**Sample Legislative Ask for Ohio**

(Written by John Filek, Helen Keller National Center)

People who have a combined hearing and vision loss (commonly known “DeafBlind”) have no access to qualified direct services that allow them to accomplish the day-to-day tasks for a full and independent life.

**Legislative Ask:**

**Ohio Association of the DeafBlind** request statewide “Support Service Provider” (SSP) services for individuals who have a combined hearing and vision loss.

**What is a Support Service Provider?**

Support Service Providers (SSPs) are trained individuals who enable people who are DeafBlind to access their environments and make informed decisions by providing them with visual and environmental information, human guide services, and communication facilitation.

**The Importance of SSPs**

SSPs provide assistance with daily activities such as grocery shopping and errands; navigating throughout the community, communicating, and accomplishing tasks in environments such as stores, laundromats, and doctors’ offices; labeling foods, medications, and clothing; making telephone calls; and participating in family, community, recreational, and social events and activities.

**DeafBlind People in Ohio**

* Approximately **85,000 individuals** surveyed in Ohio said yes to two questions: (1) Are you deaf or have serious difficulty hearing? (2) Are you blind or have serious difficulty seeing even when wearing glasses? (2021 US Census Bureau’s American Community Survey)
* Currently, only a few places provide services for DeafBlind Ohioans and the ones that do exist are limited. For example, the program in Franklin County serves only adults age 60 and older.
* **Home and community-based service systems, such as the Personal Care Assistant (PCA) program,** could be expanded to include SSP services for all DeafBlind individuals to access daily “quality of life” tasks and remain independent.
* **Community Centers for the Deaf (under OOD)** should also add a line item to their budgets to include SSP training and services.
* The SSP model has been established for the past 40 years and is currently being used in over 30 SSP programs across the country. There is **no comprehensive statewide program providing DeafBlind people the direct services to meet daily needs**.

More information can be found at:

<https://www.helenkeller.org/resources/support-service-provider-white-paper/>

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