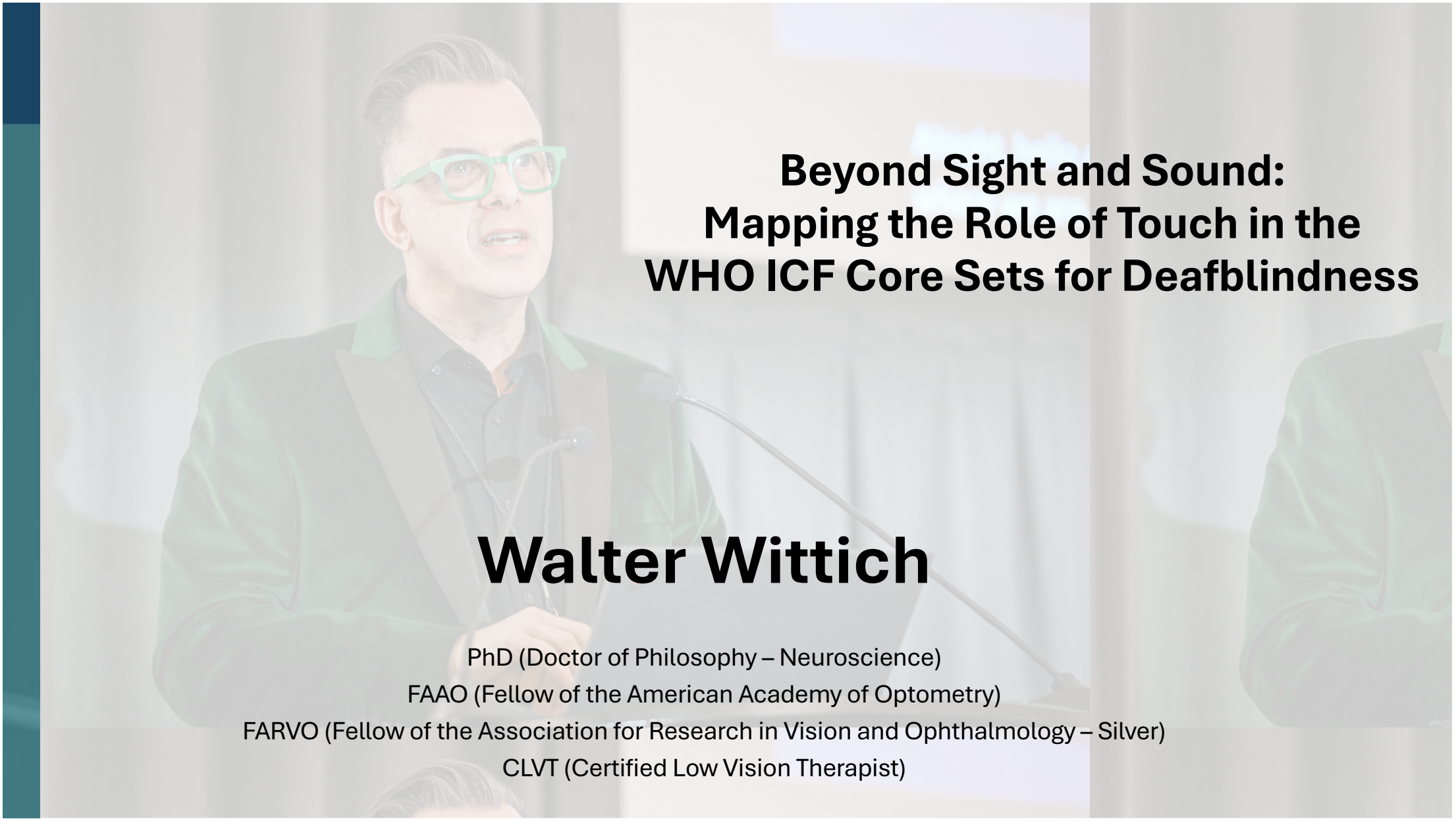

Beyond Sight and Sound: Mapping the Role of Touch in the WHO ICF Core Sets for Deafblindness

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CLVT (Certified Low Vision Therapist)

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to begin by acknowledging that Montréal is located on **unceded Indigenous lands**.

The **Kanien'kehá:ka Nation** is recognized as the custodians of the lands and waters from which I present today.

Tiohtià:ke (commonly known as Montréal) is historically known as a gathering place for many First Nations. Today, it is home to a diverse population of Indigenous and other peoples.

I want to express my respect for the continued connections with the **past, present and future** in our **ongoing relationships** with Indigenous and other peoples within the Montreal community.



We are all guests on this land. Let us walk together in respect, gratitude, and commitment to reconciliation.

DISCLOSURE

I do not have any conflicts of interest to declare

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eSight #EveryoneDeservesToSee

Mitacs

PUBLIC AND GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Alzheimer Society CANADA

CCNA Canadian Consortium on Neurodegeneration in Aging

CANADIAN HEARING SERVICES

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION

CIHR IRSC Canadian Institutes of Health Research / Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

CPR Centre de recherche sur la réadaptation et l'intégration sociale

Deafblind International Dbl Research Network

DeafBlind ONTARIO FOUNDATION

Québec

REPAR FRSQ

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Why Talk About Touch?



THE ICF FRAMEWORK

A holistic model of health and functioning

The ICF provides a common language to understand health and functioning as a dynamic interaction between an individual's health condition, body functions and structures, activities, participation, and contextual factors.

HEALTH CONDITION
(disorder or disease)

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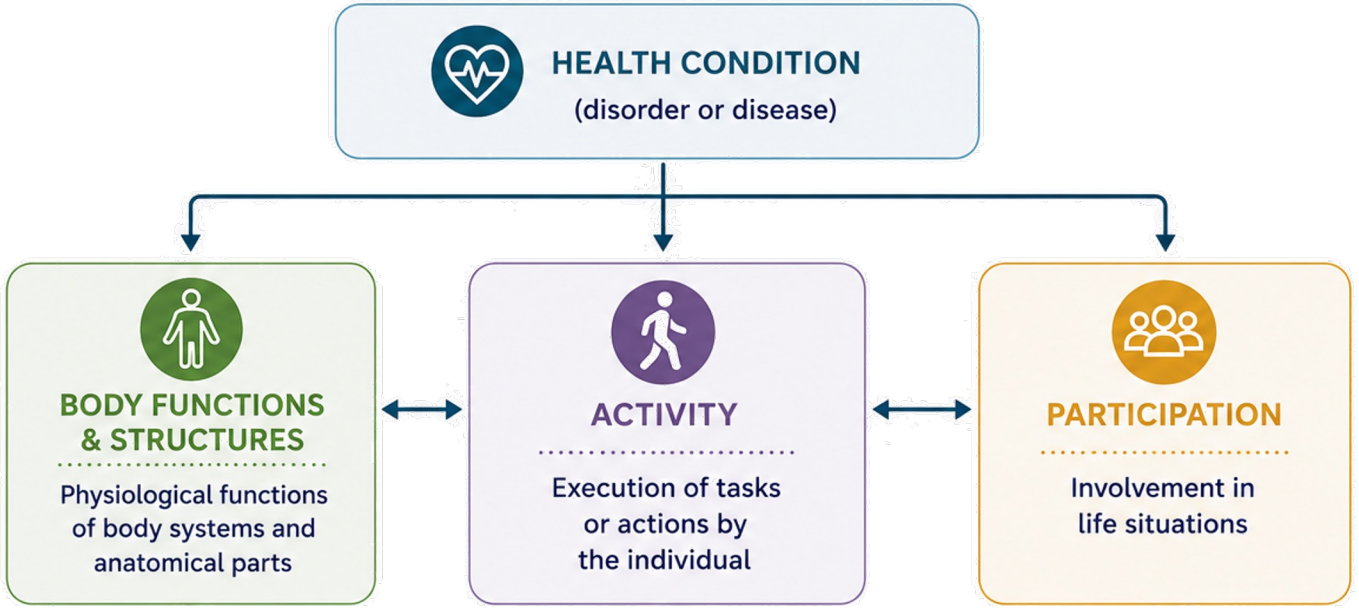

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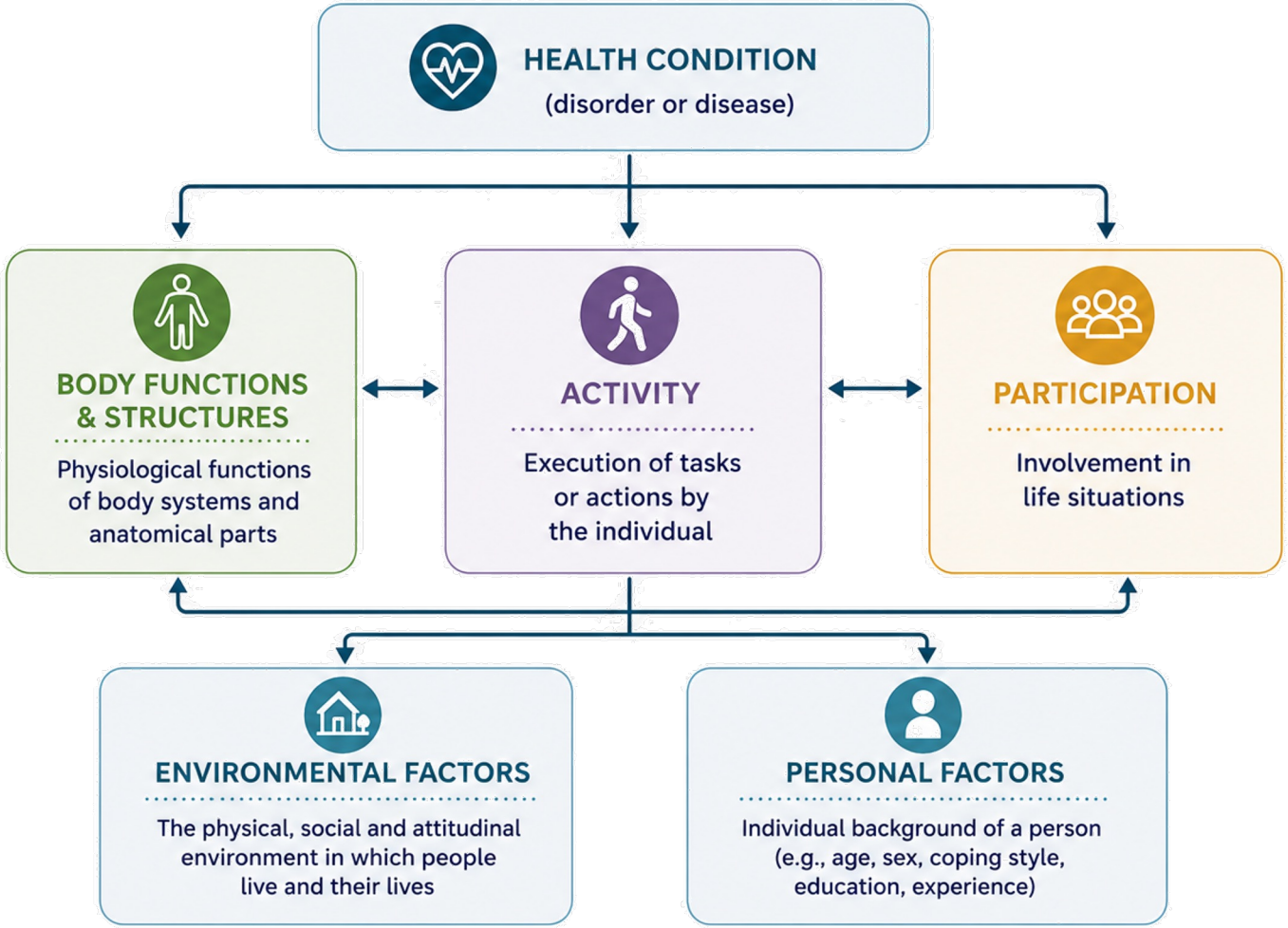

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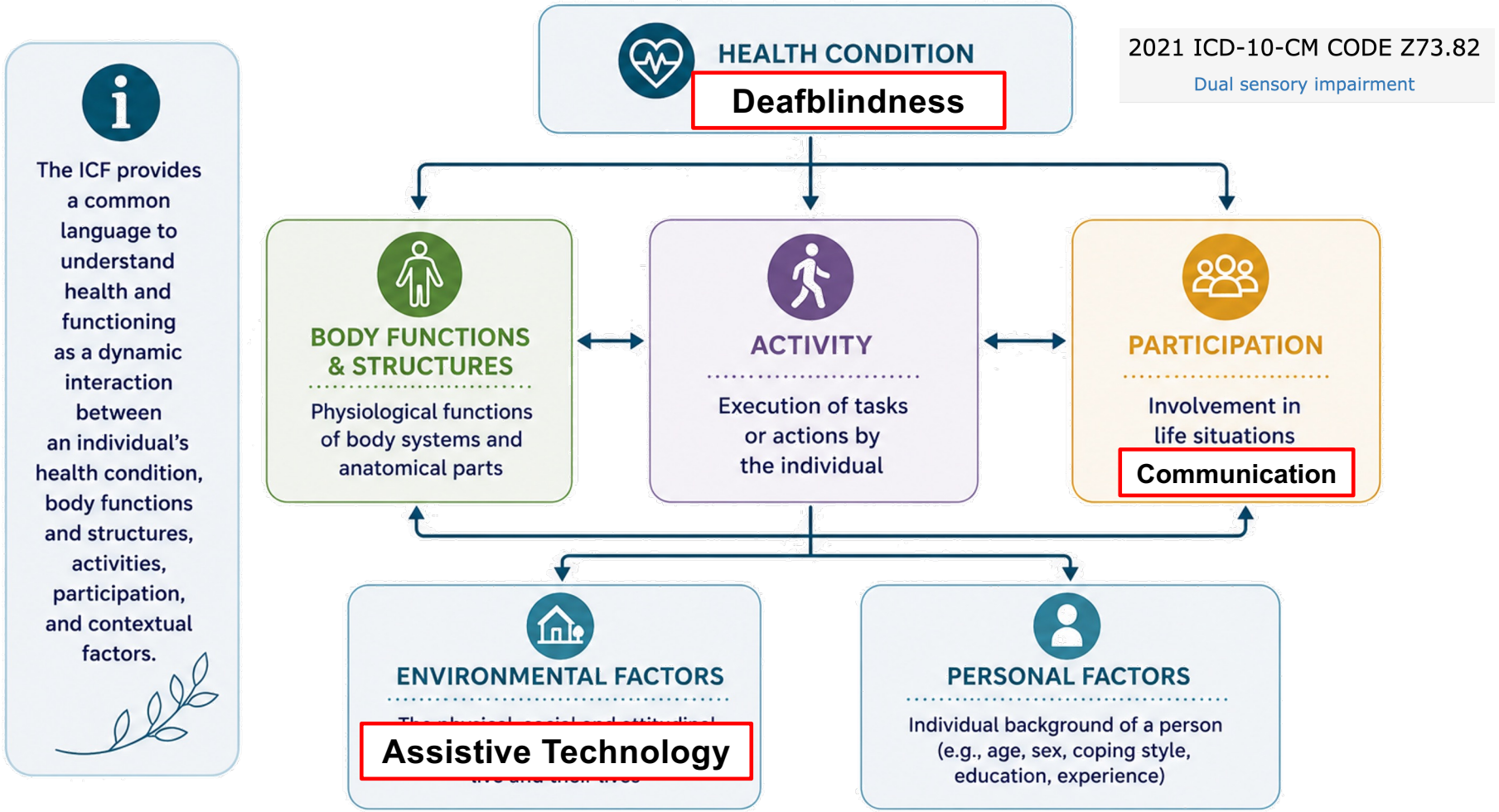

ICF CORE SETS: DEVELOPMENT PROCESS

WHAT IS A CORE SET?

- ICF Core Set = reduced number of codes, specific to a disorder or disease.
  Clear and specific terminology.
- Regulated process of how to develop a Core Set.

PREPARATORY PHASE

1. Empirical multicentre study
2. Systematic literature review
3. Qualitative study
4. Expert's study

GOAL: To create internationally agreed, disorder-specific ICF Core Sets that support clinical practice, research, policy, and data comparability.

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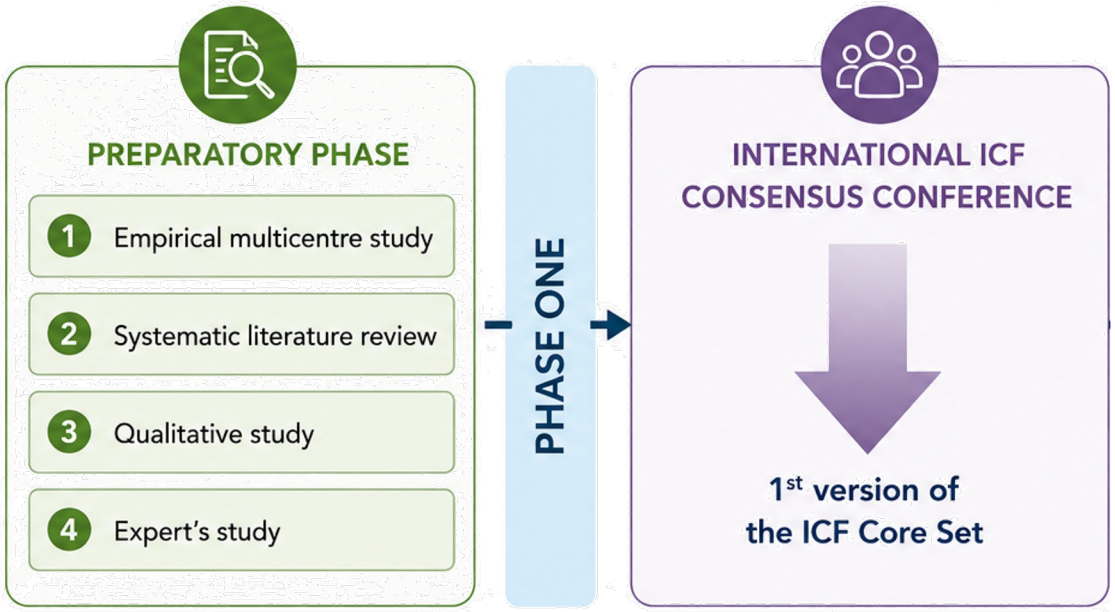

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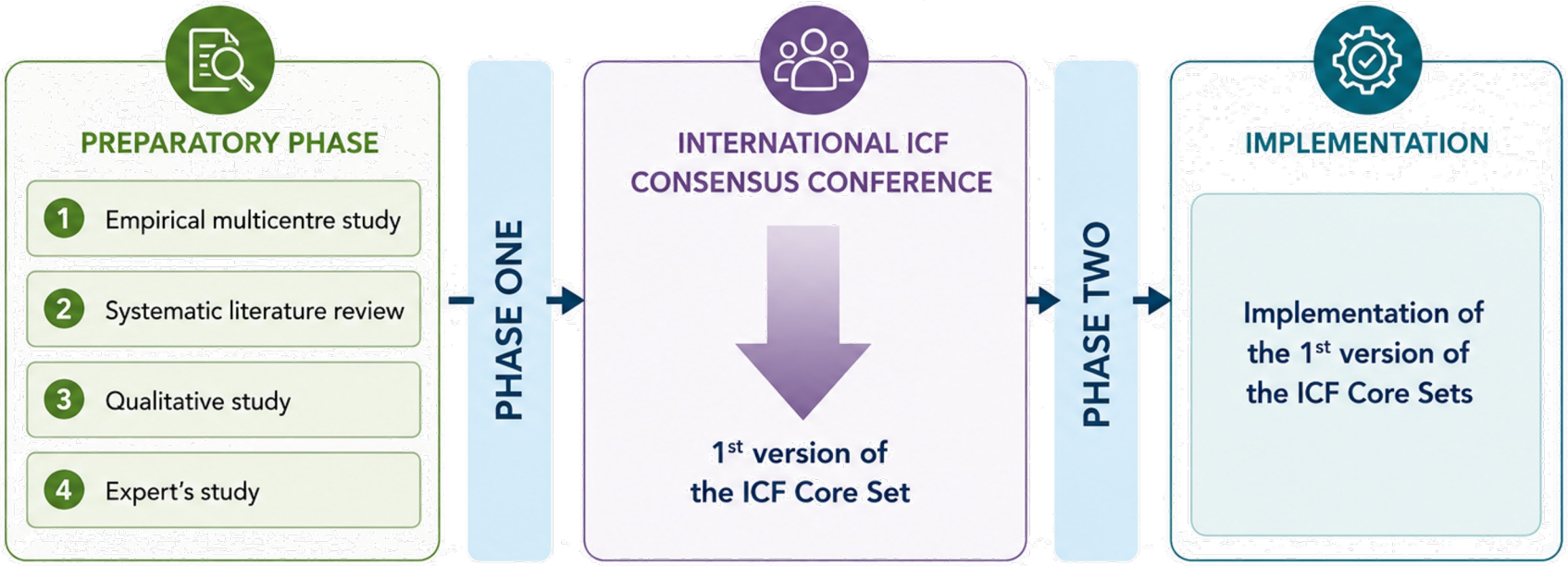

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THE ICF CORE SETS FOR DEAFBLINDNESS

Comprehensive Core Sets

The Comprehensive Core Set (218 codes) provides a detailed list of all key factors to assess or manage deafblindness, supporting thorough care and policy planning.

Intermediate Core Sets

The Intermediate Core Set (137 codes) summarizes the Comprehensive Core Set by grouping all its items into a more concise list, facilitating interprofessional communication.

Brief Core Sets

The Brief Core Set (33 codes) is a concise version that highlight only the most essential areas for quick and efficient individual clinical evaluation.

LOOKING ONLY FOR THE WORD “TOUCH”

substantially underestimates its importance.

TOUCH
IS RELEVANT ACROSS MANY AREAS OF LIFE



TOUCH AS SENSATION	b1564, b260, b265, b270, b2701, b2702, b840
TOUCH AS EXPLORATION AND LEARNING	d120, d140, d145, d166, d170
TOUCH AS COMMUNICATION	b16702, b16712, d3150, d320, d335, d340, d350, d360
TOUCH AS ACTION AND INDEPENDENCE	d440, d445, d520, d550, d560, d620, d630, d640
TOUCH AS MOBILITY AND ORIENTATION	d450, d4502, d4503, d4600–d4602, d465, d470
TOUCH AS SOCIAL CONNECTION	d710, d7104, d7105, d720, d7200
TOUCH AS ENVIRONMENTAL ACCESS	e1151, e1201, e1251, e1301, e1351, e150, e155, e255, e340, e535, e5600, e575, e580, e585, e590

TOUCH AS SENSATION

Touch provides sensory information about our bodies and the world.



TACTILE PERCEPTION

Detecting touch: textures like rough or smooth.

PROPRIOCEPTION

Sensing the position and movement of body parts.

TOUCH FUNCTION

Sensing surfaces and their texture or quality.

TEMPERATURE & OTHER STIMULI

Includes temperature, vibration, pressure, and noxious stimuli.

VIBRATION & PRESSURE

Sensing vibration and pressure for cues and feedback.

SKIN SENSATION

Sensation from the skin: itching, burning, tingling, pins and needles.

TOUCH AS EXPLORATION AND LEARNING

Touch helps us explore, understand, and learn about the world.



PURPOSEFUL SENSING

Using touch intentionally to gather information about textures and surfaces.

BRAILLE LITERACY

Learning to read and write Braille and other tactile symbols.

SKILL ACQUISITION

Developing skills through touch, including tactile strategies, tools, and daily routines.

READING

Understanding written language through touch, in print or Braille.

WRITING

Producing symbols or language by touch to express and share information.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Gaining knowledge about the world and communicating ideas.

TOUCH AS COMMUNICATION AND CONVERSATION

Touch connects us, allows us to share messages, and have conversations.





TACTILE SIGN LANGUAGE

Signing and receiving signs through touch.

BODY GESTURES

Understanding and using hand movements, posture, and body language.

BRAILLE

Reading and writing Braille for information and communication.

COMMUNICATION TECHNIQUES & DEVICES

Using strategies and tools such as Braille displays, notetakers, and vibrating or tactile devices.

CONVERSATION

Exchanging messages using sign, gestures, Braille, or other forms of communication.

TURN-TAKING

Taking turns to listen and respond in a conversation.

TOUCH AS ACTION, ORIENTATION, AND INDEPENDENCE

Touch helps us act, move, and take care of ourselves and our environments.



FINE HAND USE

Handling, picking up, grasping, manipulating, and releasing objects.

MANIPULATION

Reaching, pushing, pulling, turning, twisting, throwing, and catching.

DAILY SELF-CARE

Caring for body parts through touch—skin, nails, hair, face, and body.

EATING & DRINKING

Tactile control of utensils, cups, food textures, temperature, and safety.

ACQUISITION OF GOODS & SERVICES

Shopping and selecting objects through touch.

PREPARING MEALS

Tactile access to ingredients, tools, temperature, safety, and sequencing.

DOING HOUSEWORK

Tactile organization, cleaning, sorting, appliance use, and environmental control.

MOBILITY

Walking using touch through feet, cane, guide contact, surfaces, and obstacles.

DIFFERENT SURFACES

Tactile/proprioceptive feedback from grass, gravel, ice, snow, slopes, and more.

NAVIGATING OBSTACLES

Using touch, proprioception, auditory or guided cues to avoid and navigate.

MOVING IN ENVIRONMENTS

Tactile mapping of spaces, routes, and landmarks inside and outside buildings.

USING TRANSPORTATION

Tactile information, assistance, route-finding, and environmental cues for travel.

USING EQUIPMENT

Using mobility aids and tactile or haptic technologies to move safely and independently.

TOUCH BETWEEN PEOPLE: RELATIONSHIPS, TRUST, AND CONNECTION

Touch helps us connect, build relationships, and feel safe and understood.



PHYSICAL CONTACT

Touch conveys warmth, presence, and connection through safe physical contact.

SOCIAL CUES

Reading and sharing social cues through touch and close interaction.

INTERPERSONAL INTERACTION

Engaging in back-and-forth communication, turn-taking, and social exchange.

RELATIONSHIP FORMATION

Building connections, developing trust, and creating meaningful relationships.

AFFECTION & EMPATHY

Expressing care, comfort, and support through touch and closeness.

SOCIAL RECIPROCITY

Responding to others, sharing experiences, and strengthening bonds through mutual interaction.

Touch is the language of relationship.
It fosters trust, belonging, and connection.

TOUCH DOES NOT HAPPEN IN A VACUUM

Touch is shaped and supported by people, tools, environments, services, and systems.



ASSISTIVE PRODUCTS
Tools and devices that enable tactile access in daily living, mobility, communication, education, and employment.

TACTILE & VIBROTACTILE TECHNOLOGIES
Vibrotactile alerts and haptic technologies provide information, orientation, and connection.

BUILT ENVIRONMENTS
Accessible design, tactile cues, surfaces, layout, and routing support safe navigation and independence.

COMMUNICATION SERVICES
Services, systems, and policies that ensure access to tactile communication.

SUPPORT PERSONS
Family, peers, and professionals who provide assistance, information, and tactile communication.

EDUCATION
Accessible learning materials, tactile instruction, and inclusive practices support learning and participation.

EMPLOYMENT
Workplace adaptations, tools, and supports enable tactile access and meaningful participation.

POLICY & SYSTEMS
Laws, policies, and social systems create the conditions for inclusion, equity, and tactile access.

VIBRATION
Environmental vibration and alerts provide critical information and awareness.

PERSONAL CARE & ASSISTANCE
Support with daily routines, mobility, and communication through touch.

SOCIAL & SYSTEM SUPPORT
Families, communities, health, education, and employment systems enable participation.

When environments, people, tools, and systems work together, touch becomes a pathway to access, connection, and belonging.

Beyond Sight and Sound:
What the Core Set Teaches Us About Touch

FROM PERCEPTION
Touch informs awareness and understanding.

TO COMMUNICATION
Touch conveys meaning, ideas, and connection.

TO MOBILITY
Touch guides movement, orientation, and independence.

TOUCH CONNECTS EVERY PART OF LIFE.

TO RELATIONSHIPS
Touch builds trust, belonging, and meaningful connections.

TO SOCIAL INCLUSION
Touch enables participation, contribution, and social belonging.

Touch is not merely a sense.
It is a pathway to participation.

- From **perception** to **communication.**
- From **movement** to **relationships.**
- From individual functioning to **social inclusion.**



Touch is fundamental. Touch is relational. Touch is transformative.
When touch is recognized, supported, and valued, everyone can belong and participate.

GLOBAL IMPLEMENTATION

Summary videos

available in American Sign Language (ASL)
and Langue des signes québécoise (LSQ) on YouTube.



Global collaboration drives meaningful change. Together, we are building a more inclusive world.

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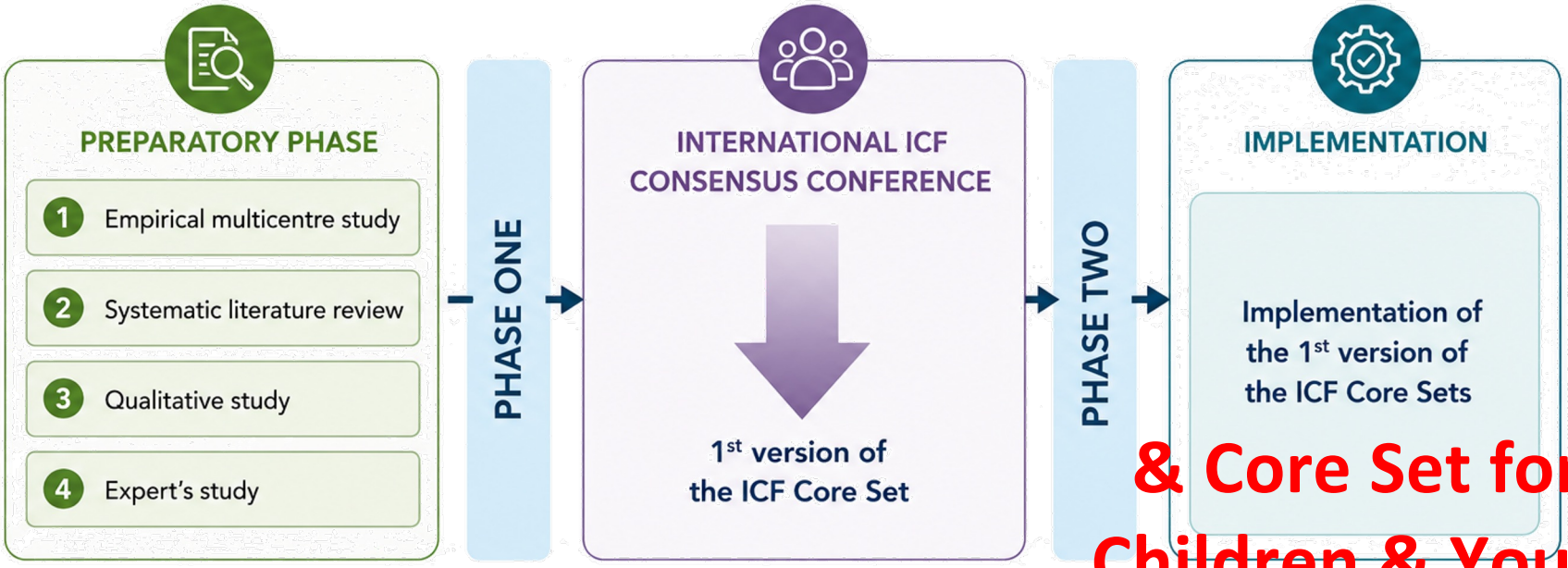
Next Steps



& Core Set for Children & Youth

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THANK YOU
TO OUR
RESEARCH FUNDING BODIES

DeafBlind ONTARIO FOUNDATION

CANADIAN HEARING SERVICES

GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS FOR RESEARCH & INNOVATION

RÉSEAU DE RECHERCHE EN SANTÉ DE LA VISION

Québec

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Centre de réadaptation Lethbridge-Layton-Mackay du CIUSSS du CODIM

Deafblind International DbI

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Additional information and updates

LET'S STAY CONNECTED
I welcome your questions and collaboration.