



**WORLD FEDERATION
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Position Paper:
Including Deaf People with Intellectual Disabilities

developed with



Inclusion
international



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Position papers explain what the World Federation of the Deaf thinks about issues that are important to deaf people.

A position paper explains some of the big problems that deaf people face, and what our network wants the world to look like.

1. What is this position paper for?

Goal

This position paper is trying to explain that deaf people with intellectual disabilities have specific rights, and that they should be fully included in their communities.



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Who should read this?

This position paper is for people and organisations who work with deaf people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

For example, it is for:

- People who make decisions (like governments)
- People who work with deaf people with intellectual disabilities, like service providers
- Organisations that include deaf people with intellectual disabilities



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2. What is happening now for deaf people with intellectual disabilities and their families?

Many people who are deaf also have an intellectual disability.

Deaf people with intellectual disabilities are not always seen or included by their communities. They are more likely to be excluded and left behind.

Deaf people with intellectual disability have a right to communicate in sign language. They have a right to get good support to use communication. Sometimes deaf people with intellectual disabilities will be sent to live in places where people do not communicate with them in ways they understand.



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For example, they could be sent to live in institutions or with family that does not know how to sign.

When deaf people with intellectual disabilities do not start to sign language early on in their lives, this will make it more difficult for them to develop good communication skills. This also makes it harder for them to connect with other people in their communities.

For deaf people with intellectual disabilities, it can be a problem if other deaf people do not know how to communicate in an accessible way. For all people to grow and learn, we need to connect with other people in ways we understand. When this does not happen, deaf people with intellectual disabilities are



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excluded and can't reach their full potential.

3. What rights do deaf people with intellectual disabilities have?

For deaf people with intellectual disabilities to be fully included, they need to communicate in languages they understand (like sign languages). They need accessible communication.

Accessible communication means that what is being said is easy for everyone to understand. This is a basic need, and their human right.

The right to accessible communication is written down in many different places. For example:

- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (the UDHR) says that everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This means everyone has the right to share their ideas and thoughts.
- The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (the CRPD) says that deaf people with disabilities have the right to use sign languages to communicate with their government.



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- The CRPD also says that people with disabilities have the right to take part equally in their communities. This means that deaf people with intellectual disabilities have the right to have a social life and get services in ways they understand.

Deaf people with intellectual disabilities also have the right to fully take part in their communities. This means being included in deaf communities and also among hearing people in the community.

For people to be included in their communities, they need to have access to languages they understand and be able to use it to communicate with others.

For deaf people with intellectual disabilities, this means that they should get access to professional people who know how to interpret spoken languages into sign languages. Professionals can help make sure that deaf people with intellectual disabilities participate in places like schools, workplaces, communities, and with their families and supporters.

For deaf people to be included in communities, they need to be included at school. To make this happen, education systems need to be fully inclusive.



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Deaf people with intellectual disabilities can only fully take part in education if:

- They get information in a visual way, such as sign languages
- The ways they communicate are respected
- The style of teaching fits the way they learn
- They follow the same curriculum and lesson plans as everyone else, and
- They feel safe and like they belong at school.

Deaf people with intellectual disabilities also need to be around people their age who can use sign languages.

They also need to be around deaf adults who can be role models.



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It is also important for schools to check often to make sure inclusion is happening. This is called monitoring. Deaf learners with intellectual disabilities should also be asked what they think.

4. How can we make sure deaf people with intellectual disabilities are included?

There are many things that will help make sure deaf people with intellectual disabilities can take part in their communities. It is the job of decision-makers, like the government, to make these things happen.

- Governments should make sure deaf children with intellectual disabilities get support and learn sign language early on. Services that check the hearing of new babies can



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help make sure this happens. This type of programme is called a “universal newborn hearing screening program.”

- Governments should help families of deaf children with intellectual disabilities to learn sign language. This is important because deaf children with intellectual disabilities need to be able to understand their families at home.
- Governments should make sure deaf children with intellectual disabilities can be part inclusive spaces where they can meet others when they are young. This helps make sure they can make friends and meet people in their community.



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- Government should make sure that education is inclusive.

Job training programmes should also be inclusive.

- Governments and services should start planning to help people with the transition from being kids to becoming adults early.

- Service providers should make sure that professionals and people who give services understand what deaf people with intellectual disabilities need.

- Communities should make sure that deaf adults with intellectual disabilities are in contact with people who use sign languages. These people can communicate with them in an accessible way. This helps make sure they are



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included and can have a social life.

- Groups of deaf people should help groups of deaf people with intellectual disabilities to become part of their groups.
- Organisations of deaf people need to include everyone in their community. This includes deaf people with intellectual disabilities.
- Governments should make sure deaf people with intellectual disabilities get access to sign languages.
- Governments should include deaf people with intellectual disabilities and their families when they are planning programmes or policies. They should ask for ideas and



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involve them in making rules and doing research.

- Researchers and organisations should put out more information about what works for including deaf people with intellectual disabilities.

Where did the information in this position paper come from?

We used research, studies, and laws to write this paper.

This is a list of some of the things we read:



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<https://wfdeaf.org/news/wfd-position-paper-language-rights-deaf-children/>



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About the World Federation of the Deaf

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is an international organisation that does work on deaf people's human rights.

WFD has member organisations in 135 countries.

WFD's big goal is making sure that deaf people are equal in all parts of their life. They do work on topics like sign language, education, employment and community life.



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WFD is recognized by the United Nations and is a founding member of International Disability Alliance (IDA).

Website: www.wfdeaf.org

Email: info@wfdeaf.org

About the Down Syndrome International

Down Syndrome International (DSi) is the global network of people with Down syndrome and their families.

They want a better world where all people with Down syndrome are fully included in society.

They have over 150 member organisations worldwide and are a member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA).

Website: www.ds-int.org/

About Inclusion International

Inclusion International (II) is the global network of people with intellectual disabilities and their families.

II wants a world where people with intellectual disabilities and their families can fully take part.

They speak up for the inclusion of people with intellectual disabilities into their communities, where everyone should be



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valued equally.

It has over 200 member organizations in 115 countries.

Inclusion International is a founding member of the International Disability Alliance (IDA). It was a leader negotiating the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Website: www.inclusion-international.org

Email: info@inclusion-international.org