

# Working with Randolph-Sheppard Entrepreneurs Who Are Deafblind: A Qualitative Analysis

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**Structured abstract:** *Introduction:* The purpose of the study was to explore challenges facing deafblind entrepreneurs and the staff who work with them through the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program. *Methods:* Interviews were conducted with 41 Randolph-Sheppard staff and deafblind entrepreneurs across the United States. Participants were selected using a snowball sampling procedure. Interviews were conducted by telephone or e-mail, and results were coded to identify overarching themes. *Results:* The top challenge identified among all staff was helping deafblind entrepreneurs interact effectively with customers. Common communication challenges included reliance on third parties and communication that was characterized by repetition and slowness. Although challenges surrounding communication were commonly cited by staff, problems with technology were the most important concerns for the entrepreneurs themselves. Over one-third of respondents (36%) felt deafblindness did not create any unique communication challenges. Common suggestions for program improvement were expanding access to interpreters and training in sign language and tactile interpreting. *Discussion:* Entrepreneurs and staff agreed that many challenges relating to deafblindness can be overcome with creativity and determination. One important approach for improving communication is proactively informing customers about the entrepreneur's deafblindness and describing communication strategies. Further research to determine the extent of hearing loss among entrepreneurs in the Randolph-Sheppard program would be beneficial. *Implications for practitioners:* Individuals with deafblindness have demonstrated the ability to take part in the workplace, but challenges remain. Staff who work with these entrepreneurs need to help them address their unique communication needs in a proactive, positive manner.

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Created in 1936, the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program (BEP) pro-

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vides competitive work experience for legally blind individuals across the United States. The Randolph-Sheppard Act (20 U.S.C. §107 et seq.) granted blind individuals priority in the operation of all food service facilities on federal property. Since that time, many states have adopted similar laws that include state, county, municipal, and some private facilities in

the program. Through the Randolph-Sheppard program, legally blind individuals (referred to as “entrepreneurs,” “operators,” or “vendors”) own and operate facilities that range from vending machine routes to full-service cafeterias. State licensing agencies have responsibility for recruiting new entrepreneurs, equipping them with training and licensing, and placing them in facilities in need of an operator.

BEP facilities employ 2,319 legally blind entrepreneurs to run facilities across 49 states and three U.S. territories (Rehabilitation Services Administration, 2010). As the BEP matured, it expanded from small vendor-managed kiosks and concession stands to encompass large food service facilities, full restaurants, and laundry services. Entrepreneurs are responsible for day-to-day operations, including customer service, inventory, accounting, and cleanliness. In order to assist them, Randolph-Sheppard entrepreneurs employ over 12,000 staff members in support roles, of whom about 400 are also blind and over 1,000 of whom have some other disability. In fiscal year 2010, gross annual sales for the BEP totaled nearly \$800 million, with individual entrepreneurs earning an average annual salary of about \$56,000, well above the national median household income for that year.

By definition, all BEP vendors are legally blind. However, blindness is not the only disability an entrepreneur in the BEP may encounter. It is estimated that there

are 1.54 million U.S. adults who have both a hearing and a vision impairment, the majority of whom are over age 70 years (Swenor, Ramulu, Willis, Friedman, & Lin, 2013). For individuals below age 70 years, the prevalence of dual sensory loss was less than 1%. Although the BEP does not collect data on the number of entrepreneurs who experience hearing loss in addition to their vision loss, in a survey of 44 state BEP directors, 48% ( $n = 21$ ) reported encountering entrepreneurs with deafblindness in their state program (Bybee, 2012). In order to qualify for participation in the BEP, individuals must be legally blind, meaning they have a visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with best correction or a visual field of 20 degrees or less, or both. In order to be considered deafblind, an individual must be both legally blind and have chronic hearing impairment so severe that most speech cannot be understood with optimum amplification (Huebner, 1995).

Securing employment is a challenge for individuals who are deafblind. However, few studies have examined employment outcomes for this population. According to data from the National Longitudinal Transition Study–2, among young adults (aged 21–25) with deafblindness the employment rate was 30% at the time they were interviewed (Newman et al., 2011). Research demonstrates that individuals who experience dual sensory loss such as deafblindness often withdraw from activities and productive roles (Brennan, Horowitz, & Su, 2005; McDonnall, 2009). No employment data are available for adults who are deafblind.

When individuals with deafblindness manage to secure employment, they face

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unique challenges in the workplace. One of the largest obstacles is effective communication (Brabyn, Schneck, Haegerstrom-Portnoy, & Lott, 2007). Individuals who are deafblind use a number of technologies and strategies, most of which are based on the sense of touch, to communicate effectively. These adaptations include using tactile communication, such as braille and finger-spelling, to interact with customers and employees. Social interactions and travel can also be significant challenges for workers who are deafblind (Brennan et al., 2005; Fischer et al., 2009). However, some individuals with deafblindness have overcome these challenges and maintain careers in a variety of fields, including as BEP entrepreneurs.

The purpose of this study is to present qualitative data on the challenges encountered by deafblind entrepreneurs within the BEP and the staff who work with them. It provides recommendations on changes that can be made to improve the workplace experience of BEP entrepreneurs with deafblindness and how BEP staff can work more effectively with these individuals.

## Methods

### PARTICIPANTS

Respondents were state directors ( $n = 14$ ), trainers ( $n = 5$ ), and business consultants ( $n = 10$ ) for the BEP, and BEP entrepreneurs with deafblindness ( $n = 12$ ), providing a total sample of 41 participants from 15 large and small states across all regions of the continental U.S. The average amount of time spent working in the program was 11 years, with a minimum of 6 months and a maximum of 30 years. Each individual had some experience working with a BEP entrepreneur with deafblindness.

Of the 12 BEP entrepreneurs with both vision and hearing loss, nine (75%) were male and three (25%) were female. The average age was 56 years old (range 47 to 69) and the number of years working in the program was between four and 34 years, with an average of 16 years. The age of onset for hearing loss ranged from birth to 53 years of age, with over half experiencing their hearing loss before age 21 (58%,  $n = 7$ ). One-third of the entrepreneurs (33%,  $n = 4$ ) reported using sign language. Ten ran vending routes that required them to travel between vending machines to keep them stocked. The remaining two entrepreneurs operated snack bar facilities, which entailed interacting with customers to provide face-to-face food service.

### INSTRUMENT

Upon approval from Mississippi State University's institutional review board for the protection of human subjects, BEP state programs were contacted to participate in this study. Targeted programs were identified through a previously administered national survey that inquired about experience working with BEP entrepreneurs with deafblindness. The Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) for Deaf-Blind Youths and Adults assisted with identifying additional state programs for participation in the study. A snowball sampling procedure was administered in which each state director was asked to provide contact information for BEP trainers or business counselors who have worked with entrepreneurs with deafblindness, as well as contact information for any entrepreneurs who are deafblind.

The interview instrument was developed by project staff and reviewed by a

representative from the HKNC. (*Editor's note:* The survey tool is available as Appendix 1 in the online and e-book versions of this article.) The instrument contained between 10 and 27 open-ended questions tailored to each group of individuals (directors, trainers, business counselors, and entrepreneurs), with each group receiving a different set of questions. Interview discussions varied based on responses given during the interview. BEP state directors were asked questions regarding experience with deafblind entrepreneurs, accommodations used, policies and procedures, and challenges encountered. Training staff and business counselors were asked to comment on accommodations used, challenges faced, potential program improvements, and communication strategies they use when working with deafblind entrepreneurs. Deafblind entrepreneurs were asked about personal experiences, challenges encountered, accommodations used, communication strategies, and the most challenging aspects of their job.

Each interview took approximately 30 minutes to complete, with additional time allowed as needed. If requested, interviews with deafblind entrepreneurs were conducted by e-mail; all other interviews were conducted by telephone. All participants verbally consented to participate. Responses from the 41 participants were analyzed using a modified version of an inductive data analysis procedure (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This procedure included the authors independently coding all data, grouping data, and developing themes that emerged through analysis. Codes and developed themes from each author were compared and refined. An outside consultant reviewed all data and independently verified analysis results.

## Results

Interviews covered a wide range of subjects, and the interviewer allowed flexibility in the topics covered depending on the path the discussion took. Common themes that emerged from the interviews are described in greater detail in the next section (see Table 1).

### MAJOR CHALLENGES

Participants were asked to describe the greatest challenges encountered when either working with deafblind entrepreneurs or being a person with deafblindness in the BEP. The most commonly cited challenge among all participants was ensuring the entrepreneurs were communicating effectively with customers, which was noted by 25% of the BEP state directors ( $n = 3$ ) and 44% of the BEP counselors ( $n = 4$ ) who responded to the question. In contrast, this concern was rarely mentioned by the entrepreneurs themselves, with only one entrepreneur (9%) citing communication with customers as their greatest challenge. BEP staff described instances when customers were uncomfortable interacting with the entrepreneur or were dissatisfied with the service they received. As one counselor put it:

He [the entrepreneur] has to ask people to repeat themselves, and he could be a little bit more outgoing with some people. I think the hearing difficulty plays a role in him not being as outgoing. I think that the [entrepreneur] can come off as a little gruff or unfriendly to customers sometimes.

Other major challenges reported by both BEP staff and entrepreneurs centered on the mechanics of communication, such as

**Table 1**  
**Responses of the participants to the survey.**

	BEP directors ( <i>n</i> = 14)		BEP trainers ( <i>n</i> = 5)		BEP counselors ( <i>n</i> = 10)		Deafblind entrepreneurs ( <i>n</i> = 12)		Total ( <i>N</i> = 41)	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Biggest challenges: Total	12	85.7	4	80.0	9	90.0	11	91.7	36	87.8
Communicating with customers	3	25.0	0	0	4	44.4	1	9.1	8	22.2
Accurately conveying content	0	0	1	25.0	5	55.6	0	0	6	16.7
No major challenges due to deafblindness	3	25.0	0	0	1	11.1	2	18.2	6	16.7
Communication taking longer	2	16.7	2	50.0	0	0	1	9.1	5	13.9
Finding effective methods of communication	0	0	1	25.0	2	22.2	2	18.2	5	13.9
Getting interpreters	2	16.7	2	50.0	1	11.1	0	0	5	13.9
Problems with outdated or lacking technology	2	16.7	0	0.0	0	0	2	18.2	4	11.1
Entrepreneur lack of confidence	0	0	1	25.0	0	0	1	9.1	2	5.6
Communication challenges: Total	11	78.6	5	100	9	90.0	11	91.7	36	87.8
Reliance on third-party help	3	27.3	1	20.0	3	33.3	9	81.8	16	44.4
Repetition or slowness	4	36.4	0	0	5	55.6	7	63.6	16	44.4
No major challenges due to deafblindness	6	54.5	3	60.0	2	22.2	2	18.2	13	36.1
Difficulty of face-to-face communication	1	9.1	0	0	7	77.8	3	27.3	11	30.6
Customers need awareness of deafblindness	3	27.3	1	20.0	2	22.2	3	27.3	9	25.0
Communication limited to favorable conditions (e.g., quiet rooms)	4	36.4	0	0	1	11.1	2	18.2	7	19.4
Accommodations: Total	12	85.7	3	60.0	7	70.0	10	83.3	32	78.0
Hearing assistance (e.g., hearing aids)	10	83.3	2	66.7	3	42.9	6	60.0	21	65.6
Interpreters	3	25.0	3	100	0	0	0	0	6	18.8
Assistance from employees	2	16.7	0	0	2	28.6	1	10.0	5	15.6
Braille tools (e.g., labels)	0	0	2	66.7	1	14.3	2	20.0	5	15.6
TTY telephone	2	16.7	0	0	2	28.6	1	10.0	5	15.6
None	2	16.7	0	0	2	28.6	1	10.0	5	15.6
Suggestions for program improvement: Total	10	71.4	5	100	10	100	6	50.0	31	75.6
No suggestions	6	60.0	1	20.0	2	20.0	0	0	9	29.0
Greater access to interpreters or knowledge of sign language	1	10.0	2	40.0	4	40.0	1	16.7	8	25.8
Improve program technology	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	83.3	5	16.1
Change training (e.g., expand length)	0	0	2	40.0	1	10.0	0	0	3	9.7
Strengthen partnerships	2	20.0	0	0	0	0	1	16.7	3	9.7
Policies and procedures: Total	11	78.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
No official policies for deafblind vendors	11	100	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Informal policies	3	25.0	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

the difficulty of having one-on-one conversations and lack of spontaneity (14%, *n* = 5). In addition, both staff and entrepreneurs cited the fact that communication with deafblind entrepreneurs tends to take longer (14%, *n* = 5) as a major challenge. As one director recalled about working with a former deafblind entrepreneur, “Communication was very difficult,

and most of us only communicated with him when it was absolutely necessary.”

Some challenges were reported only by BEP staff, with no entrepreneurs mentioning these issues as major challenges. Staff were frustrated by the difficulty of getting qualified interpreters (14%, *n* = 5) to assist them in communicating with the entrepreneurs. Staff also expressed concern

about whether entrepreneurs were correctly comprehending content and lamented the difficulty of conveying lengthy or technical information (17%,  $n = 6$ ). Worries about entrepreneurs fully understanding content were particularly pronounced among counselors, with 33% ( $n = 3$ ) reporting this as a major challenge. One counselor described the dilemma this way:

One issue is the seven-page field report that I need to review with the vendor. There is so much information that it's not realistic to be able to go through it all with the vendor through signing or typing. . . . I do the best I can and try to hit on the most important aspects. Also, when an interpreter is signing to the individual I have no idea what he is signing or if he is signing the information correctly or thoroughly. I'm not able to give feedback [to deafblind vendors] to the extent that I'm able to give a vendor with only a vision loss. I can only hit on the important parts, so minor things are not addressed, and the communication is subdued.

Some staff and entrepreneurs stated that they felt deafblindness did not create any unique challenges (17%,  $n = 6$ ). State directors and entrepreneurs were the most likely to report that deafblindness did not create any unique challenges, with 25% ( $n = 3$ ) and 18% ( $n = 2$ ), respectively, stating this opinion.

### COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES

Participants were asked to comment specifically on the challenges related to communication with deafblind entrepreneurs. Two major themes emerged from their responses. Sixteen respondents (44%) re-

ported that communication with the deafblind entrepreneurs is characterized by repetition and slowness. The entrepreneurs themselves frequently reported (45%,  $n = 5$ ) having to ask customers to repeat themselves in order to correctly understand what they were saying. Although such tactics cause communication to take longer, repetition and summarization are important techniques used by staff and entrepreneurs alike to ensure that the message is fully understood. As one entrepreneur described it:

I try to be a fun, go-lucky guy with my customers . . . I have no shame in telling them what my disability is or whether I didn't hear something they said. You deal with these people every day, and you become part of the family. I pick up 85% [of what is said]. If I feel like what I missed is important, I will ask the person to repeat themselves. If I don't think it's important I'll just let it go so as not to annoy them.

Another major theme that emerged is reliance on outside help to communicate (44%,  $n = 16$ ). When interacting with deafblind entrepreneurs, assistance was provided by professional interpreters, employees who know sign language or fingerspelling, or family members. Rather than communicating primarily with the deafblind entrepreneur, some customers instead communicated with the entrepreneur's support staff. Such reliance on a third party for communication can pose challenges. As one BEP director put it, "Things get lost in translation when using an interpreter." This concern was echoed by a trainer, who worried that "with tactile interpreters, the person might say they

understood but there's no real way to tell if they really did understand or if the interpreter communicated the right information."

Another common theme, described by nearly one-third of respondents (31%,  $n = 11$ ), was relying on communication methods such as writing or speaking over the telephone, rather than speaking face to face. BEP counselors were most likely to report writing as their primary mode of communication with deafblind entrepreneurs (44%,  $n = 4$ ). One counselor described the importance of written communication for conveying serious information: "At the end of a conversation I can never be 100% confident that he [the entrepreneur] has heard me . . . if it [communication] involves any type of disciplinary action, it's always handwritten, and I read it to him."

Another counselor described the importance of written communication for conveying technical information: "The most difficult thing is if . . . I am trying to relay some very technical, specific information to him [the vendor]. It's sometimes difficult to get across. When this happens we turn to written communication."

Another important communication issue is ensuring customers know the vendor is deafblind (25%,  $n = 9$ ). Alerting customers to the vendor's dual sensory loss can smooth interactions. As one BEP director noted, "The building population is aware of his [the entrepreneur's] disabilities, which makes it easier for everyone." A deafblind entrepreneur described her proactive strategy this way: "When I first go to a new facility, I send out a letter to everyone in the building letting them know about my condition and letting them know how they can get my attention."

Thirty-six percent of respondents ( $n = 13$ ) felt that deafblindness among vendors did not create any unique communication issues. BEP state directors were especially likely to report that this was the case, with six of the eleven who responded to this question (55%) selecting this option.

### **JOB ACCOMMODATIONS**

Participants were asked to discuss accommodations that can be used to help an entrepreneur with deafblindness navigate their job. Two-thirds of respondents (66%,  $n = 21$ ) who answered this question reported that entrepreneurs with deafblindness used some form of hearing aid, cochlear implant, or personal sound amplifier while on the job. Reliance on outside help while interacting with others, either through interpreters (19%,  $n = 6$ ) or employees with knowledge of sign language or tactile interpreting (16%,  $n = 5$ ), was another common accommodation. One vendor noted how important it is to hire "employees that are going to be understanding of your hearing loss and won't get aggravated or agitated if they have to repeat themselves."

Other frequently mentioned accommodations include braille items, such as braille notetakers, braille labels, or braille displays (16%,  $n = 5$ ); TTY telephones (16%,  $n = 5$ ); and laptops customers can use to communicate with the entrepreneur (13%,  $n = 4$ ). Sixteen percent ( $n = 5$ ) of respondents reported that no accommodations were used on the job by deafblind entrepreneurs.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT**

All participants were asked to provide suggestions for ways the BEP could be

improved to more effectively work with deafblind entrepreneurs. The most common suggestion was to expand access to interpreters (26%,  $n = 8$ ). This includes employing tactile interpreters as BEP employees and helping trainers and counselors learn sign language or tactile signing techniques. Trainers (40%,  $n = 2$ ) and counselors (30%,  $n = 3$ ) were eager to obtain such training.

Another suggestion was to expand and update the technology available to deafblind entrepreneurs, with all mentions of this suggestion coming from the entrepreneurs themselves (42%,  $n = 5$ ).

Entrepreneurs expressed concern that the technology used by the BEP, such as talking calculators and hardcopy brailers, is out of date and that they lacked the tools necessary to fulfill their job roles successfully. Another suggestion was to strengthen the BEP's partnerships with outside organizations, such as state vocational rehabilitation programs or the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, in order to expand resources for entrepreneurs with deafblindness (10%,  $n = 3$ ). Nine respondents (29%) did not have any suggestions for improvements.

BEP state directors were also asked whether their state programs have policies and procedures in place to guide their response to deafblind entrepreneurs. None of the 11 state directors who responded to the question reported having any official policies or procedures. A few reported having unofficial guidelines they try to abide by when working with deafblind entrepreneurs, including having interpreters present at all official BEP meetings (18%,  $n = 2$ ) and requesting that only one person speak at a time during meetings (9%,  $n = 1$ ).

## Discussion and implications for practitioners

The themes that emerged from response analysis demonstrate that, although communication is not an insurmountable barrier for deafblind entrepreneurs, it is a major challenge. The number one challenge cited by BEP staff is helping entrepreneurs who are deafblind communicate effectively. Interestingly, only one entrepreneur said that communication with others was their biggest challenge. In fact, entrepreneurs' perceptions of their greatest challenge were extremely diverse, with no more than two vendors citing any one challenge. This disconnect between challenges perceived by entrepreneurs and by the staff who work with them is an interesting finding in itself. It may indicate that the deafblind entrepreneurs are somewhat unaware of the communication obstacles perceived by others. Although it may seem implausible that so few entrepreneurs would acknowledge communication as their primary challenge, many deafblind individuals are, by necessity, incredibly adaptive and ingenious. They do not view their dual sensory loss as a disability but rather as something one adjusts to, as with any other circumstance. In addition, only two of the 12 entrepreneurs who participated in this study worked in settings requiring regular face-to-face customer service; the others operated vending routes, which tend to be more solitary endeavors. Additional research on entrepreneurs who work in customer service-oriented positions could help shed light on whether this segment of the population is more attuned to communication challenges.



BEP staff also tended to be more concerned about other communication-related issues, such as ensuring that the content of conversations is accurately conveyed and the limitations created by reliance on third parties and technology are recognized. Fortunately, many staff also indicated that, although communication is a challenge, it can be addressed. Recommendations include ensuring consistent access to qualified interpreters when needed (the number one recommendation for program improvement among staff) and ensuring interpreters know how to communicate technical material related to running a food service or vending facility. Staff also felt it would be helpful if more among their own ranks were more knowledgeable about deafblindness. For example, providing staff with information sessions on deafblindness or training on fingerspelling may help staff facilitate more effective communication with entrepreneurs who are deafblind.

In order to ensure entrepreneurs are communicating effectively with customers, a proactive and positive mind-set is essential. Although only one entrepreneur cited communication with customers as their primary challenge, such communication was frequently perceived to be an issue by BEP staff who observed the entrepreneurs at work. BEP staff should ensure that entrepreneurs are aware of the communication challenges perceived by customers. After all, if entrepreneurs do not view communication as a challenge, they are unlikely to take proactive action to address it. Entrepreneurs need to understand that their customers may perceive communication to be a major challenge, and BEP staff can help entrepreneurs implement strategies to over-

come these obstacles. For instance, entrepreneurs can let customers know ahead of time that a food service or vending facility will be staffed by a deafblind individual. This notification should clearly tell customers how best to communicate with the entrepreneur, since letting customers know how to interact with the vendor ahead of time can help alleviate potential awkwardness or uncertainty.

Among the vendors themselves, concerns about communication were secondary to concerns about improving the BEP's use of technology. Of the six entrepreneurs who made recommendations for improving the BEP, five focused on the need for the program to ensure entrepreneurs have the technology they need to perform their job effectively. Although not necessarily related, it is possible that, by helping deafblind entrepreneurs acquire updated technology, issues of communication may also be improved.

BEP state directors were more likely than other categories of respondents to state that deafblindness did not create any major communication challenges (55%,  $n = 6$ ) and to have no suggestions for program improvement (60%,  $n = 6$ ). Such responses indicate a need for BEP state directors to interact more closely with deafblind entrepreneurs and to observe them on the job. It also suggests that, when creating policies for working with deafblind entrepreneurs, state directors should consult with the trainers and counselors who work with entrepreneurs on a more regular basis.

None of the BEP state directors reported that their programs had official policies or procedures for interacting with deafblind entrepreneurs in the program, and only a few reported having unofficial,

informal policies. State programs should consider creating a set of guidelines that can be referred to when working with deafblind entrepreneurs. Such guidelines may become more necessary in future years as many current BEP entrepreneurs age, putting them at greater risk of experiencing hearing loss. Given the results of this study, these guidelines should include procedures for hiring qualified interpreters, outlining promising communication strategies, and addressing the unique technology needs of deafblind individuals.

Because this study involved a relatively small number of participants, results may not be generalizable to the larger population. However, the results of this research point to areas ripe for additional study and begin to fill the gap when it comes to research on employment outcomes and challenges for individuals who are deafblind, an area greatly lacking in peer-reviewed research. This study's limited number of deafblind respondents (12) may indicate relatively low numbers of deafblind entrepreneurs within the BEP. Alternatively, it may indicate that few staff are aware of the entrepreneurs in their own program who experience hearing loss in addition to their vision loss. In either case, further research into the number of entrepreneurs affected by hearing loss is warranted. The limited number of entrepreneurs with hearing loss participating in this project also limits the ability to draw broad conclusions about the experiences of deafblind individuals within the BEP. More broad-based research that captures the thoughts of a greater number of deafblind entrepreneurs would be beneficial. In addition, research to capture competitive employment rates and expe-

riences for the larger population of adults who are deafblind could help lend insight into the experiences of those who participate in the BEP. Currently, employment statistics and studies for this population are sorely lacking.

In conclusion, with appropriate accommodations and adaptations, BEP entrepreneurs who are deafblind are capable of operating food service facilities and vending routes. Although communication is a challenge, neither deafblind entrepreneurs nor BEP staff view communication challenges as insurmountable barriers. Individuals with deafblindness can succeed as BEP entrepreneurs if they are provided with updated technology, notify customers about the best ways to communicate with them, and keep a positive, upbeat attitude when interacting with customers. Additional training for staff on dealing with deafblindness and increased interpreter support would also be beneficial program improvements. As long as an entrepreneur with deafblindness is provided with the appropriate tools and support, he or she can build a career as a business owner in the BEP.

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