCAM 1402, Chicago. Babysitting is available. Call (773)702-9022 for more information. **n**

2009 – CHARGE Syndrome Conference

The 9th International CHARGE Syndrome Conference will be held on July 24th–July 26th, 2009 in Bloomingdale, Illinois, which is located about thirty minutes from exciting downtown Chicago. The conference will be at the Indian Lakes Resort, 250 West Schick Rd., Chicago, IL.

The conference will begin on Friday, July 24, at 8:30 am and conclude on Sunday, July 26th at noon. There will be an informal get-together on Thursday evening, July 23rd. Childcare will be provided during the meeting on Friday, Saturday and Sunday for all children who have registered for this program. For more information check the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation website at www.chargesyndrome.org. **V**

IATP - LIVING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

We live in the age of technology. We are all linked to our computers, our cell phones, our PDAs. Our classrooms are filled with technology and sometimes our kids know more about it than we do. It touches all parts of our lives.

Technology is also a vital part of services for students with disabilities, including those with deafblindness. **The Illinois Assistive Technology Program (IATP)** is a statewide, not-for-profit agency, in its seventeenth year of service. It was one of the first nine states funded under the Technology-Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities Act of 1988, as amended.

Promoting Independent Living Through Technology for All People with Disabilities in Illinois

IATP believes that disability is a natural part of the human experience and in no way diminishes a person's right to:

- live independently, enjoy self-determination and make choices, benefit from an education, pursue meaningful careers and enjoy full inclusion and integration in the economic, political, social, cultural, and educational mainstream of society in the United States.

IATP's primary focus is on education, employment, community living, information technology and telecommunications. Our mission is to enable people with disabilities so they can fully participate in all aspects of life. Our services include:

- State Financing – Tech Connect is an alternative financing program for individuals with disabilities and their families.
 - **Low Interest Loan Program** people with disabilities can borrow money at a low interest rate; with extended terms and flexible approval criteria that supports getting assistive technology devices, services and home and vehicle modifications.
 - **Telework Low Interest Loans provide** individuals with disabilities the opportunity to borrow money at a low interest rate, with extended terms and flexible approval criteria to start or improve a home-based business.
- Device Reutilization - **AT Classifieds** provides an online database of assistive technology devices available for sale or donation. Individuals can list AT items to sell or shop for a device. The service is free and provides individuals with disabilities the opportunity to acquire needed AT at a reduced cost.
- **Device Loans** – The purpose of IATP's device loan program is to let potential AT users “try-out” devices prior to purchase, have access to a backup system when their device is in for repairs and/or have access to a device while waiting for their device to be delivered. There are over 1,000 devices in the loan inventory. In 2006, IATP loaned 1,043 devices to consumers statewide.
- Device Demonstration – Located in Springfield, IATP **AT Demonstration Center** showcases a wide variety of assistive technology devices. Consumers, family members and service providers spend hours touring the center learning about and trying out new devices.
- State Leadership Activities Include:
 - Public Awareness and **Information and Assistance**. IATP conducts Public Awareness activities that are intended to reach large numbers of people such activities include **Newsletter**, other print materials, **Presentations, Exhibits, Conferences**. Through these various venues individuals are educated about IATP and its services, AT device, services, funding resources etc. Through its **800 numbers**, IATP responds to request for information and/or puts individuals in contact with other agencies, organizations or companies that can provide the caller with needed information on AT products, devices, services, funding sources, or other related disability topics, or providing intensive assistance to individuals about AT products, devices, services funding sources or other related disability topic
 - Training and Technical Assistance – IATP conducts numerous training activities each year that are designed to increase participants' knowledge, skills and competences regarding AT. IATP provides technical assistance to assist programs and agencies in improving their services, management policies and/or outcomes with respect to AT devices and services.
 - **Coordination and Collaboration** – IATP coordinates and collaborates on the provision of its state level and its state leadership activities with both public and private agencies to increase the access to and the acquisition of assistive technology devices and services.

IATP is located at: 1 West Old State Capital Plaza, Suite 11, Springfield, IL 62701. Voice: 217-522-7985, TTY: 217-522-9966, Fax: 217-522-8067, V/TTY IL Only: 800-852-5110. Website: www.iltech.org.

Please return the following information to: Philip J. Rock Center and School

- Please make no changes to my address and keep me on your mailing list
- Please take my name off the mailing list.
- Please make the following changes on my mailing address label.
- Please add my name to the newsletter mailing list.
- Please mail me a large print edition of the newsletter.
- Please mail me a Braille edition of the newsletter.

Name: _____

Parent/Job Title/Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Comments:

Thank you!

A Publication of the Philip J. Rock Center and School...Serving individuals who are both auditorily and visually impaired. 818 DuPage Blvd., Glen Ellyn, IL 60137 – Voice: (630)790-2474, Fax: (630)790-4893, TTY: (800)771-1158, [www. project-reach-illinois.org](http://www.project-reach-illinois.org); email: PRC@aol.com

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