



Tanne

Schweizerische Stiftung für Taubblinde  
Fondation suisse en faveur des personnes sourdaveugles  
Fondazione svizzera a favore delle persone sordocieche  
Swiss Foundation for Persons with Deafblindness

# Open senses, create dialogue.

Swiss Competence Center for  
Deafblindness and Similar  
Multiple Sensory Disabilities



## Specific Challenge

**Deafblindness** affects in its own way. Hearing AND vision are affected – wherever and for whatever reason. Therefore, one distance sense can at best only compensate for the difficulties in the other to a limited extent.

An affected person may be completely deafblind. She or he may also be hard of hearing and blind, deaf and visually impaired, or hard of hearing and visually impaired. The situation may change. Today, congenital deafblindness is often associated with other impairments and health problems.

Development and participation in life are severely endangered. This is also true in the case of **similar multiple sensory disabilities. Autism spectrum disorder (ASD)** is sometimes part of the situation. Sometimes ASD is also a somewhat similar challenge. Perception and communication are then central.



**“People with this dual sensory disability are severely limited in perception and interpersonal communication. They are dependent on special support and remedial measures. That is why Tanne exists. As a center of excellence, Tanne fills an important gap in services for people who often do not receive the education, care and counseling they would need. That's why I'm committed to Tanne.”**

Peter Schaub, lic. iur., President of the Foundation Board

## Specific Mission

Tanne, the Swiss Foundation for Persons with Deafblindness, is the **center of competence** for congenital deafblindness and similar multiple sensory disabilities **at every age**. Tanne is a private NPO, denominationally neutral and has public mandates.

Tanne has been in existence for over 50 years. Its specific mission has led to a special competence. That is why Tanne makes offers for every age of life. Tanne advises throughout Switzerland. And it is committed internationally: for the rights of the persons concerned and for the further development of the field.

This brochure introduces the main areas of expertise of Tanne. And it makes you familiar with its services.

Our basis is real cooperation. It is possible thanks to the interest and commitment of authorities, organizations and private individuals.



**“With Tanne, children and adults receive the support they need to make the most of their remaining visual and hearing abilities and to develop tactile forms of communication. During my visit to Tanne, I was impressed by the great commitment and empathy with which the employees accomplish this highly demanding task. Tanne is an important special education service for the Canton of Zurich and the whole of Switzerland.”**

Dr. Silvia Steiner, Minister of Education in the Government Council of the Canton of Zurich, President of the Swiss Conference of Cantonal Ministers of Education





## Area of Expertise “Perception”

To live is to perceive. When perception becomes meaningful to us, we learn and develop.

Persons with congenital deafblindness have problems with hearing and vision, and perhaps with other senses as well. A similar multiple sensory disability and ASD may also compromise meaningful perception. Other impairments and health problems can further complicate perception.

Therefore, it is central to strengthen as many senses as possible and their interaction. After all, the senses function as a team. This also applies to our support. Together we look for and find personally suitable ways. We set and aim for “sense-full” experiences.

### Hearing and Seeing

Even very few opportunities in seeing or hearing can be very important. We use the chances as good as possible: With comprehensive assessments, personal assistive

devices, adapted environment, targeted support in everyday life and in special situations. What interests the clients is central. This applies to all senses.

### Sensing and Touching

The sense of touch, proprioception (the sense of self-movement, force, and body position) and the sense of balance are fundamentally important. They are even more important when hearing and seeing are limited. We can explore, “see” and “hear” with hands, feet, mouth, the whole body. When I touch, I am in contact. I can make things happen and grasp things and meanings.

### Smell and Taste

Many things have a scent or taste – for example food, places or people. When we smell and taste, we are strongly involved. Directly connected are basic needs such as hunger, feelings and memories. Smell and taste are powerful: also when we orient ourselves in space, develop likes or dislikes.



## Area of Expertise “Communication”

Life is communication. When we communicate, we relate and develop into members of a community and culture.

Congenital deafblindness isolates to a greater or lesser degree and makes communication difficult. Similar multiple sensory disabilities and ASD can have similar effects. Other impairments and health problems can be additionally challenging.

Therefore, it is central to build stable relationships. Together we discover the world. We develop personally appropriate ways to name experiences and communicate about them.

### Touching and Naming

The more touchable the experiences, the better. Everything also has a sign name. This can be felt. Personally important experiences leave bodily emotional traces. They express

themselves in the form of movements, touches or gestures. Caregivers repeat these. In this way, they show that they have noticed the expression. What it means, we try to establish together.

### Creating a Language Together

Step by step a common language is created. We combine established body expressions with more widely understood language forms. Variety is important: own gestures, meaningful actions, sounds, melodies, spoken language, “body signs” performed on the body, under the hand and visibly performed signs, meaningful objects, photos, pictograms, drawings, alphabetical means such as the manual alphabet, the Lorm alphabet, Braille and print. Perhaps a speech computer would also fit. We use all AAC options and approaches.

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“Signing”





## Whenever: Specialized Assessment, Counseling & Training

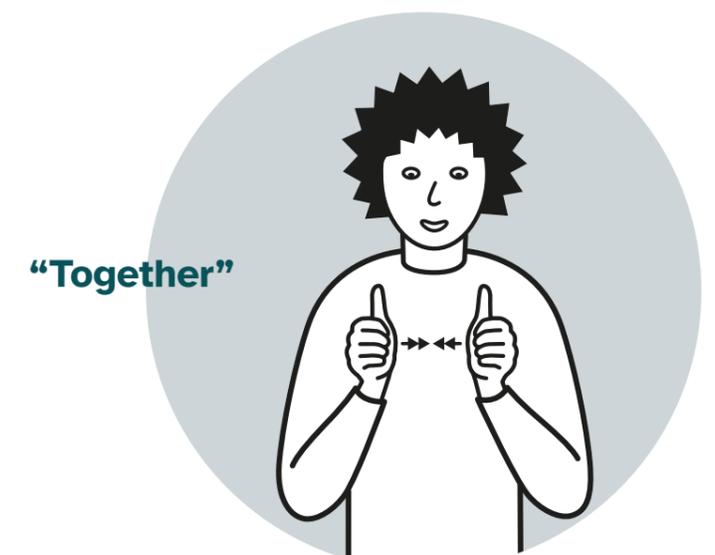
Congenital deafblindness is a specific challenge. Tanne has developed specific expertise in this area. This expertise also provides support for similar multiple sensory disabilities. This includes, in part, autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Perception and communication are central – along with any assistive devices and adaptations in the environment. Competent caregivers are particularly important.

- Tanne provides advice and support throughout Switzerland. At any age. In all environments and tailor-made.
- We train throughout Switzerland, on site at Tanne and also in collaboration with buk, the Swiss Association for Formation in Augmentative and Alternative Communication.
- At Tanne we can assess the sensory perception comprehensively. In our special room we assess in greater depth the possibilities in vision and hearing.

We always look for solutions that fit the situation. We build on what already exists. And we really work together. The goal is always increased participation in life for the person with deafblindness or similar multiple sensory disability.

**“For us it was important to work with a specialist who could take a new look at the communication with A., a deaf elderly woman without spoken language. Since the consultation, A. contacts us more often of her own accord, not only when she wants to tell us about a need, but also to show us a flower, for example. A. also comes along on outings more often again. We assume that the clear information about the destination and what to expect there gives her the necessary security. A. tries more and more often to imitate individual signs. She is interested in the pictograms and hardly ever gets angry about her food anymore because she can now determine it herself.”**

Prisca Stutz, Head of Assistance, Höfli Residence for Persons With Disabilities, Wangen





## A Good Start: Offers for Young Children

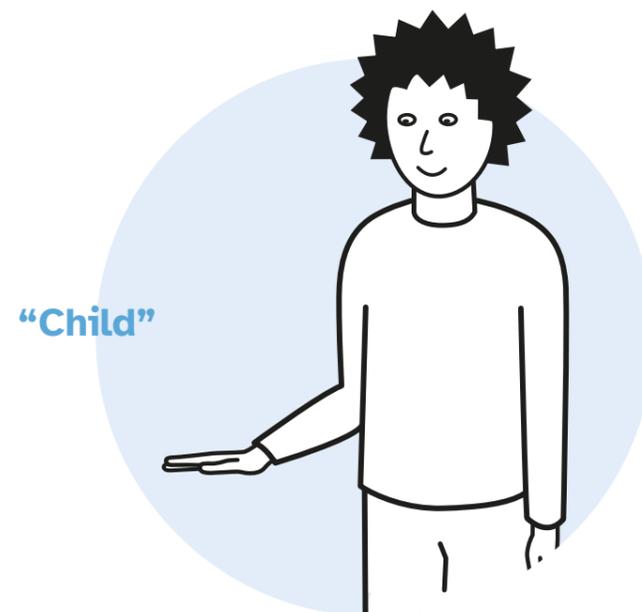
The first years of life are enormously important. For daredevils and dreamy ones. Pleasure souls and super-active ones. Enthusiasts of colors, numbers, language, dolls or climbing trees. Simply for EVERYONE: also for those with exceptional talents as well as special needs and disabilities.

That is why Tanne has a truly inclusive daycare center, the Kita Tannezapfe: [www.tannezapfe.ch](http://www.tannezapfe.ch)

### We also offer:

- Regionally: General early intervention in the home environment or at Tanne
- Switzerland-wide: Specialized early intervention for children with deafblindness in the home environment or at Tanne
- According to individual needs: physiotherapy & occupational therapy at Tanne, speech therapy in the home environment or at Tanne

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**“During the early intervention of Tanne, Soey has found herself. She has lost her fear of life. Her senses have become more open. She now wants to discover and try new things. She stands up and realizes what she can accomplish. She laughs and giggles. And she shares what she doesn't want. Soey has become someone: She is no longer a toddler, but a girl on her way into life.”**

Michèle Uster, mother of Soey



## A Schooltime for Life: Offers for Pupils

School years shape everyone. This makes it all the more important to spend time at school that actually brings meaningful results, both at the moment and for later life. Competencies that are aligned with the individual's level of development. That are individually and socially essential. So that the personality develops and participation succeeds in the best possible way.

This requires personalized solutions for the child, the teenager and the family.

Tanne therefore offers specialized schooling at Tanne, but also partially integrated or inclusive in the mainstream school.

### There are various childcare options available on site at Tanne:

- After-school care for day students including vacation care during 5½ vacation weeks per school year
- Partial or weekly boarding school in residential groups for 6 children each  
With single room, overnight supervision  
Recreational care during 18 weekends and 6½ vacation weeks per school year  
We are happy to assist with additional care needs.

### The boarding school enables comprehensive support at Tanne. This includes therapies and basic nursing care:

- According to individual needs: physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech therapy.
- Internal responsible for basic nursing care and established cooperation with physicians



**“P. arrives at home with a smile on his face after a week at the school and the residential group at Tanne, and exactly the same smile is on his face when we accompany him back to the residential group on Sunday evening. Thanks to the loving and competent care, the support agreed upon together with the caregivers, the teachers and the therapists and the similar handling of structures and rituals, P. seems to feel equally safe, well protected and happy at home and at Tanne.”**

Iris, Hansjürg, Tino and Marc Lüthi, foster family

## A Full Life: Offers for Adults

A full life – within the bounds of what is possible in the way that suits us personally.

That is what we all want. And that also applies to adult clients. This includes work and leisure. Everyday life and vacations. Closeness and distance. Achievements and open wishes. Celebrations and farewells. Questions and some answers. And hopefully a long, beautiful retirement time.

### We use the chances for individual solutions and offer:

- Living in groups of 5 or 6 persons at Tanne  
In your own room, with overnight supervision and assistance during the whole year
- Living in your own studio with direct connection to the residential group, with overnight supervision and assistance during the whole year
- Many leisure activities, including a therapy bath, our Snoezel room, a horse riding farm, a music room or vacations in Switzerland and abroad

### Therapies and basic nursing care are always included as needed:

- Physiotherapy and occupational therapy
- Internal responsible for basic nursing care and established cooperation with physicians

### Living includes working opportunities until retirement:

- In one of 9 different workshop ateliers according to your own interests and talents
- Maybe partly in the administration, the building services, the housekeeping, in the kitchen or in the café of Tanne, maybe partly in another company

The workshop ateliers are also possible after the retirement. But maybe other things will fit better then. Regular meetings for coffee and cake, for example.

“Everything”



**“The support and assistance of our brother with deafblindness is very demanding for us. We are grateful that Tanne supports us professionally and humanly in coping with this life task. It offers our brother a home and various contact opportunities.”**

Lea Widmer, sister



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