Deaf + Blind = 
Hearing Loss + Vision Loss

What is Deaf-Blind?
The term “Deaf-Blind” is a general term used for the population who has combined hearing and vision loss in varying degrees. Often, when we see the word “deaf-blind,” we think of a person who is totally deaf and blind. However, each individual who has hearing and vision loss is different.

What are the types of vision loss?

- **Visual acuity**: 20/70 or higher requiring large print to read.  
  **Legal blindness**: 20/200 or higher.
- **Visual field loss**: peripheral vision loss; experiences difficulty in locating things in a timely manner, bumping or hitting things that are out of their visual field. A person is legally blind if vision field is less than 20 degrees in his or her better eye.
- **Light sensitivity**: (1) Sensitive to light/glare requiring adaptations to the environment, (2) lack of sensitivity to light requiring more light than a normal person would, or (3) night blindness—difficulty seeing in dark/dim environments as well as at night.
- **Contrast sensitivity**: Has difficulty seeing similar colors (i.e.: white/yellow, black/blue, red/pink, blue/green) requiring high contrast in clothing, printed text).

How do you identify a person with combined hearing and vision loss?

- **Hearing**: Misses certain sounds, has difficulty understanding in certain situations, or has difficulty understanding any speech (relies on other avenues of communication such as printed text, sign language, or gestures). Some people wear hearing aids.
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**Vision:** The individual may exhibit one or any combination of the following:

1) Difficulty reading regular print and prefers reading large print or is unable to read any print.

2) Misses certain items in the environment or needs “guiding” assistance by following a person or by holding a person’s arm. Some use white canes.

3) Has difficulty seeing things because of too much or too little light in the environment.

**What label do I use for individuals who have combined hearing and vision loss?**

When interacting with individuals who have both hearing and vision loss, ASK them how they identify themselves:

- Hard of Hearing-Visually Impaired
- Hard of Hearing-Blind
- Deaf-Blind
- Deaf-Visually Impaired

Use their preferred identifying label. RESPECT is one of the most important considerations in working with this population.

**For more information contact the Deaf-Blind Services Specialist at the Charlotte Regional Center (704-568-8558 or 800-835-5302) or the Raleigh Regional Center (919-874-2250 or 800-999-5737).**