**Alberta Society of the DeafBlind**

**Support Service Provider Role and Responsibilities**

**ASL Summary**

**Video Description and Transcript**

**Slide: Alberta Society of the DeafBlind logo**

The logo is a circle divided into four sections, each one a different colour: blue, red, gold and green. In the centre is a black circle with a small white circular section on the upper right side. The outer circle with the black centre represent an ‘eye’ and the colours represent diversity. To the right of the logo are lowercase letters asdb in large font. Below the asdb acronym the name of the organization is printed in full: Alberta Society of the DeafBlind.

A Deaf woman, Linda Cundy, is seated, in front of a black fabric background. She has short wavy brown hair. She is wearing a blue v-neck top with sleeves down to her elbows. She narrates the entire video in American Sign Language. The video has English voice-over and is captioned.

**Slide Title: Support Service Provider Role and Responsibilities**

The Alberta Society of the DeafBlind (ASDB) has prepared a detailed document regarding the role and responsibilities of the Support Service Provider (SSP).

**Slide Title: ASDB Philosophy**

The philosophy of ASDB is that the SSP and the DeafBlind person work together to maximize the empowerment of the DeafBlind person. The SSP and DeafBlind person should agree what is the best approach for each situation, keeping in mind safety, the design of the environment, the demands of the setting.

**Slide Title: ASDB Membership**

ASDB is a consumer-led organization. Our membership is comprised of DeafBlind, Hard-of-Hearing-Blind, Low-Vision-Deaf, Low-Vision-Hard-of-Hearing, and DeafBlind-Plus. Members also include allies: family members, Deaf community members, and service providers. Some of our members use American Sign Language (ASL) as their primary language, others spoken English.

**Title: Creating these resources**

After researching what is being done in Canada, and the USA, we prepared an English document and this ASL video as information tools, to raise awareness and increase the understanding of the important and complex role and responsibilities of the Support Service Provider (SSP). The ‘SSP’ term was coined in the USA some years ago. For consistency we are also using this term, though in some parts of Canada the term ‘intervenor’ is used for the same service role.

**Slide Title: SSP Role**

The SSP works with/for DeafBlind persons as they do their personal errands, tasks, appointments or activities. This is done in a manner that leads and enables the DeafBlind person to be as independent as possible. The SSP at all times empowers the DeafBlind person to make their own decisions, and to conduct their own business however they wish, keeping in mind the **safety of everyone**, including the SSP.

The SSP must maintain a courteous and respectful relationship with the DeafBlind person, and behave in a professional manner.

The SSP serves to connect the DeafBlind person to their environment. The SSP should maintain a constant connection (touch) with the DeafBlind person. For example, the SSP is encouraged to keep their hand on the shoulder or back of the DeafBlind person as they interact and have conversations with other people. The DeafBlind person will know that the SSP is still close by. If there is no touch, the DeafBlind person may feel lost, or may feel awkward searching for the SSP when they are finished with their conversation. This may lead to discomfort or embarrassment for the DeafBlind person. Again, the SSP and DeafBlind person should agree, in advance, regarding what is best for each situation.

The SSP guides the DeafBlind person to and from the location they are going to, as well as in and around the location, for the length of the time they are there.

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The purpose of SSP services is to enable DeafBlind persons to interact with, and navigate around the community, including core activities such as:

* Booking appointments
* Dealing with mail (computer or paper)
* Accessing information (TV, computer or paper)
* Shopping, banking, going to appointments, activities, events

When using the services of the SSP, the DeafBlind persons will determine the priorities of what they wish to focus on. The SSP takes direction from the DeafBlind person. At the same time the SSP must consider the DeafBlind individual’s medical, physical, developmental and cognitive abilities.

**Slide Title: SSPs have TWO primary responsibilities**

The two overarching responsibilities of the SSP are to:

1. Provide safe navigation / guiding while travelling
2. Continuously provide information about the environment

**Slide Title: Describing the Environment**

The SSP continuously describes the physical environment, the activities taking place around them, and the ‘atmosphere’ or ‘mood’ of their surroundings. This includes describing the people present, the people arriving or leaving as well as what is happening. DeafBlind persons want to be informed of what is happening around them, as to feel connected to their communities, and changes that may be taking place.

While in a group or social setting, it is not the SSP’s role to keep the DeafBlind person company. It is the SSPs’ role to describe the environment, identify the people who are present, and what is happening. The DeafBlind person will indicate to the SSP when they want to be led to other people present, or will indicate to the SSP to get the another person’s attention so the DeafBlind person can call them over. The SSP follows the DeafBlind person’s lead about what they want to do.

**Slide Title: Engaging in the community**

The SSP serves to facilitate the DeafBlind person’s common interactions in the community, for example with store clerks bank tellers, hair stylists, massage therapists, brief conversations with others. They have a key role enabling the DeafBlind person to attend social gatherings with family, friends, in the Deaf /Hard of Hearing communities, places of worship, hobby groups, clubs and to participate in volunteer responsibilities. As well the SSP supports participation in leisure and recreational activities, sporting or athletic events. SSPs may even assist with the DeafBlind person’s commute to their place of employment.

The SSP supports the DeafBlind person’s autonomy by describing the environment and guiding the DeafBlind person to engage in daily activities and tasks, even simple things, themselves. Some common examples include:

* At a buffet, serving their own food onto their plate
* Bringing their own tray of food from the mall food vendors to the table
* Pouring their own drink into the glass
* Pushing the elevator button
* Opening doors
* Pushing the WALK button themselves to cross the street
* Putting groceries in their cart, then on the conveyer, paying cashier, and packing the groceries themselves

The SSP can provide assistance with tasks when asked, particularly, if there are concerns about safety, or other factors, like spilling drinks or food.

However the SSP is not meant to be serving or ‘doing for’ the DeafBlind person so, typically, the DeafBlind person should be going with the SSP to do things, for example, to buy a meal from a food vendor, even if they cannot carry the food back to the table themselves due to safety or spilling risks.

**Slide Title: Accessing Information**

In this function of the SSP role, assistance is given for the DeafBlind person to attend to daily communication tasks, such as

* Reading / writing mail, reading / writing e-mail, texts, web sites, blogs
* Accessing information (TV, Internet, newspaper, magazines), etc.

**Slide Title: Communication Facilitators**

The SSP may also act in a separate but complimentary role as a “communication facilitator” (CF). The CF relays or ‘interprets’ ASL video conversations that take place on platforms such as FaceTime, Skype, or video relay services. This also extends to in-person situations where ASL is being used, such as events hosted by the Deaf community, or events that are interpreted like conferences, workshops, meetings, banquets, events, for example.

**Slide Title: Required Skills**

Because of the specialized skills required to work as an SSP, and the very personal role SSPs fulfill in the DeafBlind person’s life training is required that focuses on:

* The diversity of communication methods specific to working with DeafBlind people
* The diversity of navigation techniques specific to working with DeafBlind people
* The scope and limitations of the SSP role and responsibilities

**Slide Title: Required Skills – Language Fluency**

The SSP must be **fluent** in the language and communication preferences of the DeafBlind person whether they are English, American Sign Language, etc.

**Slide Title: Required Skills – Navigation / Guiding**

The SSP must understand how to safely guide DeafBlind people in various environment: walking, escalators, stairs, restaurants, offices, malls, public transit, etc. This includes making transportation accessible such as car, public transit, taxi, airplane.

The SSP must be skilled in using the techniques appropriate to the DeafBlind person’s personal navigation needs and preferences

**Slide Title: Required Skills – Interpersonal Relationships**

In addition to all this, SSPs must possess ‘soft skills’ such as conflict management, positive interpersonal dynamics, including knowledge of concepts of empowerment and oppression, issues of influence and power, and the functions of allies and service providers.

**Slide Title: Code of Ethics**

SSPs as well as communication facilitators must adhere to a Code of Ethics and Code of Conduct. This is a separate document prepared by ASDB.

**Slide Title: NOT SSP Responsibilities**

The SSP role typically does **not** include:

* Interpreting - except for casual or simple social conversations
* Counseling, advising, or advocating
* Housekeeping or personal care such as bathing, grooming, or dressing
* Homecare such as administering medications, cooking, shopping
* Child minding (babysitting)
* Running errands on behalf of (for) the DeafBlind person
* Acting as a paid friend or companion

**Slide Title: Conclusion**

Support Service Providers fulfill an important function in the DeafBlind and mainstream community. SSP services prevent isolation and facilitate integral human needs such as:

* Self–determination
* Communication
* Intellectual stimulation
* Social inclusion
* Community contact

The DeafBlind community values the work of SSPs and relies on their skills to enable our independence. Their impact cannot be understated.

**Slide Title: Resources**

We hope you found this video instructive and informative. If you wish to learn more, our web site is an excellent resource with many more documents and ASL videos.

**Slide:** **Resources - More documents and videos** [www.albertadeafblind.ca](http://www.albertadeafblind.ca)

**Slide:** **Materials used to create the SSP Role & Responsibilities materials are cited in the English document**

**Slide:** **Thanks to Tracy Hetman for researching & writing the English document SSP Role & Responsibilities**

**Slide:** **Thanks to Linda Cundy for providing this ASL summary of the SSP Role & Responsibilities**

**Slide:** **Thanks to Alicia Ponciano for providing the English voice-over for this video**

**Slide:** **Thank You!**

**Slide: *Alberta Society of the DeafBlind logo***