



# Texas School for the Blind & Visually Impaired

## Outreach Programs – Texas Deafblind Project

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## **Learning to Trust, the Key to Quality Intervention**

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If you are sick and have a choice, do you go to just any doctor or to one that you are familiar with? If you didn't have a doctor you trusted, you may pick your doctor out of the phone book, but you are more likely to ask people you know (and trust) for recommendations. If you tried a new doctor and found that you really do not trust or like her, would you stay with her? Not if you had other options. Even with something that is not as critical as health care such as a hair stylist or a car mechanic, you don't want to come back to people who you do not trust or like.

When I first became a classroom teacher, I believed my students would like me simply because I was "their teacher"! Well, let's think about this.

Did they know me? NO!

Did someone tell them I was an okay person? NO!

" Did they get to pick me for their teacher? NO!

Building trust with your student is a critical first step in providing instruction, especially if the child is deafblind. Here are some simple suggestions on how to build trust in your relationship with your student who is deafblind.

1. I believe it is critical for a new person to be introduced to the child through their parents or other trusted adult and in the child's familiar environment, typically their home setting.
2. Ask the parent to guide their child's hand (using hand-under-hand technique) gently to yours.
3. Allow the child all the time he/she needs to feel hands, rings, your watch or other distinguishing features such as your hair or mustache.
4. If the student does not readily explore using hands, the parent may want to keep his/her hands in proximity to the child's just to reassure or confirm that they know you and that you are okay.

5. Have the parent or trusted adult say your name while the child is exploring to learn who you are.
6. You may also want to have the parent(s) engage the child in a favorite turn-taking activity such as hand game, singing, or rocking and then, gradually, bring you into the game with them. Physical proximity to the child and their parent allows the child time to get used to you from a place of safety.
7. Don't separate the child from the parents until you have been "blessed" and the child will interact briefly with you or consent to have you included in the interaction.

Building trust is such an important part of any relationship, and sometimes it takes so little to put a child at ease. Going into the child's home and being "introduced" to the child by his/her parents has always opened the door for me or if not going into the home, at least making sure I have been properly recommended by someone the child trusts. Maybe the child recognizes the sound of my voice, my scent, or some item I regularly wear (such as a bracelet or ring). Maybe he/she remembers playing with me and his/her parents. Whatever it is, the child always seems to feel more at ease when he encounters me outside the home. It's almost as if I hear him/her saying, "I remember you! You were in my home last night. You played with me and my Dad. You must be okay."

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