



January, 2009
Together for Independence

PRO HORIZONS

A Newsletter of the Project Reach/Philip J. Rock Center and School

PROJECT REACH GRANT FUNDED

Exciting News! Project Reach: Illinois Deaf-Blind Services has been fully funded for the next five-year grant cycle. The good news was received on September 17, 2008 and we are full speed ahead with many new and innovative ideas.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT

The purpose of Project Reach: Illinois Deaf-Blind Services is to improve services and results for Illinois children who are deaf-blind. The goal of the project is: To promote academic achievement by providing technical assistance, disseminating information, and implementing activities that are supported by scientifically based research in deaf-blindness and related fields. Project Reach is a statewide effort to help families and service providers address the needs of Illinois children with deaf-blindness.

The project employs four deaf-blind specialists, and two family specialists who live and work in different geographic areas of the state, and have a broad range of experience with children with deaf-blindness of all ages and developmental levels. They work with the children, their families, and current service providers, to help meet each child's very individual needs at home and at school.

CORE SERVICES MAINTAINED

PROJECT REACH GRANT FUNDED

Exciting News! Project Reach: Illinois Deaf-Blind Services has been fully funded for the next five-year grant cycle.

All the "core" services of Project Reach have been maintained intact from the previous grant cycle. Referrals for eligibility and technical assistance are still processed

through the project, housed at the Philip J. Rock Center in Glen Ellyn. Referral forms are available on the website at www.project-reach-illinois.org. The Deaf-blind Specialists can conduct a vision or hearing screening, or a functional vision or hearing assessment, to

determine whether an individual child is eligible for services. Technical assistance is offered in a variety of areas including communication, IFSP/IEP development, assistive technology, advocacy skills, orientation and mobility, social skills, recreation and leisure, transition, vision and hearing function, or behavior.

COACHING

If support is needed for a school or early intervention program, Project Reach works hand-in-hand with the current team of service providers. The goal is to give them the information and training they need to better meet the needs of a child with deaf-blindness on a daily basis, as most local programs do not have teachers or related services providers that have training or experience serving students with deaf-blindness. The deaf-blind specialist functions as a “coach.” She will be available for follow-up, whether that means answering questions, attending an IFSP or IEP meeting, providing additional training, or coming up with new strategies.

The goal is to help the current team to find and use proven, research-based interventions that work for an individual child, and that can be used over time to support that child’s success. Through this coaching model, local educational teams will gain the skills necessary to support both their student’s unique and exceptional needs, but also to support their access to and participation in the general education curriculum.

PARENT SUPPORT

A central goal of Project Reach services is to facilitate strong, positive relationships between parents and families of a child with deaf-blindness and their service providers. These relationships are vital, especially during key transition periods such as from early intervention to school services, or from school to adult services.

In addition to supporting needs at home and school, Project Reach helps families of children with deaf-

blindness connect with each other. Project Reach also has two family specialists on staff, who are themselves a family member of a person with disabilities. Their role is to link families together, either on an individual basis or through membership in IADB (Illinois Advocates for the Deaf-Blind.) IADB is an organization of parents, families, and friends, dedicated to protect the rights and advocate for the needs of all individuals who are deaf-blind.

RESOURCE CENTER

Project Reach continues to maintain a Resource Center; materials are available statewide, free of charge.

INFORMATION PACKETS AND MATERIALS

Information packets on a variety of topics including such areas as General Deaf-Blindness, Communication, and Vision and Hearing Accommodations. These packets and more are currently available by contacting Project Reach, and they will soon be immediately available through the website.

Project Reach has renewed its commitment to reaching families of all ethnic and racial groups, as well as those in difficult-to-reach rural areas of the state. Many of Project Reach’s materials are translated into other languages.

MODEL CLASSROOMS/MENTOR TEACHERS

With the advent of the new grant cycle, Project Reach will be developing a system of model classrooms and mentor teachers. A network of classrooms and teachers providing exceptional programs and services to children and youth with deaf-blindness will be enlisted to provide assistance to new technical assistance recipients. In order to begin identifying model classrooms, the Deaf-Blind Specialists will use the COI (Classroom Observation Instrument) for Educational Environments Serving

Students with Deaf-Blindness. Local staff from highly-rated classrooms will be coached to become mentor teachers.

TRAINING AND INSERVICES

Group training will also continue to be available on a variety of topics. Deaf-Blind Specialists are available to speak to groups from individual school districts, community agencies, support groups, and professional organizations, to name a few. Presentations are made regularly at local, state, and national conferences for professionals working students with disabilities.

HOW COOL IS TED?

Project Reach uses "TED", the Technical Assistance Effectiveness Database, to track and evaluate all the services we provide. Use of this FileMaker Pro software helps our project staff assure that eligible children are identified, and evaluates the effectiveness of the technical assistance provided.

ISTAC AND PARTNERSHIPS

Project Reach collaborates with a wide range of partners, to increase the effectiveness of services for students across the state. Most vital is participation with ISTAC, the Illinois Statewide Technical Assistance Center. In addition, the project maintains partnerships with groups know to have contact with children with deaf-blindness, or groups who are likely to do so. Some of these groups include parent groups, those devoted to children with specific etiologies, cultural/ethnic groups, early intervention agencies, early childhood services, professional groups related to vision and/or hearing loss, medical providers, and local school districts.

SUMMARY

With access to the innovative technical assistance activities of Project Reach, general and special education teachers serving students with deaf-blindness will increase their knowledge and understanding of their students' needs in order to increase student access to the general education curriculum, and be more involved in the curricular and extracurricular community of the school. Students who are able will increase participation in standard statewide assessments. Project Reach activities are consistent with the No Child Left Behind Act in providing support to teachers who are administering alternate assessments to students who are deaf-blind, ensuring that their vision and hearing needs are taken into consideration, and that the appropriate accommodations and adaptations are in place for these assessments. In addition, technical assistance from Project Reach will be provided across age levels, including for students at the critical point of transition to adult services.

HOW DO I MAKE A REFERRAL?

Referral for service requests to the project can be made by calling or writing to Tina Lechnick, Project Coordinator at:

**Project Reach
Philip J. Rock Center & School
818 DuPage Blvd.
Glen Ellyn, Illinois 60137**

**(630) 790-2474 / (800) 771-1158 (TTY)
and (630) 790-4893 (fax)**

You may also make a referral through accessing the Project Reach website, www.project-reach-illinois.org. You can download the Adobe Acrobat Reader version of the appropriate referral form, print it, fill it out and send it to Tina Lechnick at the above address, fill out an on-line form to submit electronically, or call one of the phone numbers above and request a fax or mailing of the referral form.

PHILIP J. ROCK CENTER AND SCHOOL IN GLEN ELLYN



Project Reach is centrally housed at the Philip J. Rock Center and School. The Philip J. Rock Center and School (PRC) serves two distinct functions in providing services to individuals who are deaf-blind.

- The residential school offers an intensive, comprehensive educational programs available for children who are deaf-blind in the 3-21 year age group.
- The Center provides a wide range of services on a statewide basis. Services are provided in schools, medical settings, early intervention centers and homes.

The combined Center and School concept makes possible a program which provides a continuum of services to children who are deaf-blind and their families, as well as limited services to the adults who are deaf-blind.

The Center and School is operated by The Illinois State Board of Education. The primary goal of the Philip J. Rock Center and School is to help people who are deaf-blind achieve maximum independence based on their individual potential.

PRC is located at
818 DuPage Boulevard in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.
You can contact the school at
(630) 790-2474, (800) 771-1158 (voice or TTY) or (Video phone).
By e-mail, the school can be reached at prc@philiprockcenter.org.

**Philip J. Rock School is accepting applications
for the Spring Quarter!**
Visit the school web site – www.project-reach-illinois.org.

MEET THE SPECIALISTS!

Project Reach employs four Deaf-Blind Specialists and two Family Specialists, located in various geographic areas of the state. Feel free to contact the Specialist in your area should you have questions, need training, or help.

The Deaf-Blind Specialists are:



Michelle Clyne, serving Chicago and Northeast Illinois
(630) 790-2474
mclyne@philiprockcenter.org



Karen Windy, serving Central and parts of Northwest Illinois
(815) 223-2037
windy61@sbcglobal.net



Carla Beck, serving Southern Illinois
(618) 483-3062
carlabeck@frontiernet.net



Jean Deptolla, serving Northwestern Illinois
(630) 790-2474 or (630) 709-1232
jdeptolla@philiprockcenter.org or jeansnewlife@aol.com

The Family Specialists are:



Yolanda Lopez
(773) 427-9770
jdlopez@sbcglobal.net



Karen Olehy
(309)694-9072
Kjo@bradley.edu

Yolanda is new to Project Reach with the advent of our new grant cycle. She is bilingual in English and Spanish. She is the parent of an eight-year-old son with special needs. Her role, along with Karen Olehy, is to assist families in finding resources, connecting with other parents, locating parent-friendly information, and serve as a support to families as someone who has shared some of the same difficulties. We are thrilled to have her join us!

NCDB FAMILY LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

The National Consortium on Deaf-Blindness (NCDB) provides an intensive one-year family leadership training program in 1-3 states each year. This year Illinois is proud to be one of those states. Six to ten participants are selected from each state. The goal of the program is to train and support family members of children who are deaf-blind to become leaders within deaf-blindness in their local or state communities. During the program, family members identify and pursue meaningful leadership roles based on their interests and strengths. This could include such activities as:

- Mentoring and supporting other families
- Serving on advisory committees or boards
- Increasing awareness of deaf-blindness by telling their story to the media
- Providing activities for sibling groups
- Providing training to families and professionals.

The key training topics for the Family Leadership Training Program include understanding deaf-blindness, understanding systems and opportunities for family leaderships, understanding leadership, communication skills, partnership and collaboration skills, advocacy skills, and maintaining your personal life balance. Optional training topics, which are used to customize the training to fit the needs of the participants, include training skills, loss and the grieving process, connecting with families (building relationships and involvement), and cultural competence skills.

The program includes both distance education components, including web-based trainings and telephone conference calls, and face-to-face training components. On-site trainings are scheduled for three weekends during 2009. To pull everything together, each participant will develop their own personal leadership goal and work on it throughout the course of the year. Project Reach is proud to support this Program on behalf of children and youth with deaf-blindness in Illinois.

→ CHOICES FOR PARENTS ←

Choices for Parents, a statewide not-for-profit agency operating out of Chicago, has received approval to implement a statewide parent to parent network related to children who are deaf or hard or hearing, called Guide By Your Side (GBYS). They are currently recruiting a Program Coordinator and Parent Guides from throughout Illinois. Eight regions are planned, which will coincide with the geographical boundaries of the Illinois State CFCs (Child and Family Connections offices). Questions regarding the program can be directed to Karen Aguilar, Coalition Director, CHOICES for Parents, P.O. Box 806045, Chicago, Illinois, 60680-4121. She can also be reached by phone at (312) 523-6400 (Outside the Chicago area 866-733-8729). Check out their website at www.choicesforparents.org.

ARE YOU “SOUTH OF SEVENTY” OR “NORTH OF EIGHTY”?

Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD) Outreach and Hearing and Vision Connections is sponsoring two FREE conference for parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. The “North of Eighty” conference will be held on Saturday, March 14, 2009 in Rock Falls and the “South of Seventy” conference will be held Saturday, April 4, 2009 in Mt Vernon.

Topics for the North of Eighty Conference include:

- Behavior Issues in Children with Hearing Loss
- Deaf Culture
- Auditory Training
- Role of the Educational Interpreter Storytelling

Topics for the South of Seventy Conference include:

- Theory of Mind in Children with Hearing Loss
- Signing Idioms
- Sibling Relationships in Families of Children with Hearing Loss
- Cochlear Implants

To register for either conference, call toll-free 1-877-339-2686 (Voice/TTY), or on-line at

www.morgan.k12.il.us/isd/outreach_events/.

Financial assistance may be available for childcare or overnight accommodation expenses. The deadline for North of Eighty is March 2, 2009 and for South of Seventy is March 16, 2009.



Project Reach/Illinois Family Leader Collaboration Conference April 24-26, 2009

This year Philip Rock Center/Project Reach: Illinois Deaf-Blind Services is offering a Parent Training Weekend opportunity in conjunction with the Illinois Family Leader Collaboration Conference – “Resources and Inspiration for Adult Family Members and Caregivers of Children with Disabilities”. This conference will be held at the: **Paradise Hotel, 21 Blackjack Blvd, in East Peoria** and PRC/Project Reach will sponsor 20 families to attend the event. Philip Rock Center is donating money to the Illinois Leader Collaboration Group to sponsor a speaker for the conference. Project Reach will pay for one hotel room for 2 nights at the **Stoney Creek Inn, 101 Mariners Way, East Peoria, (309)694-1300** on April 24 and April 25, 2009 per family. There is a **\$50.00 refundable deposit** that will be returned to you after the conference. The deposit is for expenses in the event you did not attend without a 2 day notice, we would keep the deposit to cover hotel expenses. We will provide a room for a “Parent Chat” on Saturday night at the Stoney Creek Inn in the Caterpillar Trail Room from 7:00 pm – 10:00 pm on April 25, 2009. **CHILDCARE WILL NOT BE PROVIDED.**

If you have questions, please call the Philip Rock Center at (630)790-2474. Information has been mailed to families, so, please check your mail!

Please return the following information to: Philip J. Rock Center and School

- Please make no changes to my address and keep me on your mailing list
- Please take my name off the mailing list.
- Please make the following changes on my mailing address label.
- Please add my name to the newsletter mailing list.
- Please mail me a large print edition of the newsletter.
- Please mail me a Braille edition of the newsletter.

Name: _____

Parent/Job Title/Organization: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____

Email Address: _____

Comments:

Thank you!

A Publication of the Philip J. Rock Center and School...Serving individuals who are both auditorily and visually impaired. 818 DuPage Blvd., Glen Ellyn, IL 60137 – Voice: (630)790-2474, Fax: (630)790-4893, TTY: (800)771-1158, www. project-reach-illinois.org; email: PRC@philiprockcenter.org.

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**PRC is operated by
the Illinois State
Board of Education**