

# Quarterly Newsletter

January 2026



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*"Once I knew only darkness and stillness... my life was without past or future... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness, and my heart leaped to the rapture of living."*

- Helen Keller

## Tactile Communication

### Letter from the Editor

Happy 2026 and Welcome Back!

Helen Keller once wrote: *"Once I knew only darkness and stillness... my life was without past or future... but a little word from the fingers of another fell into my hand that clutched at emptiness and my heart leaped to the rapture of living."*

These words remind us of the profound power of connection. Every time we place a sign in a child's hand, trace letters on a palm, or share a tactile story, we are doing more than teaching—we are opening doorways to meaning, memory, language, and possibility. This newsletter is based on different ways that we can connect with the children we serve and teach them ways to connect with those around them.

Your patient persistence matters, every moment of every day. Those repeated signs, those gentle touch cues, those moments when you wonder if you're getting through—they are building bridges



between isolation and understanding. Language, in whatever form it takes, transforms a world without past or future into one filled with both.

Thank you for being the hands that spell hope into waiting palms.

**Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS**

Project Director, The Alaska Deafblind Project | Newsletter Editor

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**Tactile Sign Language for the Deafblind: A Guide for Educators and Families**

By Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS

**Understanding Tactile Sign Language**

Tactile sign language is a common communication method used by individuals who are Deafblind. It refers to the mode of signing using touch, and can be based on a natural sign language like American Sign Language (ASL), a modified form of visual sign language, or a manually coded language. Unlike protactile (PT), which is a tactile language developed by and for the deafblind community with its own grammar and linguistic structure, tactile sign language is an adaptation of visual sign languages for tactile reception.

[Read More](#)

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**Protactile Language: Bridging Communication for Deafblind Communities: A New Language Built on Touch**

By Angel Black, M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS

Prior to 2007, deafblind individuals communicating with one another typically relied on interpreters—sometimes requiring two interpreters for a single conversation between two deafblind people. This indirect communication method can be cumbersome and impersonal. That year, members of the deafblind community developed protactile, a fully tactile language that requires only physical contact between two people. No vision or hearing is necessary to communicate through protactile.

[Read More](#)



**Communication Methods**

By Angel Black M.S.Ed., TSVI, COMS

Every child and youth who is deafblind deserves access to communication methods that support both understanding and self-expression, no matter their age or developmental stage. These young people use a diverse array of communication approaches—including vocalizations, gestures, objects, pictures, speech, and sign language—with most relying on multiple methods that work together. The most effective communication strategies emerge from careful assessment of each child's unique needs and abilities.

[Read More](#)

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## Upcoming Events

### Tactile Signing Webinar Series - January 2026:

#### **Understanding Learners with Various Sensory Needs, presented by Susanne Morgan Morrow, MA, CI, CT**

January 13, 2026 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM AKST

[Registration Link](#)

#### **The Power of Touch for Learners who are DeafBlind, presented by Susanne Morgan Morrow, MA, CI, CT**

January 20, 2026 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM AKST

[Registration Link](#)

#### **Tactile Communication Across the Spectrum, presented by Susanne Morgan Morrow, MA, CI, CT**

January 27, 2026 11:00 AM - 12:30 PM AKST

[Registration Link](#)

[Events Calendar](#)

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