

Introduction to Teaching Students With Sensory Disabilities

"I'm going to be a lawyer—I'm supposed to read the fine print. What a joke. I can't even read the large print." **Mary** is legally blind and uses special equipment to help her read legal documents at the George Washington University Law Library.



"I love softball. I'm hitting .425, and my kids think I'm a sports hero. I guess I am." **Tommy** doesn't see well, but special adaptations like softballs with beepers and a closed-circuit television system help him lead a life much like his neighbors and peers.



"To be honest, we were concerned about placing **Pat** in the public school, but we couldn't be happier. It hasn't been a 'piece of cake,' but everything looks very promising right now." Pat was born blind. Kindergarten could have been a major problem, but mobility and listening-skills training made the transition from a special education preschool program to her neighborhood school go smoothly.



"When I think about all the things that could be wrong with me, I think I'm pretty lucky. I've had a great time in

(Continued)

6 Teaching Students With Sensory Disabilities

(Continued)

high school, and I'm going to college with my best friend. Right now, that's all I want." **Sandy** is deaf. An interpreter uses sign language to communicate what is spoken by others and to let them know what Sandy has to say. A telecommunication device for the deaf (TDD) connected to the phone enables Sandy to make and receive calls.



"Ya know, growing up with **Barry** was just like growing up with Bobby. They both were royal pains. Hey, boys will be boys, and sometimes they will be your brothers." Barry is hard-of-hearing, and his sister learned sign language and finger spelling, so she can have private and public conversations with him.

People like Mary, Tommy, Pat, Sandy, and Barry receive special education because they have difficulty seeing and hearing. Of the five senses, seeing and hearing are most important for translating external information to traditional learning. People who have difficulty seeing or hearing have sensory disabilities referred to as visual impairments or hearing impairments. The term **visual impairments** refers to all degrees of vision loss. The term **hearing impairments** refers to all degrees of hearing loss. **Deafness and blindness** refers to a combination of hearing and visual impairments.