

**EDUCATION OF TEACHERS AND PROFESSIONALS TO SUPPORT THE  
INCLUSION AND PARTICIPATION OF PEOPLE WITH DEAFBLINDNESS**

***FORMAÇÃO DE PROFESSORES E PROFISSIONAIS COMO APOIO A INCLUSÃO E  
PARTICIPAÇÃO DE PESSOAS COM SURDOCEGUEIRA***

***FORMACIÓN DE PROFESORES Y PROFESIONALES PARA APOYAR LA  
INCLUSIÓN Y PARTICIPACIÓN DE PERSONAS CON SORDOCEGUERA***



Shirley Rodrigues MAIA<sup>1</sup>  
e-mail: maryshilly@yahoo.com.br



Fernanda Cristina FALKOSKI<sup>2</sup>  
e-mail: fernandacfalkoski@gmail.com

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<sup>1</sup> Educational Association for Multiple Disabilities (AHIMSA), São Paulo – SP – Brazil. Founding Partner. Post-doctorate (UFSCAR).

<sup>2</sup> Educational Association for Multiple Disabilities (AHIMSA), São Paulo – SP – Brazil. Pedagogical Coordinator. PhD student in Special Education (UFSCAR).

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**ABSTRACT:** This article aims to portray the continuing education of teachers and professionals to work in deafblindness and multiple sensory disability, in the functions of guide-interpreter and mediator instructor. The trainings took place during the COVID-19 pandemic between September 2020 and August 2021. The methodology is to present the organization of the course, totally remote, which occurred with the partnership between SMPED and the Brazil Group. We selected 70 professionals from the city of São Paulo, being teachers and interpreters of Libras, to participate in the course of guide-interpreter and 15 professionals from different cities of Brazil, among teachers and interpreters, for the function of instructor mediator. As a result, we highlight the way synchronous activities, practices and internships occurred, and ensured the effectiveness and participation of people with deafblindness and multiple sensory impairment in different situations of daily life, such as television news, reading books and participation in congresses.

**KEYWORDS:** Deafblindness. Multiple Sensory Impairment. Continuing education. Inclusion. Accessibility.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo visa retratar a formação continuada de professores e profissionais para atuação na surdocegueira e na deficiência múltipla sensorial, nas funções de guia-intérprete e instrutor mediador. As formações ocorreram durante o período de pandemia, causada pelo COVID-19, entre setembro de 2020 e agosto de 2021. Tem-se como metodologia apresentar a organização do curso, totalmente remoto, que ocorreu com a parceria entre a SMPED e o Grupo Brasil. Foram selecionados 70 profissionais da prefeitura de São Paulo, sendo professores e intérpretes de Libras, para participar do curso de guia-intérprete e 15 profissionais de diferentes cidades do Brasil, entre professores e intérpretes, para a função de instrutor mediador. Como resultado, destaca-se a forma como ocorreram as atividades síncronas, práticas e estágios, sendo que garantiu a efetivação e participação das pessoas com surdocegueira e deficiência múltipla sensorial em diferentes situações do dia a dia, como telejornais, leitura de livros e participação em congressos.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Surdocegueira. Deficiência Múltipla Sensorial. Formação continuada. Inclusão. Acessibilidade.

**RESUMEN:** Este artículo tiene como objetivo detallar la educación continua de profesores y profesionales para trabajar en sordoceguera y discapacidad sensorial múltiple, en las funciones de guía-intérprete e instructor mediador. Las capacitaciones tuvieron lugar durante la pandemia de COVID-19 entre septiembre de 2020 y agosto de 2021. La metodología consiste en presentar la organización del curso, totalmente a distancia, que ocurrió con la asociación entre SMPED y el Grupo Brasil. Seleccionamos a 70 profesionales de la ciudad de São Paulo, siendo profesores e intérpretes de Libras, para participar en el curso de guía-intérprete y 15 profesionales de diferentes ciudades de Brasil, entre profesores e intérpretes, para la función de mediador instructor. Como resultado, destacamos la forma en que ocurrieron las actividades, prácticas y pasantías sincrónicas, y aseguramos la efectividad y participación de las personas con sordoceguera y discapacidad sensorial múltiple en diferentes situaciones de la vida cotidiana, como noticias de televisión, lectura de libros, participación en congresos.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Sordoceguera. Deterioro sensorial múltiple. Formación permanente. Inclusión. Accesibilidad.

## **Introduction**

The Brazil Group for the Support of the Deafblind and the Multiple Sensory is a philanthropic organization that has, throughout its 24 years, carried out actions to favor the rights of people with deafblindness and multiple sensory disabilities. During the pandemic, members of the group participated in a call for proposals that would select projects that would enable the inclusion and rights of people with disabilities. Thus, the proposal of the guide-interpreter (GI) training course for professionals from the public network of the city of São Paulo was presented.

The specific training of guide-interpreter allows: transmit messages, contextualize the environments and guide the person with deafblindness. The transmission of the message can be carried out by means of transliteration or interpretation. In the case of transliteration, the guide-interpreter receives the message in a certain language and transmits it to the person with deafblindness in the same language, but using a form of communication accessible to that person. For example, the GI hears the message in Portuguese and transmits it in tactile Braille or enlarged speech. Unlike the interpretation situation, when the GI receives the message in one language and must transmit it in another. For example, it listens in Portuguese and transmits through tactile pounds or pounds in reduced field.

The guide-interpreter also has the function of being a guide-seer, that is, to use the techniques of guidance to favor orientation and mobility with people with deafblindness. Performing, during the journey, the audio description, tactile description, description of people and the environment. Informing about the route, obstacles and furniture of the environment, for example.

The guide-interpreter must perform the description in a contextualized way, respecting the time, importance and purpose of the information passed to the person with deaf-blindness, such as the conditions of the environment, the people present, the description of objects and people. One should start by stating the general and then the most specific. Example: if you need to describe a meeting room, first explain the environment and the location it should occupy, only then describe who is present.

It is essential that the guide-interpreter always answers the questions of the person with deafblindness, because this denotes his interest and the information, he needs to understand what is happening around him.

The function of guide-interpreter and tactile communication were contemplated in some legislations, demonstrating that, little by little, the federal, state and municipal governments are recognizing the existence of deafblindness and the needs of people with this disability.

Among them, we can mention the Brazilian Classification of Occupations (CBO) of the Ministry of Labor and Employment in the category of occupational group 2614, which refers to: Philologists, translators, interpreters and the like, in its subdivision with title 2614-25 Sign language interpreter. This classification includes the functions of guide-interpreter, interpreter of pounds, educational interpreter, translator of pounds and translator-interpreter of pounds.

The importance of the guide-interpreter was recognized in federal law No. 10,098/2000, in chapter VII, art. 18: "Accessibility in communication and signaling systems" that cites this professional.

Art. 18. The Government will implement the training of professional interpreters of writing in Braille, sign language and guide-interpreters, to facilitate any type of direct communication to the person with sensory impairment and with difficulty of communication (BRASIL, 2000, online, our translation).

Resolution CNE/CEB 2/2001 of the Ministry of Education/Secretariat of Special Education (MEC/SEESP) poses to the education systems the challenge of organizing to include students and meet their special educational needs. More precisely, in CNB/CEB Opinion No. 17/2001 "National Guidelines for Special Education in Basic Education" (BRASIL, 2001). In this document the national guidelines for the education of students with disabilities were instituted and, for the first time, an official document of the federal government made mention of students with deafblindness and their communication needs. This reference appears in article 2, "Students served by special education."

2. Communication and signaling difficulties differentiated from other students, particularly students who present deafness, blindness, deaf-blindness or accentuated language disorders, for which differentiated forms of teaching and adaptations of access to the curriculum should be adopted, using applicable languages and codes, ensuring the necessary human and material resources (BRASIL, 2001, online, our translation).

And in sub-item 2.1, when it mentions the specific forms of communication of people with deafblindness:

2.1. In view of the specific conditions associated with deafness, it is important that education systems are organized in such a way that there are schools in a position to offer deaf students the teaching in Brazilian sign language and in

Portuguese and, for the deafblind, the teaching in digital sign language, Tadoma and other techniques, as well as schools with different teaching and learning proposals, providing these students and their families with the option of the pedagogical approach they deem appropriate (BRASIL, 2001, online, our translation).

Decree 5296/2004 (BRASIL, 2004), which regulates Law No. 10,098, established the general rules and basic criteria for the promotion of accessibility for persons with disabilities or reduced mobility in its article 6, item III:

Attendance services for people with hearing impairment, provided by interpreters or people trained in Brazilian Sign Language - LIBRAS and in dealing with those who do not communicate in LIBRAS, and for deafblind people, provided by guides-interpreters or people trained in this type of service (BRASIL, 2004, online, our translation).

The guidelines of the National Policy of Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education of 2008, also cites the guide-interpreter in its item IV – Guidelines of the National Policy of Special Education in the Perspective of Inclusive Education:

It is up to the education systems, when organizing special education in the perspective of inclusive education, to provide the functions of instructor, translator / interpreter of Libras and guide-interpreter, as well as monitor or caregiver of students in need of support in activities of hygiene, food, locomotion, among others, which require constant help in the daily school (BRASIL, 2008, online, our translation).

The course was organized to take place in a hybrid way, but due to the results of the COVID-19 pandemic having had alternating moments of complications, the course became *online-only*. In the curricular matrix, there is the discipline of practical internship of 80 hours, so it was necessary to organize it virtually, to favor the students and meet the needs of people with deafblindness.

The Mediator Instructor (MI) course favors the inclusion of people with congenital deafblindness. It also took place online due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The function of the instructor-mediator is to be in more direct contact with the person with congenital deafblindness and / or with the person with multiple sensory impairment, in the classroom in partnership with the teacher collaborating in the development of activities, mediating the student in learning and communication with the environment and people. It is necessary to have the knowledge of orientation and mobility techniques, because, according to Maia (2004), these techniques favor



the posture, and the exploration of the environment of the person with deafblindness, as well as the interaction with other people.

It should provide access to information, environments and materials, guided by the team that directs the school and by the teacher, so that it can adapt and / or adapt resources and together with the teacher to flex the educational contents according to the individual program of the student and their needs. It is essential to have knowledge of alternative and augmentative systems and individual forms of student communication that involve reception and expression, offering conceptual and additional information about what occurs around the student for their full understanding. Its function, also, is to always be by the side of the student in all the places that he attends and, if necessary, to prepare accessible resources so that he can understand and participate in the activities, especially in school life (BARROSO *et al.*, 2021).

## **Methodology**

### **Guide-interpreter training course**

The course was divided into two classes, one with 50 professionals and the other with 24 people. The synchronous classes took place on Thursday nights, totaling 03 hours each, with theory and asynchronous classes composed of theory and practices through chats to clarify doubts. The internships were reorganized to meet the demands of people with acquired deafblindness, for supervised practices in communication techniques and internet accessibility.

A handout was organized with the contents on: Forms of Communication, Emotional Aspects, Legislation and Functions of the Guide-Interpreter, other materials such as the Booklets of n° 1, 2 and 3 - Contacted with deafblindness - Forms of Communication, Orientation and Mobility and Strategies for Interpretation and the Primer on Usher Syndrome.

The online stage was carried out by the Zoom platforms – weekly in the evening for the theoretical classes and exchanges of experiences with the students and in the Moodle platform to carry out the activities of the classes, availability of the texts and practical activities.

The registrations followed the following criteria: to work in the municipal education network in the services of the Bilingual Polo School for the Deaf, Bilingual School for the Deaf (EMEBS), to be a professional of the Boards of Education (DRE), to be a professional of the

13 Training and Support Center for Inclusion (CEFAI). Have knowledge or fluency in Brazilian Sign Language (Libras).<sup>3</sup>

The subjects offered in the synchronous and asynchronous modalities were: Terminology and Definitions and General Aspects of Acquired Deafblindness, Communication Systems, Function and Role of the Interpreter Guide, Orientation and Mobility, Accessible Resources and Assistive Technology, Audio Description and Tactile Description and Haptic Social Communication.

### **The Mediator Instructor course**

The Mediator Instructor course was open to the community at large, with classes on Tuesdays from 7:30 p.m. to 10 p.m. for synchronous classes. And the asynchronous ones on the other days of the week. It also had 80 hours of supervised internship with people with congenital deafblindness or people with Multiple Sensory Disabilities. The target audience are professionals who have students with deafblindness and are in the process of inclusion in municipal or state education networks. We had registrations from participants from the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais, Rio de Janeiro, Rio Grande do Sul, Paraíba and Alagoas, as well as one participant from Paraguay, with 16 people registered.

The subjects offered in the synchronous and asynchronous classes were: General Aspects of Disabilities: Physical, Intellectual, Multiple, Visual, Deafness/Hearing, Deafblindness, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Interaction and Communication, Accessible Resources, Function and the role of the Mediating Instructor, Principles of intervention, Accessible Books.

### **Performance of the actions**

#### **Guide-Interpreter Course**

The workload of the 1st class totaled 120 hours of coursework. 30 hours by Zoom platform, 24 hours of synchronous class and 6 hours (1 hour weekly) with chats to resume doubts. As for the Moodle platform, activities totaling 90 hours were performed, with 10 hours per week for reading and performing activities. Regarding the realization of 80 hours, practical

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<sup>3</sup> South Zone: Ipiranga, Capela do Socorro, Santo Amaro, Campo Limpo; North Zone: Tremembé-Jaçanã, Freguesia do Ó, Pirituba; West Zone: Butantã; East Zone: Guaianases Itaquera, Penha, São Matheus and São Miguel

activities were organized, among them: written description (in the case of students with deafness the activity was performed through video in pounds) of a film and an image, posted on the Moodle platform, with a total of 20 hours; interpretation activities through WhatsApp, Google Meet and Zoom for the participants, people with deafblindness, at the Texas Symposium, with synchronous (total of 40 hours) and asynchronous (total of 20 hours) activities ending the total of 80 hours of internship.

The workload of the 2nd class also totalized 120 hours of course, being 30 hours by the Zoom platform of synchronous class. As for the Moodle platform, activities totaling 90 hours were performed, with 10 hours per week for reading and performing activities. About the realization of 80 hours, practical activities were organized, among them: written description of a film and an image, posted on the Moodle platform, with a total of 20 hours; interpretation activities through WhatsApp, Google Meet and Zoom for the participants, people with deafblindness, at the Texas Symposium, with synchronous (total of 40 hours) and asynchronous (total of 20 hours) activities ending the total of 80 hours of internship.

In March 2021, the Second Meeting of the Americas Network was held, with the Texas school for people with Multiple Disabilities and people with deafblindness as partners for the realization of the Texas school. We had the participation of 05 people with deafblindness and 10 families who were scholarship holders of the event.

The need to be able to support with guide-interpretation services was a challenge, because the whole event would happen virtually and we were at a time when it was not possible to be in person with people with deafblindness. Among the needs, we highlight:

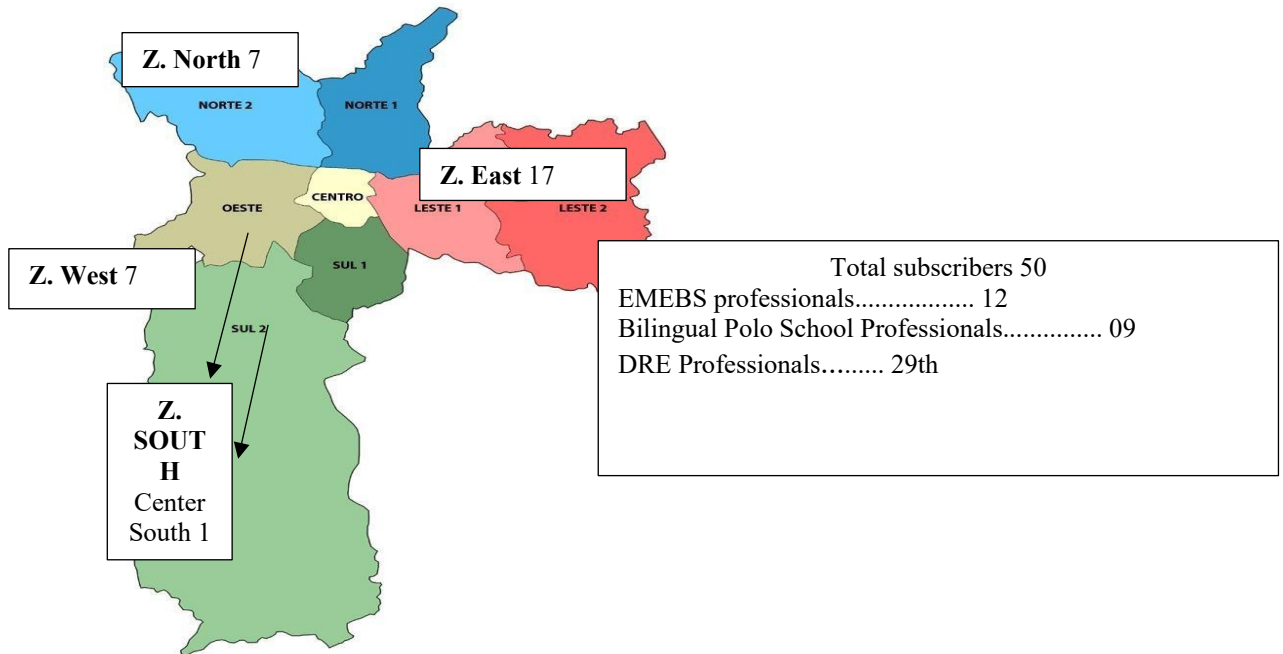
- 01 that uses the Tadoma: which is characterized by the perception of the oral language emitted through the placement of one or two hands of the person with deafblindness on the articulatory organs of the emitter to perceive its vibration and movement (WATANABE, 2017);
- 02 that use the expanded speech: being the speech close to the best ear of the person with deafblindness, without screams, but in a tone that can be understood. Sometimes it is necessary to change the structure of the sentence or change vocabulary to understand the information (BARROSO *et al.*, 2021);
- 02 that use Libras in reduced field: Sign language is performed within a small spatial framework and at a greater distance so that it can be perceived by the person with



deafblindness through their vision when their visual field is narrow or reduced (PLAZAS, 1999; WATANABE, 2017).

The first class had a total of 50 enrollees, being from different regions benefited.

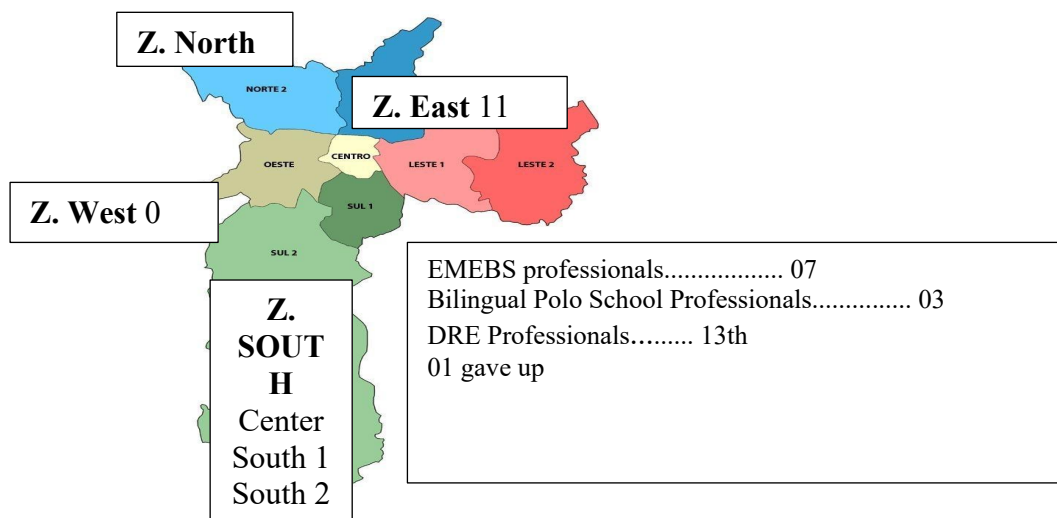
**Figure 1 – Class 1- Map of the Zones of the city of São Paulo**



Source: Prepared by the authors

The second class had the total number of people enrolled from different regions.

**Figure 2 – Map of the Regions of São Paulo**

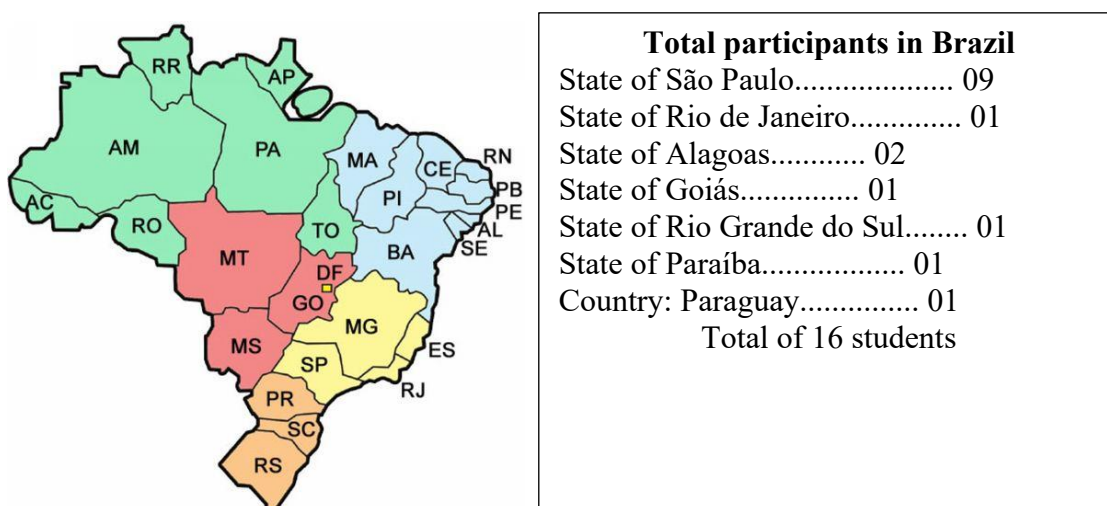


Source: Prepared by the authors

### Mediator Instructor Course

The mediator instructor course had 16 people enrolled and from different regions of Brazil.

Figure 3 – Map of Brazil



Source: Prepared by the authors

We highlight that the numbers presented were significant when it comes to the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### Results

The classes were taught by the *Zoom* platform – weekly, always on Friday from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm for the 1st class and 7 pm to 10 pm for the 2nd class. The activities of the Moodle platform served to exchange experiences with the students and carry out the activities related to the classes, as well as some texts were made available.

Some complementary classes were organized for clarification and extra activities, aiming to favor the accessibility of the person with deafblindness during the Texas event in March. The students were informed via e-mail, *WhatsApp*, *Moodle* platform and *Telegram* with meeting link, date and time.

The recorded lessons were made available to the students, after being translated into pounds. The materials prepared for classes on the *Zoom* platform were made available to participants on the *Moodle* platform.

An electronic handout was organized and made available on the *Moodle* platform containing information on: Forms of Communication, Emotional Aspects, Legislation and Functions of the Guide-Interpreter that will be delivered at CEFAI.

The practical internship activities were carried out through two platforms *Zoom* and *Moodle*, with the participation of people with deafblindness. Descriptions of lectures at the Texas School for People with Multiple Disabilities and Deafblindness International Texas Symposium Event were held throughout March. The event took place on 01, 02, 03, and 04 and days 8, 22 and 29 March 2021.

The organization of the internship was done through a form, in which the student had to fill in the day and time available to work with people with deafblindness. Three interpretation groups were organized: one of them made by writing in a message via WhatsApp; another made by recording audios via WhatsApp and another with translation in pounds via room created on the Google Meet platform. It is noteworthy that this type of work, in this way, was carried out for the first time in Brazil, that is, the offer of remote care for people with deafblindness. This service is unprecedented in both translation and interpretation. As well as a live on the YouTube channel "Universo da Surdocegueira – Grupo Brasil" when the event ended, so that both participants and people with deafblindness could report this unprecedented experience.

For the "2021 Texas Symposium on Education for People with Deafblindness" we had the participation of five Brazilian women with deafblindness, the full schedule is available in Annex 17, with the organization and schedule of the symposium in Portuguese. The lectures took place in two formats, synchronous and asynchronous, and the synchronous lectures took place between March 01, 02, 03, 04, 08, 22 and 29, 2021, usually between the time of 3pm and 8pm. Asynchronous lectures were made available throughout the month within a platform that participants had access to, there were 14 in total.

To carry out this work, some WhatsApp groups were created: "Grupo Geral Texas", where all the participants were, including the coordination of the group; "Group speaks --- and --- Texas", where were the participants who were going to perform the translation of the lectures into speech, but that on the second day had to be changed to writing, due to the speed with which the symposium was translated into Portuguese, and the women with deafblindness; "Written group --- Texas", where were all the participants who would do the translation of the lectures in written form and the woman with deafblindness; and, "Texas Pounds Group", where were the participants who would perform the translation of the symposium into pounds, as well as the two women with deafblindness. In each of these groups were also the teachers and the

team that works in the internship.

During the moments of synchronous lecture, the interns were connected to the event that took place on the *Zoom* platform and *WhatsApp* or in another room on *Google Meet*, working in pairs, dividing themselves in time and being able to support each others, as another possibility to ask questions with the teachers who accompanied all the actions. At the end of each lecture, the participants were instructed to send the record of the conversation, through the option "export conversation" both to the teachers and to the people with deafblindness, so they were left with the record of each moment.

However, it was not possible to meet all participants only with this demand, because we had many students for few people with deafblindness and available schedules. Thus, other actions were organized so that they could be taken advantage of, with six people with deafblindness who made themselves available to participate in these moments. Among the actions listed, we can highlight: *Jornal Nacional*, *Jornal Hoje*, *Fantástico*, *TV Cultura*, *JW.ORG*, news in general and sports news. Books that were transformed into audiobooks: "The secret", "On the other side", "Renunciation", "Gospel according to Spiritism", "WEB The Genesis Guillon", "Guide to Human Rights Women – UN".

As a final activity, after the end of the symposium, a *live* was organized to tell and disseminate how the organization and realization of the work of guides-interpreters took place. Thus, three women with deafblindness, three trainees who participated and a teacher of the course were invited. The *live* was recorded and made available on *YouTube*.

At the end of the course, participants were asked to complete an evaluation about the course, and some main aspects were pointed out. Each student also had to send the complete report with the hours and activities performed in the internship.

The 24-hour practice activity log had to be created due to the impossibility of in-person meetings due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In this activity, the proposal was to read and study a material about audio description and, in the sequence, the participants needed to perform the audio description of a photo and a short video, being posted on the *Moodle* platform.

The second class also has the full call, along with the class replacement activity, that is, when the student could not participate in a certain class, he could watch the recording later, read the materials and perform the activity so as not to have the absence. The proposed activity was to point out the main aspects presented in class, and in these cases, the class ended up being resumed in the next meeting, thus, no student was harmed.

The attendance control in the remote classes was carried out through a spreadsheet, built

specifically for this, both for the Zoom platform and in the Moodle chat. Only participants who had 75% frequency on Zoom and performed at least 75% of the activities were approved for the internship.

### **Mediator Instructor Course**

The course took place on the scheduled dates and with great participation of the registered professionals. That said, all had people with deafblindness to be able to attend and organize the teaching plans. The participant from Paraguay, for example, has the experience of Brazil in the area for having been a teacher and guide-interpreter in the schools of the municipal and state education network. Now, its work takes place in Paraguay, a country that is still structuring the care of people with deafblindness. There was a lot of exchange of experiences between the participants and the construction of the *WhatsApp* group to support the activities and the *Telegram* media.

### **Final remarks**

The courses of guide-interpreter and mediator instructor are important actions to promote inclusion in municipal and state education networks, the need for new notices and actions that can favor more professionals to give the necessary support, but also a need for great dissemination to meet the desired goal.

We noticed that the participants, at first, presented some resistance to perform the activities virtually, but with the passage of time, the actions and support offered by the professionals who worked on the platform, as well as the teachers, the students were reassuring themselves and making themselves more available. Finally, we highlight the exchange of information and experiences with people with deafblindness.

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