



HANDS & VOICES COMMUNICATOR

Hands & Voices™

"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."™

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D/HH Plus Kindness Leads to Inclusion

Kayla Lee, Montana H&V

Imagine being a parent getting "the call."

We had been waiting for answers about why our son's development wasn't quite on track. A few months prior, he had been diagnosed with aural atresia causing bilateral conductive hearing loss. We had just started down the path of trying to obtain hearing devices. Answers came in pieces. We were floundering in the unknown. Then came the call, "Mr. and Mrs. Lee, we have the results of your son's genetic testing. He has a genetic deletion. The geneticist will call you in a few weeks to discuss what this means for your son at a genetic counseling session." Sheer panic and instantaneous grief fill every inch of our bodies.

At that genetic counseling appointment, we were told that our son has a genetic deletion known as 18q. The geneticist goes on to say that this dele-



Weston, holding photo, with UP women's players and team members including brother Roczen, (L)

tion can encompass medical issues, cognitive deficits, physical and mobility deficits, and growth concerns among many others. All we heard was *deficits*, a lack of this or a lack of that. No one can give us a prognosis or cause for any of it. No one offers us real guidance on

how to move forward. Life is momentarily frozen.

But parents can't freeze.

In those first four years, as our son has grown so much; we have all grown and learned to advocate. We stopped

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Hands & Voices is dedicated to supporting families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology. We're a parent-driven, non-profit organization providing families with the resources, networks, and information they need to improve communication access and educational outcomes for their children. Our outreach activities, parent/professional collaboration and advocacy efforts are focused on enabling Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to reach their highest potential.

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In a Perfect World

What Do You See?

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Hands folded in a neat pose, Dane sits with his classmates, three little hearing girls with significant cognitive challenges. Flanking the preschoolers are a special education teacher and a teacher's aide. Both are dedicated, compassionate professionals, but neither has expertise in deafness. My son's face shines in this pre-kindergarten class picture that doesn't show what I see when I look at it now.

This is how my profoundly deaf four-year-old son spent that year: in a classroom without even one language peer with whom he could communicate readily and directly. My gut was telling me this wasn't acceptable, but after a lot of testing to find him qualified for an IEP, the school system saw this setting (the only special needs preschool class in the entire school district) as "the least restrictive environment" for Dane. The swift pushback from one school district administrator in particular was so condescending it left me too insecure to protest further. They were the experts, right?

Although I doubted the educational placement, in those early days, I lacked confidence to act on my own alarm-blaring instincts. Given his late-identification and language delay, I couldn't see Dane catching up in a setting where he'd be so deprived of communication and meaningful social interactions. Wasn't this going to make things even worse for him?

Even now, this is an all-too-common problem for Deaf students. What would it take for the "experts" to see this social isolation—an on-going plight of so many DHH students nationwide—as an urgent problem with dire consequences?

Cue the global pandemic.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, Wim Van Lancker, a sociologist at the University of Leuven in Belgium, wasn't thinking of DHH kids when he described the isolation of school children as "a social crisis in the making."* David Robson, author of *The Intelligence Trap: Revolutionize Your Thinking and Make Wiser Decisions*, emphasized that the pandemic-induced stress of student isolation "may have some serious consequences—delaying their cognitive, emotional, and social development. For those in the most critical periods of adolescence, it

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Age four, Dane was so ready for school, but school wasn't ready for him.

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may even increase the risk of mental illness.”* Those guys were both talking about isolation over a few months, not academic year after year. I'm sorry/not sorry for the snark, but welcome to our world, all of you in the rest of the world.

The risks of isolation—whether compelled by a quarantine or by language/communication deprivation—pose dire consequences for young humans. They need us to intervene NOW.

If your child is struggling without a genuine peer group where s/he/they are free to engage in all the curiosity and cavorting and calamities of full and effective communication, do something about it NOW. Our kids need a roster of friends and activities that provide the rich, genuine opportunities for exchange

(whether signed or spoken or both) that are so crucial to their social and emotional development NOW. Federal law through the IDEA and ADA/Section 504 and best practices outlined in the NASDSE Educational Service Guidelines (Optimizing Outcomes for Students who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing) support your advocacy. This kind of interaction is vital during the rapid language learning years of early childhood, and absolutely critical throughout adolescence. This is what it takes to raise resilient young adults who can express their views, solve problems, think creatively, work collaboratively, and navigate all aspects of the human experience.

Look at your kid. What do you see there... what don't you see? ~

*How Covid-19 is Changing the World's Children (BBC.com)

Welcome, New Readers!

If you are a first time reader, welcome! Our goal at *The Communicator* is to inspire, provoke, and nourish your path as a parent of a child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing or as a professional who works with families, in keeping with our motto: *“What works for your child is what makes the choice right.”*TM You'll find perspectives on current research alongside the insights of Deaf or Hard of Hearing adults; you'll find articles from children themselves next to calls for action in the world of deaf education. We also publish abbreviated news from our Chapters (see your Chapter for more information), upcoming events, and paid advertisements for programs, products and services.

If any of our articles spoke to you, we'd love to hear from you at editor@handsandvoices.org.

If you have a story to share, see the editorial guidelines, including the “sniff test,” at: www.handsandvoices.org/resources/communicator.htm.

Welcome New Families

HANDS & VOICES™

Kindness Leads to Inclusion

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perseverating on deficits and focused our energy towards shedding light on what our son CAN do. This has led to more opportunities as well as finding an abundance of joy and happiness; savoring all the little things so much more. Yes, we still fight for inclusion. Like us, all parents of children with additional needs have seen firsthand the endless battles that are required to garner acceptance and support in both education and the public arena. Judgments, assumptions, and the lack of presumed competence seem to be passed around without any inclination to their harm. So, what do we do? As a family, we have learned that it is best to educate others with kindness and openness about what our child's disability is, what it requires, and how those who are interacting with him can best support his unique needs. We do not allow our son's differences or needs to become the white elephant in the room. We encourage others to see and celebrate all of Weston's capabilities.

One thing our family has done to help cultivate an openness around our son's disability is the development of an infographic: short and sweet, detailing the major points that the intended individual (coach, new teacher, therapist, family members, friend's parents) needs to know about Weston in a snapshot. We have found that this has allotted for more growth, empathy, and a willingness to support.

Let's talk about how advocacy and this infographic changed the script for our sons' first stab at organized basketball in the first grade. Just as worry consumed us when we first learned about his diagnosis, that same worry started to rear its ugly head as we entered new terrain with sports. We worried about how the coaches would or would not support him and worried about how his peers and their parents would react to our son's *perceived* deficits. Taking time to share Weston's infographic helped educate the coaches on who our son was, it allowed the coaches to have a better understanding of what they could do to help make

his experience with basketball a positive one. We arrived at "practice one" where the coaches came in eager to meet Weston's needs. They learned how to use his mini mic and how to interact with him. They introduced him to the team and their parents all while outlining noise levels, Weston's hearing aids, and how to best communicate with him at practices and games. During this practice, the coaches could see that despite Weston's best efforts and perseverance to make a basket like his typical peers with both hands above his head was proving to be unsuccessful. He was nowhere near hitting the rim. Nonetheless, they remained upbeat and encouraging.

Practice Two

The coaches showed up to the second practice exuding enthusiasm. They had taken the time to brainstorm ideas to help Weston make a basket. They told us about professional basketball player Rick Barry and his infamous underhand shot. One of the

coaches took Weston aside one-on-one to demonstrate and practice this new method. Boom! Weston was making baskets that very same night. Weston beamed with joy and self-pride. One small act of kindness led to confidence and inclusion. A few games into the season, the coaches organized an opportunity for Weston to score a basket during one of the games. Both team's coaches were on board, the refs, two teams full of first-grade boys, and a news reporter participated in making that dream a reality. Weston scored his first basket during a basketball game performing an underhand shot just like he was taught. The building exploded with clapping, crying, hugs, and endless cheering. We thought--wow, this is it! This is the gold standard for inclusion. True inclusion is about equity, and that is exactly what occurred during Weston's first season of basketball. Having Weston shoot underhanded provided him with a real means of participating alongside his peers. Who cared if it was not the typical method when it worked for him?

Better still, the kindness cascaded from this event and spread throughout the community. The story was broadcast widely and led to our local University of Providence inviting Weston and his team to a collegiate game where they inducted him as an honorary Argo. The kindness train chugged ahead. With the help of one of Weston's coaches, this story caught the attention of none other than former pro basketball player himself, Rick Barry. Mr. Barry gave a warm and very generous interview after he heard about Weston's basketball journey and success with the renowned underhand shot. He was beyond touched by Weston's story. Mr. Barry sent Weston an autographed picture of him and his legendary underhand shot with a personalized handwritten message on how pleased he was with Weston's perseverance. As a family, this welcoming and inclusion brought a roller coaster of emotions and memories forever engrained in our hearts. Happiness and joy topped the list, but

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We stopped perseverating on deficits and focused our energy towards shedding light on what our son CAN do.

"One small act of kindness helped pave the way for our community to think about what inclusion really looks and feels like."



Hearing Aid Experiences Spanish-speaking Mothers

By Karen Muñoz, Utah State University

For most parents, learning how to manage hearing aids is a new experience. Parents not only need to navigate the technical aspects of how to change batteries and make sure the hearing aids are working; they also find themselves navigating conflicting emotions—theirs and those of others in their families and communities. Parents' life experiences, including their cultural backgrounds, can influence how they consider hearing differences, make decisions, and actions they take to manage their child's hearing aids.

We interviewed 11 Spanish-speaking mothers living in the United States and using Spanish as their primary language, to gain insights from their experiences. Six of the mothers had a college degree. A native Spanish-speaker completed the interviews and the mothers readily shared about their experiences and how they felt. Most of the mothers indicated feeling comfortable talking to their audiologist and expressed feeling supported, although one mother had to change audiologists to obtain the support she needed. The mothers

originated from six different countries and Puerto Rico. Their children were 14 to 60 months of age, most had a bilateral hearing loss, and two children had additional disabilities. Even though all of the mothers reported that they felt it was extremely important for them and for other caregivers to know how to manage the child's hearing aids, there was wide variability in how confident they felt with hearing aid management skills.

The mothers rated their confidence for fourteen skills on a scale from 0 (not confident at all) to 100 (completely confident). The skills were grouped into three categories: hearing aid use, teaching others, and hearing aid maintenance. Some skills had wide variability, for example: *troubleshooting problems when your child's hearing aids are not working*. Parents reported varying amounts of support from their audiologists, and this influenced the extent of instruction they received related to managing the hearing aids, from basic or very minimal instruction to extensive support for their learning.

“No mucho realmente...ella no se enfoca mucho en explicarme.”

(“Not much really...she doesn't focus much on explaining to me.”)

“Este, cualquier pregunta que nosotros tenemos...hemos tomado tiempo con ellos en que nos enseñen realmente, paso a paso, qué es lo que necesitamos saber...”

(“They always have time to help us with any questions that we have...they have taken the time to teach us, step by step, what we need to know...”) ~

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Kindness

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more than that, gratitude.

The whirlwind of basketball season taught Weston's coaches how to think and look outside the box, it taught Weston's peers to celebrate differences, and it taught a community about how kindness and inclusion benefit everyone. The moral of the story is that teaching others about your child's disability is—undoubtedly—always a win. Greater understanding leads to acceptance, presumed competence, and inclusion. One small act of kindness helped pave the way for our community to think about what true inclusion looks and feels like. And we have the memories to inspire us forward ~

See a video and more on Weston's basketball story:

<https://www.montanasports.com/more-sports/youth-basketball-teams-provide-unforgettable-moment-for-athlete-with-genetic-condition>

<https://www.montanasports.com/more-sports/nba-legend-rick-barry-inspired-by-7-year-old-great-falls-basketball-player>



Members of the Latino Council present a plenary at the Hands & Voices Leadership Conference held in Michigan, October 2023

Spanish-speaking Mothers

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Home Routines

Hearing aid routines also varied, from mothers saying they are unsure about hearing aid use expectations to other mothers sharing predictable habits that they have developed:

"quizás unas cuatro, seis horas al día, [audiologist] me dijo que en bebés solo se los pusiera cuatro horas al día."

("maybe between four and six hours a day, [audiologist] told me that in babies they should only be put them on four hours a day.")

"...se los ponemos nosotros en cuanto él se despierta. Este, antes de que salga de su cuarto o después que él al baño y regresa, este, es la primera cosa que él busca. Este, se lo quitamos cuando se va a bañar y cuando se va a dormir."

("...we put them on [hearing aids] him as soon as he wakes up. Before he leaves his room or after he goes to the bathroom and comes back, it is the first thing he looks for. We take them off when he goes to bathe and when he goes to sleep.")

Interpreters must support communication when communication in Spanish is not possible. Use of interpreters varied, making communication difficult for some parents. Mothers shared that they faced difficult emotions when their child's hearing loss was identified, for example:

"..., cuando me dijeron de que también mi niña está perdiendo, su pérdida de audición, sentía que mi mundo se me acababa."

("..., when they told me that my daughter is also losing her hearing, about her hearing loss, I felt that my world was coming to an end.")

When there is not an interpreter, (or an interpreter with strong bilingual skills available) parents may not be able to adequately share issues of importance or challenging emotions, and this can disrupt their ability to obtain effective



support, so they are equipped to help their child. For example, one mother shared feeling uncomfortable having others see her child wearing her hearing aids.

It is not uncommon for parents to experience difficult thoughts and emotions about their child's hearing loss. Thoughts and emotions can influence actions parents take as they navigate their day-to-day lives to support their children. For example, Spanish-speaking families have shared that having a child with a disability is seen as a sign that something is wrong with the family and the child needs to be hidden away, and that it is uncommon for them to question professionals when being seen for services (Caballero et al., 2018).

Not all parents had been connected to a support network, and one mother shared that she had not talked to anyone about her child's hearing loss. Other mothers shared the importance of support not only from their audiologist, but also from other parents:

"Manos y Voces, hemos conocido a otras personas y es tan reconfortante conocer a alguien que está pasando por lo mismo que tú y que sentirte que no eres la única, entonces yo pienso que conocer a otras personas que están pasando por lo mismo es como lo mejor...Te anima más".

("Hands & Voices, we've met other people and it's so comforting to meet someone who is going through the same thing you are and to feel like you're not the only one, so I think meeting other people who are going through the same thing is like the best thing...It uplifts you.")

When parents receive support for their learning journey, they are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to help their child. Remote services offer flexible access to care and can improve timeliness in addressing issues that arise; however, none of the mothers in the study were aware of this as an option. Optimal child outcomes can

be best achieved when audiologists and parents work together to identify solutions, discuss factors that influence decision-making, and explore strategies for effective education and support—teaching parents is key to building a strong partnership. ~

Read the journal article describing this study in more detail:

Muñoz, K., Guillen, D., Muñoz, C., & Twohig, M.P. (2023). Pediatric hearing aid management: experiences and perspectives of Spanish-speaking parents. *American Journal of Audiology*, https://doi.org/10.1044/2023_AJA-23-00070

Caballero, A., Muñoz, K., Schultz, J., Graham, L., & Meibos, A. (2018). Hispanic Parents' Beliefs, Attitudes and Perceptions Toward Pediatric Hearing Loss: A Comprehensive Literature Review. *Journal of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention*, 3(2), 30-36. <https://doi.org/10.26077/h0tf-ve32>



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Are you Pregnant?

By Shania Hunt, West Virginia

I'm Maverick. I am two years old and I'm determined, brave, and I love life to the fullest. I love making people laugh. I was born with congenital Cytomegalovirus (cCMV) and although it doesn't define me, it's part of who I am. CMV caused damage to my brain, intercranial calcifications, blind spots in my vision, sensory issues and hearing loss in both ears. I will be wearing hearing aids the rest of my life. But I am very lucky.

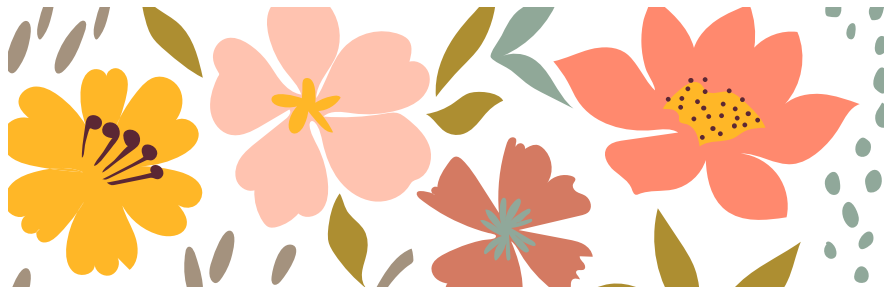
I am lucky because I was transferred to a hospital who caught my CMV in time for me to start taking anti-viral treatments that prevented more damage. Lucky because I was able to start physical, occupational, speech, hearing and

developmental therapy at such a young age. Lucky because I am able to live my life to fullest potential. My mom and I are working hard to educate about this virus. Together, we can stop CMV – a preventable, common virus that no one talks about by starting to educate West Virginians and adding cCMV to the universal newborn screening.

We especially want people to know about CMV before and during pregnancy. We want to make sure more WV babies are lucky like me, because we believe every child deserves to live their life to their fullest potential. You can reach my mom Shania at shaniawvcmv@gmail.com. ~



Maverick



 Sano

Children with hearing loss

Learn more about no-cost access to genetic testing and study opportunities.

[Learn more](#)

Journey of Love

By Deborah Rodriguez, Nevada H&V

Becoming a mother is a journey filled with joy, challenges, and profound moments. My husband Angel and I were already parents to two beautiful children, Natalia and Angel, when we welcomed our third baby in January of 2020. When our precious daughter, Elizabeth Zoe, was identified with bilateral moderate-severe sensorineural hearing loss, the path I envisioned for my family took an unexpected turn. What followed was a transformative experience navigating motherhood during the pandemic while embracing my new role as an advocate for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) community in our state.

The moment I learned of my daughter's hearing loss diagnosis my emotions flowed like a tumultuous river. I was devastated. Grief, confusion, and questions flooded my mind. How was I going to be able to help my daughter? Would she ever be able to talk to us? I saw her life flash before my eyes. Would she wear hearing aids and a wedding dress? This is not how our life is supposed to be. Unbeknownst to me at that time, even within the depths of that initial shock, I found strength. Despite the support of our immediate family, which is quite large, my husband and I felt very alone on our journey. As a mother, my instinct to protect and nurture kicked in, pushing me into uncharted territory.

Every milestone became an opportunity for growth. Before long, I was learning baby sign language. Teaching her these signs became part of our daily routine. Through this, I discovered a new level of connection and understanding with my daughter. Each smile, each sign, and each attempt she made to imitate my sounds and words became a testament to our unbreakable bond. I spent every waking hour with her, talking to her and encouraging her responses, hoping she would mimic my voice and my signs and crack the code to language.

Due to the COVID quarantine, we struggled to get care and resources for our daughter. She was seen by the pediatric audiologist from Early Intervention when she was six weeks old, but the first proper appointment with early intervention didn't occur until she was nine months old. On her first birthday, we had an intake meeting with our H&V Guide by Your Side (GBYS) Parent Guide and our Developmental Specialist from Early Intervention. We had missed a lot of time. I was very emotional, but after hearing our Parent Guide's story, I realized the journey was not ours alone. I had never been able to talk openly about Elizabeth's hearing loss to anyone besides my husband and our immediate family. I think in the back of

my mind, I was always holding out hope that she didn't have hearing loss; that it would somehow be temporary. Looking back to those early days, I feel ashamed of how often I wished she had typical hearing.

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Angel, Elizabeth, and Deborah



Elizabeth and Deborah

Journey

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A few months after that first conversation with our Parent Guide, I saw a job opening posted for a bilingual GBYS Parent Guide. That ignited a fire within me to ensure that no family faced the uncertainties we did. I wanted to be sure other moms could enjoy their new baby and find joy in their child without dwelling on their hearing loss diagnosis, spending their days crying and Googling like I did. I wanted to be able to tell other families that having feelings of sadness, guilt, and worry for the unknown was to be expected, but also remind them that they are their children's strongest advocates.

In September 2022, I was thrilled to attend the annual Hands & Voices Leadership Conference in Fairport, NY. It was such a great experience for me as a first-time attendee. I was intrigued by every panel, I met amazing leaders, and I found out about the Latino Council. I met Ana Brooks, and immediately asked her how I could join the Council. Ana shared about the application process, and as soon as I returned home, I spoke with Beth Jones, the Executive Director for Nevada Hands & Voices, and let her know I was interested in applying to join the Council. She encouraged me to apply, and about a year later, I was invited by the Council to attend one of their meetings. It was a privilege to be invited and to have my application accepted by the Latino Council. This group of extraordinary women brings so much to the table when it comes to shared experiences and immeasurable cultural understanding, crucial when fostering connections with Latino minorities living in diverse communities. I am looking forward to many more collaborations with them.

Becoming an advocate for the D/HH children and their families became my purpose. My daughter's diagnosis became a catalyst for change. Through that learning curve, I discovered a community of families who share similar experiences, fears, and hopes. I realized that by sharing our stories and knowledge, we could empower other

families to navigate their journeys with confidence. From meeting families in their homes offering emotional support and connecting families to local and national resources, every step forward has felt like a triumph. My daughter's hearing loss is not a limitation; it's a part of her that we celebrate. Through our advocacy efforts, we're redefining what it means to be a family of a D/HH child.

Today, Elizabeth is in pre-kindergarten in an Early Childhood Inclusion class at the same school her siblings attend. She is a selective speaker at first, but once she is comfortable, she is a little chatterbox. She recently started speaking out loud (before she would only whisper) and still needs to be prompted to interact with typical peers in her class. She loves to count to 30, knows all the letters, and can even tell you my phone number! She receives weekly speech therapy at school and is absolutely thriving. When she is not in school, she enjoys pestering her older siblings, which she excels at doing. She is sassy and most days, gets her way—especially if her daddy is around.

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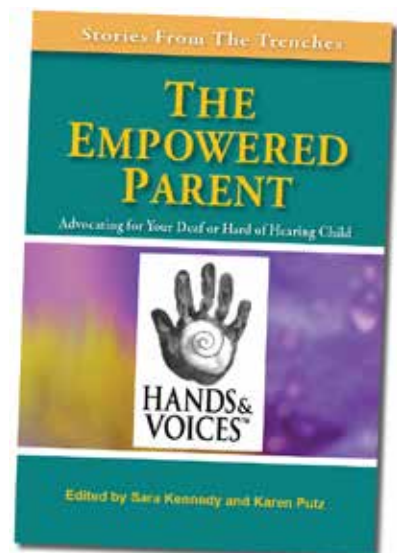
Motherhood is a tapestry woven with love, challenges, and growth. My journey as a mother of a D/HH child has shown me the power of determination, the beauty of adversity, and the impact of advocacy. As I continue to navigate this path, I draw strength in our shared experiences, find hope in our progress, and have a deep sense of purpose in advocating for my daughter and the incredible community to which we all now belong. ~

The Empowered Parent Stories from the Trenches

Advocating for Your Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child

Our motto at Hands & Voices is simple but profound. Finding out what works for your individual child and teaching them to be their own best advocate is key. Advocacy starts with informed parents whether in or out of a classroom. Inside this book, we hope you will find the inspiration and perspective you need to have the courage to advocate.

The Empowered Parent is available in print and can be ordered on the Hands & Voices web site.



<https://handsandvoices.org/resources/products.htm>

A Parent's Perspective

The EHDI Conference

Kendra Hatle, SD Hands & Voices

Hearing loss, Deaf, Sign Language, Speech Therapy: a whole lot of words were being thrown around and it was my responsibility to figure out what to do. I consider myself lucky. I have an amazing audiologist who carefully explained everything and never pushed my questions or concerns out of scope. She explained, re-explained, and ensured I had all the information I needed to make informed decisions regarding my son.

Let's start with this story closer to the beginning.

My children, then and now, are not biologically mine. Fostering was our path to having children in our lives. Albeit, children didn't always stay for long. This comes with challenges just the same as having one's own children. This was how we became parents.

Our first placement, Legend, was 9 months old when he came to us. We knew nothing other than his name and birthday and that he had some clear physical delays. We went through a myriad of appointments and referrals to specialists to get a holistic picture of Legend and what we could do to help him. When he was 11 months old, we found out he had unilateral hearing loss. He was fitted for a hearing aid and is still using that along with other

supports to help his hearing, language acquisition, and speech development. When I got the news that he had hearing loss, unlike many, it didn't faze me. I am a Sign Language Interpreter by trade and knew that whatever method or need for communication he needed, I could support it.

This child, who was not mine, was relying on me to make a decision that would shape his future. This was overwhelming, and the choices were heavy. These were choices all of us with kids who have hearing differences have made. We have had other foster kids who have also had hearing loss that have been identified since coming into our care. With each child we weigh all options and make what we feel is the most informed decision we can that will guide them to have the best outcomes.

Realistically, I knew there were other families out there who had children with hearing loss, and they also had made decisions for their children. I work every day with deaf people, who have lived their lives with the choices their parents made, for worse or for better. I **KNEW** that this happened, yet I still felt alone. I believed that no one knew what I was going through. My child had all of these other things going on. We were unique; this was complicated. Of course, no one knew exactly what I was going through. Looking back it was silly of me to think those things because although there is no child exactly like mine, in the same environment, with the same demographics; plenty of parents have faced the same decisions I had to make. I didn't need to feel alone. While we are "rare", there are many people like me. What I was missing was parent support.

Fast forward three years and I had the opportunity to attend my first EHDI conference. My tuition was sponsored, and I wanted to be sure I soaked up every opportunity. Man, let me tell you... the EHDI conference is a place of knowledge and growth. To be honest, I might



Our son, Legend

have been a little overwhelmed after the first day but I made it through and brought home skills that I would have never thought about before this opportunity was placed in front of me. I attended sessions I thought I knew something about and sessions completely out of my wheelhouse so that I could look at my children and the environment they were growing up in from all perspectives. To me, that is how I can make the best decisions for my kids going forward. I need to be able to look at every decision through different lenses and arrive at multiple conclusions.

The information was great. It truly was. But, my original goal for going was to meet and talk to other parents. The first night, there was a parent gathering and I was inundated with so many people, stories, and (best of all) the feeling of mutual understanding. They all got it. I sat in a room with more than 90 parents. They all knew exactly how I felt because they had been there, too. EHDI is known for benchmarks for screening, identifying hearing loss and early supports for children, and data and innovation in the field, with vast resources EHDI has cultivated over time and have

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I work every day with deaf people, who have lived their lives with the choices their parents made, for worse or for better. I **KNEW** that this happened, yet I still felt alone.

Ear Defenders

Marie Morgan, CA H&V Member

Living here in Southern California, we can go long stretches—even months at a time—without rain. My daughter, Kacey, is very active all year round and involved in many outdoor activities such as run club, swimming, soccer, and softball. Through the newborn hearing screening process, Kacey was identified with a bilateral sensorineural hearing loss and has worn hearing aids all nine years of her life. Being active in outdoor activities and going long stretches without rain has been great for Kacey.

Then, last fall in a playoff soccer match, it was raining hard enough and steady enough to cause Kacey to take her hearing aids out in order to play (hearing aids are not waterproof). Kacey played well, and so did her team, but it wasn't until after the game that we found out what that experience was like for her. She enjoyed the match, but felt defeated and not included by not being able to hear her teammates or her coach. She felt as if the playing field was not level for someone like her. It was the first time in her life that she had expressed something like this to us. She has been her own champion, advocating for whatever she needs to be equal with others. Because of this sense of self, she excels in the classroom, socially, and athletically. Not being on a level playing field with all the other kids was a big deal.

From that rain came sunshine. Not long after the soccer match, Kacey's school was promoting an Invention Convention. When invited to participate, Kacey said yes. In brainstorming ideas for inventions, Kacey rather quickly came around to suggesting "hearing aid raincoats" so people of any age participating in outdoor activities can keep them in if desired. That would, "level the playing field, she said! What a cool idea, and what a cool kid to recognize a real problem and want to do something about it.

The process of creating rain coats for hearing aids began with research



Kacey and her project

on similar products that may exist, as well as figuring out what materials and construction would result in a solution in time to participate in the Invention Convention. She tried various materials and processes such as sewing, gluing, and velcroing, leading her to prototypes for testing to meet key criteria. The criteria included: easy on and off, comfort, not blocking sound, and of course, protecting the hearing aids from being damaged. The prototype for the Invention Convention was vinyl material, with sewing on one side, and Velcro on the other. The final prototype met the criteria Kacey decided upon before buying any materials and trying out different solutions. She enjoyed the trial and error leading to the final prototype...a big part of the overall fun in the process.

At the Invention Convention, Kacey presented what she named the Ear Defenders, with the tagline, *Leveling the Playing Field*. This event afforded Kacey the opportunity to use her experi-

EHDI Conference

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at their disposal. Yet they strive to be more and provide more. Focusing solely on professional and agency teaching is a thing of the past. They have broadened their scope and are looking to support the one group at the root of EHDI: parents. Parents must make decisions for their children with hearing differences every single day.

EHDI was a place to mend my missing link, to help me help my child grow to be the best he can be. It provided a much-needed parent connection. I plan to stay connected with the parents in the South Dakota Chapter and see what pieces we are missing to connect with parents new to this journey. No one needs to feel "alone" when there are so many people—and knowledgeable parents—to rely on. ~

ence to describe to judges, parents, and classmates how she came up with the idea, and created a cool product design while being easy to use and solving a real problem.

There were many great inventions presented, and even though the Ear Defenders did not win the top spot, Kacey was invited to present her invention at the regional Southern California Invention Convention. On the car ride home from the event, Kacey simply said, "I don't mind that I didn't win. I'm proud of having worked on solving a problem that I and others like me have." That pride in her growing leadership is shared by my husband and me, our extended family members, and friends. ~

She felt as if the playing field was not level for someone like her. It was the first time in her life that she had expressed something like this to us.

DHH Perspectives

Two Roads Converged

By Thomas Horejcs, Maryland/DC H&V
and Dylan Conroy, MD/DC H&V parent

The phrase “two roads converged” captures the essence of connecting two remarkable journeys of a Deaf adult and a parent/student with a family deepening their understanding through study and a personal connection centered on their deaf child. By intertwining both life experiences, we can foster a supportive and informed community. This shared experience of a Deaf leader and an interpreting student who was also the parent of a Deaf child not only enriches our collective understanding but also ensures that the vibrant Deaf culture and the unique perspectives of Deaf/Hard of Hearing (D/HH) individuals infuse our daily lives with a deeper sense of empathy and inclusivity.

How We Met

Dylan: We were Americans living in the Netherlands when we found out that our daughter, Jane (pseudonym), was born deaf with additional disabilities. After extensive research, my husband Eric and I returned to the USA, and relocated to Maryland where Jane would attend the Maryland School for the Deaf – Columbia that would better fit her needs. I was also enrolled in an Introduction to Interpreting course.

Thomas (Tommy): Advocacy work is my lifelong vocation both as someone who benefited from the EHDI system as a Deaf individual and as an advocate in the EHDI field. After decades of administrative and faculty roles in higher education, I transitioned into focusing more on policy and advocacy work in telecommunications for the deaf community at Convo Communications. The arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic created an opportunity for my wife and me to relocate to rural Maryland. There, we'd be able to continue our EHDI efforts remotely while also advocating both locally and from afar. Additionally, as a Certified Deaf Interpreter (CDI), I occasionally provide interpreting services. Dylan emailed me out of the blue:



Dylan, Eric and Jane

*“Dear Mr. Horejcs,
My name is Dylan Conroy. I am a student currently enrolled in an Introduction to Interpreting course. As one of our assignments, we have been asked to interview a certified and working interpreter. Would you be willing to let me interview you regarding your work and experience as a professional interpreter?*

I know that your schedule is probably very full...but if you could spare a few minutes to talk with me in person, over the phone, or over video chat I would be so appreciative. Is there a date and time that would work best for you?”

I found myself wondering how Dylan had come to contact me. Later, she revealed that she had found my email address on the RID list of certified interpreters. She expressed her intention vividly, saying “If this is the field I want to work in and the community I want to get involved in, I should talk to as many

people as I can.”

Admittedly, the prospect of being interviewed by an interpreting student doesn't particularly excite me but I always accept these opportunities, viewing them as an essential duty to safeguard the interests of our cherished Deaf, Deaf with Disabilities (or “Plus”) and DeafBlind communities. I was fully prepared to share with Dylan the harsh reality that the world of ASL and interpreting work is complex and challenging. We arranged a date for our meeting, but when I had to cancel it due to work commitments, Dylan reached back out.

She wrote: *“I have watched a couple of videos on YouTube featuring your advocacy for Deaf education, and as a hearing parent of a deaf toddler, I found your personal and professional experiences incredibly inspiring. What*

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“...it was inspiring to see such a household function, much like any other, but with some communication practices that we will undoubtedly model to make our home better suited for Jane.”

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you shared with Tennessee’s Deaf Mentor & Parent Advisor Program about the importance of childhood Deaf peers and family friends was very moving. I hope to establish a similar kind of social support for our family in the coming years.

While I would still like to get your advice on the field of interpreting, I hope it would be okay for me to ask you some questions about how to best support my daughter as well.”

Persistent, authentic, and incredibly focused on gathering information were the qualities that immediately came to mind. It was clear that she had Googled me and my work within EHDI. Her dedication was evident in the time she invested in watching those videos, and reaching out to me showed bravery.

I thought: How can we encourage more individuals like Dylan to connect with me and my deaf colleagues? Our first meeting over Zoom quickly focused on her daughter, with little discussion about the ASL interpreting field. After learning that we were only 20 miles from each other, I invited her family to dinner at my home. She

eagerly accepted this offer. Later I asked if she had been surprised by the whole experience.

Dylan: Yes! I was surprised at how welcoming you were. I knew that by having a Deaf toddler, my pathway to interpreting would be a stronger blend of personal and professional drive than most ASL interpreting students, but I was not expecting you to open your home to me and my family. It was an incredibly pleasant surprise!

Tommy: What was your experience and favorite part?

Dylan: We had a wonderful time visiting your family for dinner! We were initially nervous, as this level of follow-through on socializing is rather new for us. It is tough establishing a new social network in a culturally familiar but different environment...To be honest, we were less worried about you being Deaf than we were about how nice your house looked online!

My favorite part of the visit was that it felt so comfortable. I felt safe letting my kids explore and I felt happy to sit at the dinner table and share food and conversation with you and your family. It was the first time since moving back to the United States that I have felt culturally fulfilled. Part of this was that it was such a language-accessible environment. When most of my days include worry over my child missing out on social communication, it was such a relief to know we were in an inclusive space.

Tommy: How did you see me adapting to the hearing environment including all of our kids?

Dylan: I enjoyed how much ASL we used and was also grateful we could bridge any gaps with sign-supported English. I noticed you had to advocate for yourself if you missed something, and I plan on teaching that skill to my daughter. While I know she needs to learn to navigate a hearing society, my goal is to provide a safe, Deaf-friendly environment at home for her.

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Key Takeaways for Families on connecting with the Deaf community:

By Thomas Horejcs, Maryland/DC H&V Board member

The deaf community, while small, is widespread! It takes effort to discover us and find the courage to reach out. Many deaf professionals are keen to meet you and your deaf child, as you both are now integral parts of our deaf communities and represent a beacon of hope for our future generation of deaf leaders;

Remember, you are not alone, far from it. You and your child belong to an amazing deaf culture. Find those connections with the deaf communities;

Exposure of your deaf child to deaf adults is critical. It gives your child a chance to see normalcy in their life, witnessing their parents interacting with members of the deaf community. These subtle yet essential opportunities are crucial for developing a healthy deaf identity;

Enjoy the journey--raising a deaf child, like with any child, is never easy. Yes, there are specific challenges unique to having a deaf child, but by embracing and celebrating the positives in life, these challenges become more manageable to address. Life will bring sunshine and storms; learn to honor both.

D/HH Infusion

Between the Tides

By Samantha Leaphart-Maroney, South Carolina H&V

There is a picture-perfect sight in front of me that comes alive with each step I take forward. As I walk over the sand dunes, the weight of the world slips away from me as the ocean starts to come into view. I can feel the warm, salty breeze against my face as it carries my hair away with all its power. I can feel the sand in between my toes, slowly pillowing itself the closer I get to the water. The calming feeling that I have in the moment takes over as I feel freedom and connection with the water and its tide. Pushing and pulling, bringing forward happiness and gifts, and taking away as the tide continues to come in and out. There are treasures all around. Sometimes you can grab them up in time from the water and cherish them forever, and then there are times you have that overjoyed excitement come across you that flows away as soon as your fingers reach the water, losing what you thought would be yours.

My story starts with myself. I have always felt a strong connection with the ocean for many reasons, and for both me and my family, our journey with hearing loss has been exactly like the tide. There have been so many treasures and takeaways, pushing and pulling of emotions.

At a noticeably early age, I started having recurring ear infections along with other medical problems. Tubes were put in, eardrums were having to be patched up, and a mild hearing loss was discovered. I was connected to a Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of hearing through my school district, and that made the biggest difference in my life at that time. No one could hold a candle to Ms. Stokes. She eased my anxiety about the introduction of an FM system, something I was very scared of at the time. I went to a public school and saw no one else wearing this big bulky box on their hips, connecting wires to earpieces into my ears, while the teacher also wore a huge box with a wire to a microphone that she had to clip to the top piece of

*The Maroneys, Scarlett, Ariel, Madison, Justin, Samantha*

her clothing. However, in elementary school, I became the highlight of the class every time the teacher walked out of the classroom, as she forgot to take off the device. I was able to hear the conversations she had and was also able to know when she was coming back close to the classroom, giving everyone the signal that “here she comes, we have to get quiet.”

Ms. Stokes also connected me with Camp Wonder Hands. For a few days each summer I was connected to other kids who were just like me, that got me, and for a little while I did not feel misplaced. I found MY people who made me feel like I belonged. Lifelong connections were instantly made.

As the years went by things changed for me. I continued having problems with my ears, many more surgeries, and my hearing steadily declined. My grades were taking a hit and problems of bullying from “being different” started up. Somewhere between middle school and high school I was having to take the next step into hearing aids. By high school, I

refused to wear my hearing aids due to all the jokes about them. I barely made it out of some classes and graduated a semester early to get out of there as quickly as I could. At 17, I had another ear infection that wiped out all that hearing in my left ear.

After graduating high school, I really embraced my difference from those around me in the hearing world. I was able to read lips, pick up on movement through my other senses heightened, and enjoyed the quiet at the end of the day when I took out my hearing aid. While there were still challenges, I was so much more accepting of myself for the first time in my life.

Still, tidal waves of emotions would send me for a loop before I could prepare myself.

Looking at the ultrasound of my baby on the screen, I had an extreme wave of anxiety washing over me as I saw this little being that I had already fallen in love with for the first time. My biggest fear during my whole pregnancy was

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Tides

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that she might have hearing loss. At this point in my life, I was fine with myself having the loss I had; I had overcome so many obstacles in my path. I did not want my child to have to go through those hurdles like I had. In April of 2011, I was so relieved when she passed her newborn hearing screening. However, as my oldest daughter was growing, I started noticing problems with her ears, and many of them were similar to mine. She underwent a good many surgeries in her younger years, as I did, and ended up with a mild loss.

After my middle child was born, I was thankful that she did not have as many medical problems arise. However, around the age of three, she started up with reoccurring ear infections. She had the procedure for tubes, and like me, after the tubes fell out, the holes in her eardrum would not heal on their own. She had to have a couple of surgeries to try and repair these holes, and we are still challenged with them. Over time her hearing levels slowly decreased, and by late 2022 we knew she would need hearing aids for school.

During this same time, our youngest

daughter started with the reoccurring, back-to-back ear infections, around the same age as her sister. After a hearing test that showed a mild loss due to the amount of fluid that she had behind her eardrums, we agreed with the doctor to have the tubes put in. I addressed with her my concerns—these patterns could no longer be a coincidence. We opted for genetic testing. In June of 2023, my youngest had her tubes put in, adenoids and tonsils removed, and blood drawn for genetic testing. The days passing after this seemed like eternity.

Around a month later they found a rare duplication in a gene that could cause hearing loss. After my husband and I were tested, results showed I also have this duplication. We are awaiting more testing for the older two girls and to proceed with our findings.

Today I have had over 20 ear surgeries. I went back to college virtually and saw just what I was capable of when I learned what kind of accessibility and learning environment I needed. I will soon be graduating with my social work degree. While I do not have much hearing left in my right ear, I would not change it or try to gain my hearing back for anything. I love me for me. I love having the option to take out my hearing aid for some quietness at the end of the

day, or when I become over stimulated. My children get annoyed at the fact that they cannot sneak up on me, because I can feel them coming before they even get close to me, making scaring me nearly impossible. They test this every now and then, still sometimes puzzled as how I knew they were hiding under the bed or just around the corner. There are pros, gifts, and positive aspects of my own hearing loss.

With that tide-turning effect, my feelings are different for my children. I have had to fight for their needs, their accommodations, and see how it impacts them. As a parent, I do not want them to have to go through the same struggles that I had to and what all I had to overcome.

With the pushes and pulls of the tides however, there is still so much happiness and love. When the tide brings those special finds, you must stick around for there will be a sea and wave of joy coming forward, and sometimes there will be even more gifts to explore. As a parent you will go through so many emotions, worries, and concerns, but please know that you are not alone on this journey. The uniqueness of each of us is what makes us a treasure to be held in this world. ~

Two Roads Converged

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Tommy: Throughout my many years of working with families, I have frequently found myself interacting mostly with mothers. However, fathers play a crucial role in this journey and are often overlooked. Resources for fathers, who tend to experience the grieving process differently from mothers, are notably scarce. With this in mind, I asked Dylan, "What did your husband think of all this?"

Dylan: Eric had a great time! We are on the same page when it comes to our family's language goals, which I now know is not always the case with hearing parents of deaf children. He and I both hope to visit again.

Eric: I believe that having our daugh-

ter being born in another country, my approach to her deafness radically changed. Living in a culture that was foreign to us and around speakers of another language allowed me to better imagine what it must be like to live day-to-day as a deaf person (though our situation was, undoubtedly, comparatively easier). In turn, appreciating the importance of Jane's language development and cultural integration came more naturally to me than it might have otherwise. From that point, it was obvious we needed to move back to the USA and into a thriving deaf community. I believe we have found that here. Our dinner at Tommy's house was the first time we had been in a mixed deaf-hearing household (other than our own). In

addition to the great company, it was inspiring to see such a household function, much like any other, but with some communication practices that we will undoubtedly model to make our home better suited for Jane.

Tommy: What are key takeaways from all of this experience and what do you hope for the future?

Dylan: My key takeaway is that I have to keep reaching out, asking questions, and following through. Having the intent is nice, but putting in the effort is what matters. I hope to continue integrating into the Deaf community. And I hope we can visit you guys again!

Tommy: Oh, we will see each other again soon as our journeys of life are now converged. ~

Avoiding Language Deprivation

By Peter Gerdes

In December 2020, we learned that our one-year-old daughter had profound hearing loss. Ever since that day, we have been on a beautiful journey trying to understand all the ways to ensure our amazing daughter can thrive! My wife and I recently had the privilege of attending a presentation by Dr. Wyatt Hall hosted by Rocky Mountain Deaf School (RMDS) in Lakewood, Colorado. This presentation focused on language deprivation and the importance of early language acquisition, especially in getting a fully accessible language for deaf and hard of hearing children.

Dr. Hall, a deaf person himself who grew up mainstreamed, has spent the majority of his career researching and studying the impacts on people who do not get full effortless access to at least one language during early childhood development, specifically from birth to around the age of five. His research demonstrates that during these early years of life, our brains are primed and ready to soak in and learn language. After this early brain development period, our brains change focus to start learning and adapting to other skills and knowledge. This presentation gave a new level of importance for our children to have access to language at such an early age.

As a hearing father to a deaf child with cochlear implants, I understand how difficult it can be to make the best decisions for our children. We live in a day and age where an endless amount of information comes at us from multiple angles and perspectives. Unfortunately, as a hearing parent, most of the resources I encountered were from the hearing community. I am not stating that it was all bad information, but I do believe it was incomplete information. In Dr. Hall's presentation, his research showed us the number of deaf and hard of hearing children and adults with hearing parents who never learn sign language, or worse, do not have full access to a first language, whether signed or spoken. That number was truly shocking, but the saddest part



Principal Eileen Kratzer introduces Wyatt Hall, PhD., at RMDSPhoto credit: Colorado Commission for the Deaf/Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind

is that children who lack full access to sign language have a much greater probability of experiencing what the community increasingly describes as “language deprivation” and associated mental health, physical health, and quality of life issues—even for those using hearing technology.



Dr. Hall's presentation was not intended to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed.

When asked about my experience through all of this, I always tell people how fortunate and lucky we have been. Early on, we had numerous chance encounters with remarkable deaf individuals, significantly influencing our decisions. We decided to give our daughter cochlear implants, giving her access to sounds in our world. We also decided to *change our lives* and dive into her world through ASL. A world where sounds are not the primary focus of the beauty that surrounds us, and where our family and friends can communicate with visuals instead of audio. Communication and language serve as the foundation of relationships, and our

daughter has formed some of the most vibrant connections I've ever witnessed. She has role models in both sign and spoken language and she is doing great at both.

Dr. Hall's presentation was not intended to make anyone feel guilty or ashamed. Instead, he aimed to inform people, drawing on a lifetime of being a deaf person himself and the current research that shows (it is becoming clear) how hearing devices alone can fall short in providing enough language for deaf/hard of hearing children. The research he showed really makes it clear we can give our deaf children everything including both spoken language and sign language. Dr. Hall notes: “Some emerging science suggests that having sign language readily available would support quicker acquisition of spoken language with cochlear implant usage... More and more, we see the research demonstrating that sign languages are nothing but beneficial, and more and more we are seeing that not being given access to sign language can be harmful for deaf children.”

Editor's note: Readers may watch a previously recorded presentation on this topic, hosted by the Texas School for the Deaf Statewide Outreach Center at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H-g3DTt-SSHs> ~

Navigating an Autism Diagnosis for a Deaf Child

By Sara Biodrowski, Nebraska H&V

The journey of parenting a child with special needs is often a journey that is filled with ups and downs. Having a child who is deaf poses its own unique challenges but adding a possibility of an autism diagnosis and things get even more complicated. This is the reality for our family, trying to understand our 9-year-old son Oliver's needs and giving him the right support.

Oliver had a rough start to life. He was born with a congenital CMV infection and later contracted a bacterial meningitis infection at only three months old. These early health struggles led to profound deafness and other developmental delays. We started to notice atypical behaviors when he was around three-years-old. Any concerns we raised were often attributed to his developmental delays, his deafness or "he is just young... he will likely outgrow these." As Oliver grew older, many of these behaviors continued and he acted differently than his typical

peers. Reflecting back now, I wish our early intervention team had shared any concerns they had. Maybe consulting more with people working with Oliver on a day-to-day basis vs. medical professionals who interact with him once a year may have helped us move faster toward identification. There is no harm in seeking testing.

Autism presents differently in every child and for Oliver the signs have been subtle but persistent. We decided to get him an autism evaluation and unfortunately in Nebraska (like many areas), there is a long waitlist. We added him to the waitlist in the summer of 2023 and he just received his official diagnosis in the spring of 2024.

During this waiting period, we brought up our concerns in the fall of 2023 with his school IEP 2023. The team agreed that they saw signs as well. The school psychologist completed an educational autism assessment, and the school team provided an educational

autism diagnosis. With Oliver already being deaf, he relies heavily on visual cues and doesn't always pick up on subtle clues people use when they talk. Understanding there is more at play now than his deafness has helped the IEP team create more tailored goals around communication and social interactions. He quickly showed progress with more specific supports.

We have also worked to educate Oliver to have him understand what autism is. Over the past five months, we have already seen improvements in his communication and less overall frustrations for him. I think the combination of having better targeted goals and services and his growing understanding about how his brain works have helped our third grader become a better advocate for himself.

As we keep going down this journey, we keep figuring things out one step at a time. Learning about his autism is just one piece of the treasure that is Oliver. Each piece of information empowers us more and helps us provide the support and opportunities he deserves. ~



Oliver (9, right) with brother Owen (12)

Now, understanding there is more at play than his deafness has helped his IEP team create more tailored goals around communication and social interactions. He quickly showed progress with more specific supports.

Sound of Silence

By Rebecca Janni, Iowa H&V

When our son Joshua was fitted with hearing aids at age three, I wondered how he experienced music. Show tunes streaming from our stereo, a helicopter whirring overhead, or a lawnmower droning in the neighbor's yard all prompted the same response: "You listening to music?" he would sign. To answer, I would point and sign the source, the helicopter or the lawnmower. When we were listening to music, I carried Joshua to our speakers and he pressed himself against them, feeling sound.

His three older siblings, all hearing, sang and played instruments, beginning with piano lessons and then trying out band instruments and singing in choirs. His sister recently graduated with a minor in violin performance. When he was young, Joshua joined us for every performance, concert and recital. Many times, he went along dragging his feet and pulling out hearing aids. I wrestled, wondering, was it wrong to force him to come along if he didn't enjoy the experience? But hearing siblings often show the same reluctance, begging to stay home and play outside with neighborhood friends. Wouldn't it be equally wrong to act on assumptions and deny Joshua these experiences simply because he was deaf?

With all five of our children, hearing or deaf, we have tried to offer early access to a wide variety of experiences, and as they grow, we do our best to support what they long to pursue. We also adapted each experience based on our children's responses. If Joshua pulled out his hearing aids at his sister Anna's violin recitals, we tucked them into a safe place, and he watched performers' facial expressions and movement. Recitals happened at the teacher's home, where Joshua often preferred to stand near her large bay window, watching birds flit about her garden, likely responding to the music. We learned that music venues could be rich visual experiences, from the pattern of bow across string to the emotion expressed on musicians' faces to the choreogra-



Three of five siblings: Elizabeth, Joshua, and Jacob

phy of birds outside the window.

As Joshua grew, he developed a love of music, asking first for piano and later for saxophone lessons. At 16, he still plays the piano at home and plays saxophone in his school's marching band, concert band, and show choir bands. By his choice, he uses bilateral cochlear implants now, and he experiences music through stimulation of his auditory nerve. When he listens to his own curated playlists, sound comes to him absent waves, in electric impulses, and because he doesn't want to miss words, lyrics scroll across the screen as he listens. When he plays the saxophone, he says, "I just use the vibration of the reed to know if I'm in tune. If it's vibrating differently, then it's out of tune. If it's vibrating and synchronizing with the others, then it's in tune."

Now, Joshua's younger sister Elizabeth (15-years-old and also Deaf) is coaxed along, sometimes reluctantly, to concerts and shows. Other times, she wants to join us, eager to see the flags and formations of the marching band or

the glitter and dance of the show choir.

This year, her brothers' show choir, Johnston High School's *Innovation*, has been especially engaging for Elizabeth and our entire family. In addition to the reverberating sounds, bright costumes and contagious dance, this year's show features American Sign Language.

Two of Elizabeth's brothers perform in *Innovation*. Jacob (age 18) sings and dances with the choir, and Joshua plays saxophone in the band. When their choir directors, Laura Grimm and Hannah Ryan, watched these two brothers signing, they began to think of ways to integrate ASL into some of our school concerts, beyond ASL interpretation. We reached out to a Deaf friend who is fluent in ASL. She and Joshua provided interpretation. This year's show, "To a New Dawn," featured one soloist singing and another, our son Jacob, signing the opener, *Sound of Silence*. Later in the show, Jacob had a second signing solo for the ballad, a medley of *Heart of Stone* and *Speechless*. For this song, the entire

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The Innovation Choir, Johnston High School (photo credit: Pat Ward)

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choir learned ASL, with Jacob signing alone at first. More choir members joined in ASL until the most climactic moment when voices and instruments faded away and the entire choir signed in unison: “I won’t be silent . . . All I know is I won’t go speechless.”

Describing the ballad’s message, Grimm said, “Even if someone tries to take away your voice, what you believe and who you are will shine through, always. We used sign language to interpret that message.”

Our daughter Elizabeth loved the show. From the very first performance, she signed along from her seat in the auditorium, more engaged than ever before. At the final competition, she moved an entire audience with her response. She picked a seat to watch, front and center, and when her brother began signing his solo, she stood up, the only one standing in a packed auditorium. She and her brother faced each other signing every word together.

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Elizabeth signing at the concert (photo credit: Jack Hutchinson)



With all five of our children, hearing or deaf, we have tried to offer early access to a wide variety of experiences, and as they grow, we do our best to support what they long to pursue.

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programs to begin to gather language outcome data as a marker to ensure that what we are doing is making a difference. Even the question of exactly how many children are delayed in language shows up in research varying anywhere from only 20% to almost 90%, depending on which research study/presentations you might look to. Do we really know the numbers? What does the research say? Is there really enough population-based data yet to know for sure?

Can we even expect to finally settle this conversation about what is best for *all* D/HH children through evidence-based research? And when research and researchers don't agree among themselves, who is caught in the middle? You guessed it—families. And their D/HH children.

There are moments in life when a chance meeting can change the way you think about something (and in fact, the direction this article was going in). I recently happened to sit at lunch with Matt Hall, Ph.D. in of all places, Bad Ischl, Austria at the Family Centered Early Intervention (FCEI) Conference.

Dr. Hall has proposed a helpful way to think about and discuss the term language deprivation in a different way. He shared that through a framework developed after a literature review on the term, that four meanings (or senses) exist when the field writes about language deprivation (Intent, language access, language proficiency, and developmental outcomes). Please watch this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=arCySZ80VKs>

Dr. Hall describes these four definitions, or “senses” of language deprivation that should help us all to ensure that when there are discussions going on about this terminology, we clarify what “sense” we are discussing. As you can see in the opening of this article, I have almost always heard the term, and defined it as intent. Yet, that is not always how people who are presenting this terminology define it. Part of the problem is that we don't stop to clarify and discuss what sense we are referring to in this important discussion. The literature as well often does not clarify

which definition is being discussed

The four ways that language deprivation may be distinctly being used in any given situation includes:

- **Intent:** Sometimes people say or sign the term to infer that the idea that the parent is intentionally withholding language from the child. (whether signed or spoken language).
- **Language Environment:** What is available to their child in their environment, differentiating between language exposure (what kind of signals are we sending to the child); and language access (what the deaf child is able to access).
- **Language Proficiency:** The child's own proficiency and skills in language, fluency, comprehension, ease of use of language.
- **Developmental Outcomes:** Long term consequences in different domains that may depend on language but are themselves distinct from language; including quality of life, cognition, mental health, physical health, social-emotional, reading/writing, and many other things. (This may also be in context to discussing Language Deprivation Syndrome, a very serious condition that is not necessarily connected with every child who is delayed in their language.)

The other important context for the conversation about language deprivation is whether the conversation/interpretation is at the individual (clinical) conversation or Public Health (what is the overall national outcome data showing us).

Have you ever been in a conversation where the same words are being used, and then realize that the participants have different working definitions in the room, or by the writer you are reading? In my conversation with Matt, I began to have clarity that when I hear the term language deprivation that it may have more context/definitions than what I had previously only defined as “intent.” I began to have some self-awareness around how I typically think everyone is defining the term in a conversation

and how important it is to clarify. I liked what Matt said at the end of his video, “So my hope is that next time you run up against somebody who's using this term 'language deprivation' that you'll be able to figure out exactly what their meaning is and if it's unclear, you might be able to help them figure out what their meaning is by sharing this framework with them.”

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Sound of Silence



*Jacob signing Speechless
(photo credit: Pat Ward)*

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One audience member contacted a local news station, WHO13, who decided to feature *Innovation* in their Scholastic Spotlight. During the interview, Elizabeth signed. “I can imagine what it sounds like when Jacob and his friends sign. I see them all dancing. It's beautiful, amazing. I see the color, I see the flags, I see all the sparkle. And then there's Jacob signing, alone, dressed in white. I love it.” ~

The Language Deprivation Conversation

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“First, do no harm.”

Can the battle of beliefs for our children’s success actually cause harm? “First do no harm” is a popular saying that derives from the Latin phrase, “*primum non nocere*.” The term is well-known amongst those involved in the field of healthcare, medicine, or bioethics, and among popular accounts in the medical fields, since it is a basic principle taught in pre-service coursework. This concept is important in understanding the psyche of families as they navigate finding the most successful strategies through the individualized decision-making process of ensuring language acquisition for their child. When terminology like “deprivation” is used on new parents to sound the alarm, we must ask ourselves if we are creating a process that is inhibiting the very essence of the first foundation towards language and communication...bonding.

The first task of parenthood is developing a bond with one’s child; that strong attachment is the very foundation for language development. If we know a baby enjoys something, we aim to repeat it; if the baby cries or shows distress, we learn their preferences and how to soothe them, how to make them smile, and how to ease them into sleep. Thus begins the long give-and-take between baby and parent that starts with touch, sound, and sight, but as recognition and mirroring blossom into communication, language is born. Anything that disrupts that bonding process risks stalling or delaying language acquisition itself. Parents explain when relaying stories of feeling caught between strongly held professional points of view about how they should be communicating and building language with their child that this impulse to connect, play and experience joy together is stunted.

What is research?

Almost 25 years ago, we asked Marc Marschark, Ph.D. to share his knowledge about how to navigate the research conversations. Below are excerpts from

the Hands & Voices *Communication Considerations* project:

The Comprehensive Dictionary of Psychological and Psychoanalytic Terms defines research as “systematic, detailed, and relatively prolonged attempt to discover or confirm the facts that bear upon a certain problem or problems and the laws or principles that govern.” This definition includes historical research, literature reviews, and, more importantly for our purposes, experimental research aimed at discovering what is true and what is false - what works, for whom, and when. The *scientific method*, which is utilized in most experimental research, involves making hypotheses, developing methods to test them, conducting experiments, and evaluating the results.



There is strong research, and there is weak research. Weak research is not necessarily the fault of a sloppy investigator or a hidden agenda.

People sometimes say that research can be made to prove anything. First, at least with regard to behavioral research (psychology, education, sociology, etc.) we do not speak of anything being proved. Rather, we obtained evidence that supports or contradicts hypotheses. Because individuals vary both with context and time, one can never be absolutely certain that a finding from behavioral research will apply to everyone in all situations. Statistics help us determine when we can be confident enough in them to make decisions. Second, certainly misleading research can demonstrate firmly

held biases. Effective research, on the other hand, is undertaken to discover facts, not to support one perspective or another. Often, an investigator has to accept findings that have been found to be “true” even if they do not match the researcher’s desires or expectations. In my case, for example, I was not a supporter of cochlear implants for deaf children in 1997, because there was little evidence that they were a significant benefit at least for children with prelingual hearing losses. A large amount of research published in 2000-2001, however, convinced me that a majority of deaf children meeting eligibility criteria would benefit from implants given appropriate supports. Benefits ranged from the development of fluid spoken language to meaningful sound awareness for safety and greater communication in the environment.

Research frequently is not easy (human behavior is complicated), is expensive (participants, and interpreters, materials, and equipment all cost money), is time consuming (I’ve conducted experiments that have taken three years) and proceeds only in “baby steps.” Some of the most important questions (see below) simply do not have any simple answers. The question of why deaf children have so much trouble learning to read, for example, has been under investigation for more than 100 years. We have more information today, but do not yet have clear and simple answers.

In our field, the big questions traditionally have been “what is better, spoken language or sign language?” and “what is the best educational placement for deaf children?” Neither of these questions has a single answer, however, as spoken and sign language have different benefits for different children in different contexts. Different educational placements work for some children and not others; family backgrounds and circumstances vary greatly. As much as people might want to declare that there are simple answers, research has demonstrated that they do not (and that

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is why there is research to support all of these alternatives).

Researchers working in deafness today range from developmental researchers interested in children's language, social, and cognitive development; educational researchers interested in learning through sign language, reading, and the effects of alternative school placements and cochlear implants on academic achievement; psychological researchers interested in memory, brain functioning, and perception and parenting curriculums; and linguists studying the structure of American Sign Language. These are but a few of the kinds of research happening today, being led by deaf and hearing investigators from a variety of fields.

There is strong research, and there is weak research. Weak research is not necessarily the fault of a sloppy investigator or a hidden agenda. The N size (number of participants) remains small in most studies, making conclusions difficult. Researchers not well-trained in experimental methods conduct research that is flawed and hence has flawed conclusions. Things that seem obvious to an investigator today might not have been recognized 50, 25, or even 5 years ago. It is important that one never accepts a single study as conclusive evidence for a course of action with regard to any particular deaf child. Parents do not want to hear that "it's complicated," but it is. It therefore is essential to collect evidence from alternative perspectives and balance research evidence against opinion, anecdote, and beliefs and our north star, the child themselves.

Unfortunately, most research in our field is published in scholarly journals and books which are not written for lay readers.

Legally Ethically Morally

The dilemma in conversations about a child's right to language is when it is juxtaposed against a parent's rights in decision-making for their children. The two concepts should never be addressed apart from one another. Let's think about the definition of "parent choice" in context to communication and language

acquisition. Below are some definitions created from the Family Leadership in Language and Learning Center (FL3) Family-to-Family Support Guidelines for Addressing the Needs of Children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Parent Choice

Parent Choice can be defined as *the moral, ethical, and legal responsibility of parents to make decisions for their child that is protected by law and their right as parents.* Parent choice is a flexible discovery process allowing parents to consider many different opportunities, resulting in an appropriate fit for their child's unique needs. Parents may modify choices over time, if needed, or as the parent gains more information and as the child can provide input. Parent choices include information decision making and the importance of having consistent, accurate, comprehensive, up to date evaluation of the child's progress and well-being.

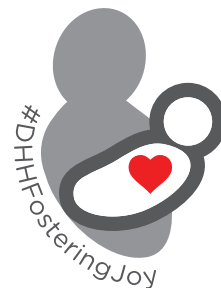
Informed decision making is a broad and inclusive phrase that captures the many decisions parents must make over time. It's the process of parents obtaining information and knowledge from a full range of sources and perspectives in order to assess benefits consistent with the values and individualized needs of their child and family, and to then take action. Information provided to families should be accurate, comprehensive, up-to-date and evidence based to allow families to make important decisions for their children in a timely manner, including decisions with respect to the full range of assistive hearing technologies, language acquisition, and communication modalities.

Conclusion

Hands & Voices began almost 30 years ago much like the first meeting of the Fostering Joy movement. Parents, researchers, clinicians, D/HH individuals, EI providers, teachers, administrators, audiologists, etc. all came together to explore the "now what" concept. What if we created a community that unites us rather than

May
we all stand
united together
to ensure that no
child is left behind
on the journey to
success.

divides us? What if we agree that there are many paths to success for our children who are D/HH? What if every family is equitably provided the resources and supports they need based on the needs of their child and family? And so, Hands & Voices was born. Can we now work together when the conversations turn to language acquisition and the way forward? The Hands & Voices motto aptly both inspires and challenges us all, "What works for your child is what makes the choice right"™ May we all stand united together to ensure that no child is left behind on the journey to success.



For more on the Fostering Joy Project, see <https://handsandvoices.org/resources/fostering-joy.htm> ~

References

- Yoshinaga-Itano, C., et al. (1998). *Language of Early- and Later-identified Children With Hearing Loss. Pediatrics, Vol. 102, No. 5.*

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Safety Questions for Overnights, Camps & Dorms

By Sara Kennedy, H&V Headquarters

Within the O.U.R. Children's Safety Project, we have had requests to address safety for children who are deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) within settings like overnights at camp, with other families or through field trips and within school dorms for some time, accelerating this year by the requests of Deaf professionals. One concept all agreed on was to create a list of possible questions that parents can ask when considering their child's safety in these situations. Those who we allow in our family or child's circle of trust must be held to the highest standards, and that takes time to develop; yet the field trip or dorm arrival is pending. Asking these questions if not already answered in orientation or welcome material is another way to intentionally address keeping kids safe from bullying, neglect, and abuse.

While the **Parent Safety Toolkit** covers this concept to an extent, some additional questions are added here by consensus of a group of parents, educators, and Deaf individuals. We are grateful to DOVE (Deaf Overcoming Violence Through Empowerment) for sharing about this and more in a recent presentation to the O.U.R. Children's Project community of learners. We can ask better questions to keep kids safe.

Here's the working document. We would welcome any feedback on this and want to recognize that some Deaf schools (Texas and Colorado, for example) are implementing 15-minute bed checks throughout the night and other steps to ensure student safety.

What can we do to make overnights safer for our Deaf/HH and Deaf/HH Plus kids?

Parents have a responsibility to ask questions and make observations where their child's health and safety are concerned. If another parent, camp, or school does not want to answer these

questions, that in itself may be a red flag for your child's safety.

Overnights:

Do the parents supervising share the same values for child safety? It is okay to ask questions:

- Who else will be home (older adults or older teens may be a red flag),
- What is planned? Any kind of outings and with whom?
- Will my child have language access?
- Who is supervising? Is this the whole evening/night/morning?
- Are their guns in the house?
- Can my child call at any time if concerned? (Talk with child about a safety plan just in case).

Follow up with your child privately afterwards about any concerns during their time away.

Overnight Camp, Field Trips, or Similar Experience

- Have all staff had background checks? No registered offenders on staff?
- What is the plan for supervision during the activity, during down times and overnight?
- What is the training around child safety?

- If my child might be at particular risk, does the staff have training in their unique needs?
- Can students contact a parent when desired and how?

Follow up with your child privately afterwards about any concerns during their time away.

Questions to Ask Programs and Schools for the Deaf:

Ask all the above questions plus...

- How are students instructed in keeping healthy boundaries with other students, staff, and teachers?
- How are staff monitored for promoting healthy boundaries?
- Are the teachers (and dorm staff, if applicable) trauma-trained?
- Is there a past history of abuse and how was it handled here? When was it?
- Are the students taught to recognize grooming techniques?
- Are the students taught to resist peer pressure and to share concerns they have?
- Are they allowed to say no without reprisals?
- Do they understand A.C.E. (Adverse Childhood Experiences) and their impact on the longevity and health of children with ACES?
- How are students supervised on school buses? What is the communication access on the bus?
- Does your school use seclusion rooms? (Note: At times, these rooms have been used to discipline kids without parental consent. Parents may want to include in their children's IEP forbidding the use of seclusion rooms and outlining specifically what actions to avoid and to take for a child with significant behavioral issues.)
- What are the visitation rules for parents and family members?



Safety Questions

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Dorm and after/before school questions:

- How many students per dorm counselor on each shift? (Lower ratios are better; but even better is awareness about when greater supervision should occur.)
- How often are bed checks done at night?
- Are the students separated by age in the locker rooms and bathrooms? What about other times of the day/night?
- What is the plan for supervision after school, before and after meals, during free time, sports and extra-curricular activities, and when moving between buildings?
- Can students contact a parent when desired and how is that done?
- Will they have a point of contact if they feel unsafe? (School nurse, advisor, etc.)

Suggestions for parents to enhance child safety within programs:

1. Visit the school or program a few times first. Public tours may show the best-behaved students and most engaging teachers. Use your observation skills to see other students and notice how they interact with students and staff. Do they look happy? Relaxed? Fearful? Isolated? Do they seem adequately supervised and cared for? Listen to your gut feeling.
2. Get input from both hearing and deaf parents. People will be very protective of their school.
3. Research on the Internet on the history of any school mistreatment of students. Most are unreported, but some will be available.
4. Check out Deaf groups... like in r/Deaf in Reddit, Quora, and AllDeaf.com. This is a good link:

<https://www.alldeaf.com/community/threads/sexual-abuse-of-deaf-students-in-schools.6829/>

The Deaf community can be reserved in front of hearing people, but share freely among themselves. There are many Deaf vlogs, but hearing parents may not have access to those in ASL.

5. See various parents of deaf children/students' groups on Facebook.
6. Strict segregation of students by age is important to allow for better supervision and less access by older students who may bully or molest younger kids.
7. Maintain frequent contacts with the Deaf child. Talk to the child through the videophone, face-time or video platforms (Zoom) daily. If not every day, every other day. Have the child go home every weekend or every other weekend if that's possible. If the family has relatives or friends near the residential school, have them visit the child frequently. The more contact the child has with others, and the more trips home or with relatives and friends, the less vulnerable the child will be.
8. Also ask the child casually if he/she had been mistreated or witnessed anything that concerns them. Educate your child on safety, touch as a choice, healthy boundaries, etc. Encourage the child to talk about school experiences, both good and bad. Tell the child not to be afraid to discuss anything. Most importantly, tell the child they won't be punished. (See the Kidpower Protection Promise for an example in the O.U.R. Children's Project Parent Safety Toolkit)
9. Enroll the child at an older age or when the child can sufficiently retell a story with enough detail to understand what happened, be able to tell someone "no" or "stop", and to tell a trusted adult. The younger the child, the more vulnerable the child is.

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Language Deprivation

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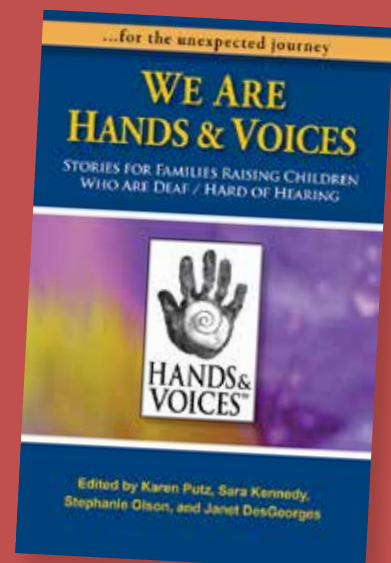
Other articles of interest that relate to this conversation:

Mood D, Szarkowski A, Brice PJ, Wiley S. *Relational Factors in Pragmatic Skill Development: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infants and Toddlers. Pediatrics.* 2020 Nov;146(Suppl 3): S246-S261. doi: 10.1542/peds.2020-0242D. PMID: 33139438. Szarkowski A, Young A, Matthews D,

Meinzen-Derr J. *Pragmatics Development in Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children: A Call to Action. Pediatrics.* 2020 Nov;146(Suppl 3): S310-S315. doi: 10.1542/peds.2020-0242L. PMID: 33139446. (similar information to the above but geared toward medical providers) ~

WE ARE HANDS & VOICES

A BOOK OF FAMILY STORIES FOR "THE UNEXPECTED JOURNEY"



Available in print and as an e-book at www.handsandvoices.org.

Potential Scholarships for DHH students

By Sara Kennedy, H&V Headquarters

When looking for scholarships for education or vocational training, the best plan is to start early, let your guidance counseling office know you are interested in finding scholarships, gather your school information before you begin, and start in! Remember to also identify yourself to your local Vocational Rehabilitation program. Parents can't apply, and these programs require you to self-identify as a person with a hearing difference and ask for support seeking employment and the education required for those employment roles. Here is a sampling of a few scholarships available to inspire your search. This is an ever-changing list.

Acoustical Society of America:

Fellowships, scholarships and grants available for graduate and undergraduate students in the sound engineering or acoustic related fields. <https://acousticalsociety.org/fellowships-and-scholarships/>

A.G. Bell Association for the Deaf:

Several awards for all areas of study for eligible deaf/hard of hearing students using spoken English. See eligibility criteria under each program listed for more information. <https://agbell.org/financial-aid/>

American Association on Health and Disability:

(AAHD) Scholarship Program awards multiple scholarships each year. Eligible students must have sophomore or greater status, and have a disability. Applicants compete for funds by submitting application materials and personal statements. Scholarships require full time enrollment as an undergraduate or part-time for graduate school. AAHD's goal is to increase health awareness among disabled individuals, applicants majoring in public health, disability studies, disability research and other health-related fields are given priority consideration for scholarship awards. <https://aahd.us/initiatives/scholarship-program/>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Foundation:

Scholarships and grant competi-

tions for graduate students and new researchers in the field of communication sciences and disorders includes students with disabilities: <https://aahd.us/initiatives/scholarship-program/>
California Association for Postsecondary Education and Disability (CAPED)

This advocacy group supports increasing educational access for disabled students at all levels for students enrolled in California. The Association puts forth a series of memorial scholarships and other awards for a wide range of students, including those with intellectual disabilities and those in need of technology. Examples: the Cindy Kolb Memorial Scholarship, towards candidates with disabilities seeking a bachelor's degree, the Steve Fateau Past Presidents Scholarship is worth \$1000, and rewards high academic achievement going to a student who demonstrates a commitment to promoting opportunity for disabled students within the college and university system, the CAPED General Excellence Scholarship recognizes community involvement and academic achievement. Each \$1500 award goes to a worthy disabled candidate with a track record of getting involved. <https://www.caped.co/scholarships/>

Foundation for Science and Disability:

Scholarship listing for individuals with a variety of disabilities listed on their webpage including those for deaf and deafblind students: <https://doit-prod.s.uw.edu/accesscomputing/resources/scholarships>

DisabledPerson:

This website has resources for jobseekers and occasionally lists scholarship competitions at <https://www.disabledperson.com/scholarships/info>

Department of Education

Department of Education outlines financial aid eligibility for students at <https://studentaid.gov/> including scholarships, grants and loans. As a student with a disability, you are eligible for the same general federal financial aid as others, *in addition* to the scholarships and grants that are offered exclu-

sively to students with disabilities. File your FAFSA request, to be considered for all available aid, then consult with your academic advisor for information about student assistance programs that speak to your particular disability.

National Database of Scholarships:

<https://www.free-4u.com/deaf.htm> (and change search engine as needed).

Gallaudet University

Gallaudet University is a liberal arts university dedicated to serving the deaf and hard of hearing community. In addition to participating in the Federal government's college grant and student loan programs, Gallaudet also offers scholarships of their own to attending students. See all scholarships and aid options at <https://gallaudet.edu/tuition-financial-aid/scholarships/>

Gore Family Foundation

The Gore Family Foundation provides for Jamaicans in need of further education including students with disabilities and at-risk students. <https://www.gore-familyfoundation.org/about-us/>

Grange Foundation:

For members of Grange, based in Florida, including students with disabilities. See more at <https://grangefoundation.org/ernestine-memorial-scholarship/>

Hattie Strong Foundation:

Providing scholarships to "young people of promise", for attendance at 24 institutions near Washington D.C. <https://www.hattie.org/our-programs/scholarship-program/>

The CHEAR Center (Child Health Evaluation and Research Center)

Located in Michigan offers opportunities for fellowships related to business, law, medicine, social work, public policy and a wide variety of other fields to encourage students (and students with disabilities) to prepare for careers in health services and health policy research for children and families. <https://chear.org/education-training>

National Technical Institute for the Deaf (NTID)

The National Technical Institute for

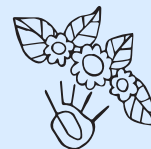
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Safety Questions

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10. How does a parent know if the child has become influenced by the institutional mentality?
- "We are products of our environment. If we learn as a young child that maltreatment is normal at school, we might also learn that we are expected to keep this a secret. Most abused children never tell a parent until we were adults. Some of our parents didn't ask, either. For older students, the biggest problem is that we didn't go home often. The few who did talk were either dismissed by parents who didn't believe them or were taken out of the school."
 - Keep talking to the child, asking open-ended questions. Model healthy relationships and read books showing healthy relationships. If a child avoids talking about certain topics, that raises a red flag.
 - Observe the behavior of the child, too. If the child's behavior changes or they experience nightmares, that is another red flag.
 - Ask the child about secrets. Families don't keep secrets (they may keep surprises – that is different.)
 - Also observe how younger kids play with toys. Kids tend to rehash their experiences through play.
11. Advocate for greater safety in Deaf schools. There has been a history of minimal or no accountability by state departments of education and Deaf schools per some families' report.

This document was developed with families, professionals, and organizations that advocate for child safety, including Deaf/hard of hearing children. ~



Fostering Joy

Celebrating Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children

A Reflective journal



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Potential Scholarships

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the Deaf (NTID) administers a wide range of scholarships for their attending students, including the *Barlow Endowed Scholarship*, the *Alice Beardsley Memorial Scholarship for Interpreting Students*, and the *Lillian M. Cowin Memorial Scholarship*. Award amounts and eligibility requirements vary greatly according to program, and interested students should contact the NTID's Office of Financial Aid for details on specific scholarships. <https://www.rit.edu/affordableexcellence/>

Optimist International

Optimist International sponsors a Communication Contest for Deaf and Hard of hearing students annually. The student applies through a local Optimist Club and develops a presentation with a theme like "How to Change the World with Optimism", delivered in spoken English or in American Sign Language. See eligibility guidelines at <https://www.optimist.org/member/scholarships2.cfm>

The Roothbert Fund

The Roothbert Fund offers scholarships to those in need of financial aid and attending schools in the eastern states and whose daily actions are guided by spiritual motives. Grants are typically \$5-7,000. See more at <https://www.roothbertfund.org/scholarships>

Mike Rowe Works Foundation:

Apply for scholarships in a wide variety of vocational training arenas through a growing list of approved programs. This award occurs annually but you can get ready any time. <https://mikeroweworks.org/scholarship/>

Sertoma

Sertoma International's Deaf/Hard of Hearing Scholarship is for students with at least 40dB bilateral hearing levels, graduating from high school, or undergraduate students pursuing four-year college degrees in any discipline. <https://www.sertoma.org/What-we-do/Scholarships>

The *Sertoma Communicative Disorders Scholarship* is for graduate students pursuing advanced degrees in audiology or speech-language pathol-

ogy from institutions in the U.S. These scholarships, worth \$1,000 each, are awarded in the spring to help offset the cost of tuition, books and fees incurred during the following school year.

Soroptimist

Soroptimist International awards a *Live Your Dream Award* to young women who are the primary financial support for themselves and their dependents, including parents and siblings toward any costs of undergraduate or vocational programs within any country on the membership list.

<https://www.soroptimist.org/our-work/live-your-dream-awards/index.html>

Live Your Dream Awards recipients may use the cash award to offset any costs associated with their efforts to attain higher education, such as books, childcare, tuition and transportation.

Stokoe Scholarship:

Made to a deaf graduate student actively involved in research in sign language, linguistics, or similar fields. Funded by the National Association of the Deaf. See more at <https://gradfund.rutgers.edu/awards/william-c-stokoe-scholarship/>

Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services provides many services including tuition waivers for eligible applicants at state supported postsecondary programs in Texas. <https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/disability/deaf-hard-hearing>

The tuition waiver covers tuition

and tuition-based fees, it does not cover books, supplies or the cost of any needed accommodation. The FAQs provide more information.

Travelers Protective Association

The Travelers Protective Association established the TPA Hearing Trust for financial aid for people with hearing differences, such as for obtaining mechanical devices, medical or specialized treatment or specialized education as well as speech classes, note takers, interpreters, etc. and in other areas of need. <https://www.tpahq.org/tpa-hearing-trust/>

The Louise Tumarkin Zazove Foundation:

Open January to May for all citizens or permanent residents of the United States with at least a 50dB bilateral hearing difference is eligible for consideration by the Foundation, regardless of age, sex, race, geographic location or ethnicity. Scholarships are considered only at accredited nonprofit schools physically located in the United States. Funds awarded by the LTZ Foundation are paid directly to schools on a semester or quarter basis. <https://www.ltzfoundation.org/>

Rare Diseases:

National Organization of Rare Disorders offers a variety of financial aid programs. See <https://rarediseases.org/patient-assistance-programs/financial-assistance/>

National free databases include

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THE H&V APP

FOR FAMILIES WITH DEAF & HARD OF HEARING CHILDREN

Four Key components of support every day for 90 days:

- Wisdom from a parent
- Wisdom from a Deaf/Hard of hearing Adult
- One article to read
- One new Website/resource to explore







HRSA awards Family Support Cooperative Agreement to H&V

Hands & Voices has been granted a third cycle of funding by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The funding covers a five-year cooperative agreement with [Hands & Voices](#) to continue to develop new family leaders and promote the inclusion of families with infants and young children identified through statewide Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) systems in hearing screening, evaluation, diagnosis, and early intervention programs.

Now in its eighth year, this support will continue funding with \$450,00 per year for the next five years for the Hands & Voices *Family Leadership in Language and Learning Center* (FL3). FL3 focuses on increasing family engagement and leadership; strengthening family support in EHDI systems; and guiding families in optimizing the language, literacy, cognitive, social, and emotional development of their infants and young children who are D/deaf and hard of hearing.

Hands & Voices Executive Director Janet DesGeorges is thrilled. "It's an honor to continue our work with all EHDI system stakeholders for the next five years as a part of this project. The FL3 Center is committed to ensuring that these children are served according to their individual needs, and that their families receive the best possible resources and support to help them achieve their goals." Resource development and dissemination, education and training, quality improvement methodology, evidence-based best practices, policy initiatives, and program partnerships are all part of FL3. In collaboration with national experts in language and literacy, state/territory-based family organizations and EHDI programs, federal agencies, Deaf-based organizations, and professional organizations, Hands & Voices (FL3 Center) will coordinate activities with other HRSA-funded organizations including Gallaudet University (Implementation and Change Center) and the American Academy of Pediatrics



(Provider Education Center). Hands & Voices Board President, Dr. Karen Hopkins shared her optimism for the future of this collaboration. "I am thrilled to see that this leadership framework will weave lived experiences of families and deaf and hard of hearing adults throughout the development of a family-centered EHDI system with the goal of successful language acquisition for deaf and hard of hearing children."

About Hands & Voices

Hands & Voices began in 1996 in an effort to join families and professionals in the discovery of *"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."*™ The parent-led, non-profit organization is dedicated to supporting families with children who are D/deaf or hard of hearing without bias around communication modes or methodology. Their model has been replicated nationwide and globally in 47 chapters. Programs include Guide By Your Side (parent-to-parent support); O.U.R. Project (children's safety); ASTra (educational advocacy); Deafed.net; leadership conferences, workshops, chapter support, and a clearinghouse of information and resources.

"This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number U52MC529918-01-00 for the Family Leadership in Language and Learning Center. This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government." ~

Scholarships

Continued from pg. 28

<https://collegescholarships.org/financial-aid/> and <https://www.free-4u.com/deaf.htm> (change search engine as needed).

Note: The TDI Scholarship program has sunsetted and is transitioning to the NextGen Leadership Program. This will be an eligibility program designed to foster future leaders in inclusion and accessibility. Look for developing information at <https://tdiforaccess.org/NextGenLeadership> through TDI.

Local Quota International Club awards are offered in specific locations. Search for the club in your region.

Note: The TDI Scholarship program has sunsetted and is transitioning to the NextGen Leadership Program. This will be an eligibility program designed to foster future leaders in inclusion and accessibility. Look for developing information at <https://tdiforaccess.org/NextGenLeadership> through TDI. ~

At The Table

The Hands & Voices Podcast



The H&V Podcast

H&V FL3 Center Has a Podcast For You!

Available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, and Google Podcasts
Search Hands & Voices

Chapter Briefs

By Sara Kennedy, H&V Headquarters

Below are some updates on what is going on in the world of H&V chapters! To get connected to a chapter in your state or province, go to www.handsandvoices.org and click on the map.

Arizona H&V

We are actively supporting families with children recently diagnosed with hearing differences through a Data Sharing Agreement with the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS). We're also working on a new contract with ADHS under their latest HRSA grant. With four Parent Guides and two Deaf/Hard of Hearing Guides, we assist 194 families with children birth to three years old.

Our events, both in-person and online, are well-attended. Our recent Spring Family Picnic drew 168 attendees, including 37 families and various community partners and sponsors. Upcoming events include Splash Pad meetups, our annual Halloween celebration, and StoryBeatz, a literacy and language hour.

We collaborate with many organizations across Arizona, including Stop CMV Arizona, a coalition focused on improving care for children affected by congenital CMV through education, support, research, and advocacy. Our ultimate goal is to create a sustainable and equitable system that enhances



WA State celebrates their new ASTra Program with HQ trainers

the health of childbearing people and children, especially those in socially disadvantaged groups, through education, screening, and family support.

Illinois H&V

We are pleased to announce that Amy Keslinke has been elected as Chapter President and Maira Nava as Chapter Vice-President. Our Executive Director will be onboarding both over the coming months. We look forward to the future of our Chapter and the contributions Amy and Maira will bring.

Iowa H&V

The Iowa Chapter's summer plans are kicking off with 2 great events in June! Iowa Baseball Camp for the Deaf

takes place (we are sponsors) and our in-person board retreat! Topics of discussion for our retreat will be building relationships with new board members, non-profit board insurance, budgeting, fundraising, and finalizing activities for the year. Iowa H&V collaborates with Iowa EHDH for many family events throughout the year. We are planning a big event in September to celebrate 20 years as a Chapter of Hands & Voices!! Have a great summer everyone!

Michigan H&V

Michigan Hands & Voices is gearing up for Summer Fun! Three regional picnics are planned for the summer, along with many Meet and Greets across the state at community parks and other fun locations hosted by our Parent Guides and DHH Guides. Our strong partnership with Michigan EHDH continues with a new 5-year HRSA grant approved to fund the GBYS program. Two parents recently participated in statewide newborn screening conferences to share their newborn hearing screening story.

Tennessee H&V

On April 27th, Friends of Tennessee's Babies with Special Needs and Tennessee Hands & Voices held the annual Chandler Farm Day. Families refer to this event as Train Day. It is one of the most anticipated events of the year. The Chandler Family graciously opens

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Tennessee Chandler Farm Day

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their property to our families we serve, as well as anyone who is Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf Blind, and Deaf Plus. They have steam trains to ride, farm animals to pet, activities and sensory areas. Those who attend receive a full lunch and ice cream churned by a train engine. (It's sanitary. There's a belt system hooked up to the train engine off to the side.) Families love coming out where everyone is welcome, their children can see other children wearing hearing devices and some who sign. We had over 100 in attendance again this year. It was wonderful seeing familiar faces and meeting new ones.

Virginia H&V

Board members of Virginia Hands & Voices have been busy hosting and attending events around the Commonwealth this spring. We've been offering regular meet-ups at various libraries and community centers offering events such as crafts and snacks, science and snacks, and board games and....you guessed it, snacks!

We've also had the opportunity to present and exhibit at multiple conferences and community events over the past few months, including the Virginia EHDl Conference (pictured). Our nine compassionate Board members are parents, audiologists, early interventionists, deaf adults, and people who use American Sign Language, Bengali, Cued Speech, Spanish and spoken English.

Looking ahead, we are planning an ice cream social at a park, a collaborative event with a speech therapy practice, attending and presenting at more community events and conferences, an accessible visit to the theater



Gathering together at the Virginia EHDl Conference

and of course, attending the annual Hands & Voices Leadership Conference in Spokane this fall. Our dedicated Board helps us accomplish amazing things, providing unbiased support to families across Virginia as a result.

Washington State H&V

The Washington Chapter is thrilled to provide educational advocacy support to families of children who are deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing of children through their new Advocacy, Support & Training (ASTra) program. For questions, contact Christine Griffin, Program Coordinator at ASTra@wahandsandvoices.org

West Virginia H&V

The WV Chapter hosted our fourth Moms' Night Inn this year with twenty people in attendance. This year's theme was "Bloom Where You are Planted" and included topics such as Growth (over-

coming challenges), How to Thrive?, Fertilize (adding knowledge, resources and support to make you more productive), Companion Planting (surrounding yourself with the right people), Transplanting (it's okay to make a move if what you're doing isn't working), and Celebrating the Harvest (finding the joy.) Thanks to grant funding we offered a Friday night arrival option to allow additional time for moms to socialize and get to know each other.

Celebrating the arrival of warm weather and seeing families in person, we will kick off the Summer Park Socials offering outdoor playtime and summer-themed crafts and games. We will host our first-ever rollerskating event and close out the season with our 11th Annual Open House Picnic. The picnic draws families and exhibitors from around the state for a day of food, fun and prizes. ~

Off to a Great Start

By Brooke Montgomery,
H&V Headquarters

Hands & Voices released a new resource to support the early intervention journey for families of children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Families can get *Off to a Great Start* by exploring resources and activities in this virtual, interactive space. The space is set up to look like a child's playroom, and you can move your cursor over images in the room to learn more about each one.

The materials included in *Off to a Great Start* are intended to educate, encourage, and support a family's involvement in the language development of their child(ren) through an innovative delivery that is simple yet thorough to promote use by families and "get the ball rolling" with early intervention.



Resources included in Off to A Great Start:

1. 8 Reasons to Say YES to Early Intervention

(English and Spanish) What are the positive aspects of early intervention for your family? This infographic illustrates the importance of Early Intervention as soon as you have a confirmed diagnosis.

2. 5 Reasons to Say YES to Assessments

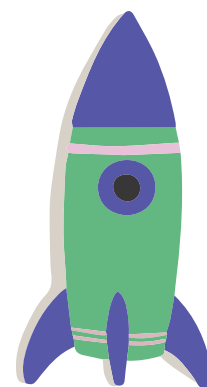
(English and Spanish) Reach families about the importance of ongoing assessment in early intervention. Developed by family leaders for new families, this infographic points families in a positive way with their early intervention team in those first valuable years

3. Parent Tip Sheets

(English and Spanish) Parent Tip Sheets provide suggestions for fun, everyday activities to enhance baby's cognitive, social, emotional, language, pre-literacy, and literacy development. For most parents, language development is our biggest worry about our deaf or hard of hearing child. How will our child communicate ideas back and forth, or express and understand feelings? Language development also supports thinking and problem-solving, and developing and maintaining relationships. Learning to understand, use and enjoy language is the critical first step in literacy, and the basis for learning to read and write.

4. Making a Plan for Your Child

It's important to work with professionals to build good support in early intervention through an Individual Family Service Plan. This guide will help you address the areas of need to make sure your intervention gets you where you want to go! A good team listens to the concerns and ideas of each of its members. You are the decision-maker for your child's language and communication. Your confidence in your decision making comes from listening to and learning from the professionals who surround you. Understand that your child and family's needs might change over time depending on many factors. This document is designed to guide conversations between you and your Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team as you address the unique communication considerations for your child.



5. Developmental Milestone Checklists

Ever wonder how to answer this question.... "Is my child doing what other kids at the same age are or should be doing?" As a parent or caregiver of a Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) child, there is probably a lot that you want to know about your child's development! The goal of this

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section is to provide information for parents and caregivers raising children who are D/HH and D/HH Plus on how to:

- Understand the importance of developmental milestone checklists.
- Utilize these types of checklists, created for typical development, in context of your own child's development. You can use checklists for typically developing children to address questions you may have about your own child's development.
- Employ these checklists for beginning and deepening conversations with your Early Intervention providers.

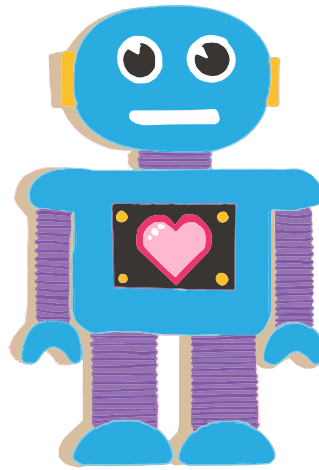
Included is a sampling of accessible, web-based checklists and resources which were chosen and vetted by the FL3 Language and Literacy Advisory Board, to do just that, with a special focus on language, literacy, and social emotional development for children birth to three years of age.

6. Early Intervention Recommendations (or... How do we know if our child is receiving the right services?)

Many parents ask this question when they first get the news that their child is deaf or hard of hearing and are setting up needed services for the first time. We know because we, as parents, asked these same questions at the beginning of our own journeys. Caretakers just start-



This guide will help you address the areas of need to make sure your intervention gets you where you want to go!



ing out need so much information. The following guide will help you think about the things your child needs. This Guide to EI recommendations was developed so that your young child who is deaf or hard of hearing can reach his or her full potential. Families and professionals must work together quickly to build carefully designed individualized intervention in your home and community to achieve your goals.

This Guide can:

- Help you understand best practices for Early Intervention (EI)
- Help you assess your EI services based on the standards recommended by the JCIH
- Empower your family to advocate for appropriate EI services
- Improve partnerships between families and professionals to help children receive best practices in EI Services

7. Fostering Joy

The most important thing you can do is love & support your child. Join other parents in the Fostering Joy movement to celebrate and focus on the joy your child brings. We know what it means to be the family of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. You may be overwhelmed, feel alone, worry about your child's communication and what you need to do next. AND as parents, we know how important it is

to just celebrate your child. To see all the many gifts your child brings, to take time to enjoy each other, and to share your joy with others that understand. THAT is what we mean by *Fostering Joy!* Join the Celebration and explore this link to connect with other families to celebrate the joys of raising our amazing kids.

8. Family Perspectives

Whether your child was just identified with a hearing loss, or you are a seasoned parent just looking for support & information to help your child thrive, reading other family stories is a wonderful way to gain insight into your own

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Great Start

Continued from pg. 33

journey. This online library features top articles from **The Hands & Voices Communicator**. Read about lived experiences in parenting children who are deaf/hard of hearing. We believe one of the best resources we offer are your stories, told from a wide variety of perspectives, and the connections they create. Explore all the categories offered here, including education, advocacy, perspectives of deaf/hard of hearing individuals and more.

9. Family Support Activities Guide

Soar to new heights as you move through your day with your child with fun and easy ideas you can use to address all the areas you care about. There is information and resources imbedded in the guide that will help you and your child in the areas of your wellbeing (how you are doing), knowledge (what you need to know), and empowerment (the confidence to get where you are going.) This *Family Support Activities Guide* is for those providing support to families or families themselves that includes family to support activities in early intervention. Developed by Hands & Voices *Guide By Your Side (GBYS)* trained parent leaders utilizing the evidence-based parent-to-parent support framework for families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing by researchers at University of Western Ontario. (Henderson, Johnson, and Moodie).

10. Flourish

As you move through your journey of raising a child who is Deaf/Hard of Hearing and discover what language and communication options work for your child, there are many wonderful resources and information available. Each family will make decisions based on the unique needs of their own child. We believe getting input from many perspectives is essential for informed decision making. We have chosen

to share some resources created by the Maine Educational Center for the Deaf. They created a project called Exploration of Language and Communication Opportunities (ELCO) that is relevant to you, regardless of where you live.


11. Promotional Resources

Explore linkable badges and social media package that can be shared to your own website and social media platforms so your organization can share these resources with families. ~

See Off to a Great Start at:


handsandvoices.org/great-start

This project is supported by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) under grant number 5UJ1MC30748-07-00 for Family Leadership in Language and Learning for \$1,800,00.00 This information or content and conclusions are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should any endorsements be inferred by HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government.

Post a job or resume to 

POST A JOB - POST YOUR RESUME

Hands & Voices is proud to launch a redesigned **DEAFED.net** website!! Deaf educators and those that wish to work in the field of deaf education and related fields can now connect using our database of job postings and resumes specifically serving the Field of Deaf Education.

 Educational Enhancement for the field of Deaf Education

Home Jobs Resumes Your Account

Job Search

Show only jobs pending review

Showing 1 to 25 of 43 records Records per page 25

User Search

Keyword Search

Find jobs containing **Any** of your search words

Find jobs containing **All** of your search words

Select a Location

----- Search all Locations -----

- International / Non US
- Alabama
- Alabama-Anniston
- Alabama-Birmingham

Select a Category

Job #	Date Posted	Location	Job Title	User ID
6670	5/31/2024	Maryland-Montgomery County	Teacher of the Deaf - Preschool Teacher	sprusst
6669	5/29/2024	Washington	Teacher for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	esd112
6668	5/22/2024	Washington	Special Education Compliance Manager	avanni
6665	5/1/2024	Texas-Houston	Paraprofessional/Instructional/Instructional Aide - Special Education	mmcco
6664	5/1/2024	Texas-Houston	Interpreter for Deaf and Hard of Hearing	mmcco
6663	5/1/2024	Texas-Houston	Itinerant Teacher of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	mmcco
6662	4/29/2024	Texas-Houston	Special Education Communication Facilitator	mmcco

www.Deafed.net

TIDBITS

20th Annual Hands & Voices Leadership Conference

Registration Now Open!

Our Chapter Co-Hosts, Washington State H&V and BC Hands & Voices are excited to bring the **20th Annual Hands & Voices Leadership Conference** to Spokane, Washington on Friday September 20th, 2024 thru Sunday September 22nd, 2024. [Click here](#) for more info and to register!

Don't miss the Hands & Voices ASTra Webinar Series

Best Practices When Serving Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Families

Presenters: Rana Ottallah & Ana Brooks

How can advocates increase their knowledge and ability to serve families with additional barriers? By adding additional tools to their toolbox, advocates will learn how to empower and train with appropriate resources specifically designed to meet the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse families. Thursday, June 25th, 2024 12 PM ET/11 AM CT/10 AM MT/9 AM PT (One hour) [Click here](#) for more information and to register.

American Society for Deaf Children's Annual Family Conference July 10-13, 2024

Get ready to amplify your family's impact this July at **ASDC2024: "Let's Grow Together: How Families Make A Difference in How Kids Feel and Learn."** This year, we're focusing on social-emotional well-being as a catalyst for innovation in traditional and modern family dynamics. But don't worry, our main goal remains to create language accessibility and diversity for our deaf and hard-of-hearing kids. Join us to "Amplify Family" as we explore how our interactions with family, teachers, and other adults shape our children's perceptions of relationships at home and school. Discover fresh concepts and viewpoints while inspiring each other

to reach new heights! Whether you're navigating the early stages of growth or preparing for life after school, we'll celebrate diverse families of all shapes and sizes, leaving you inspired and ready for new adventures. Register today at <https://deafchildren.org/asdc-2024-annual-family-conference/>

Tell us what you think about this Digital Newspaper

Hands & Voices Communicator is being delivered to you digitally for the first time as a test to see how our readers like this format.

Please take a moment to fill out this survey and tell us your thoughts. <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/D2BNZWJ>



A.G. Bell Parent Support Line

A.G. Bell works globally to ensure that people who are deaf and hard of hearing can hear and speak. They provide support, information, resources and more to help guide families on their journey. They have a parent support line to talk to a parent who's 'been there'. You can reach them at 1-833-575-5465 or parentsupportline@agbell.org

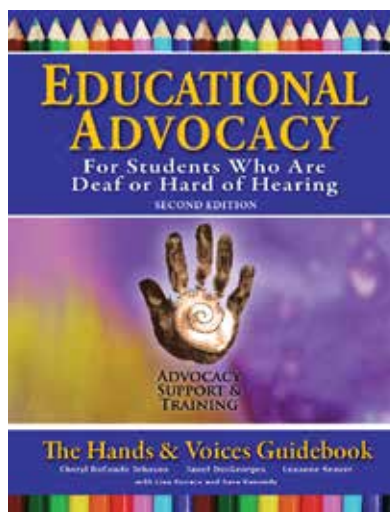
U.S. Resonate No-charge Genetic Counseling and Testing program Expands

Akouos has made the following important changes to the U.S. Resonate no-charge genetic counseling and testing program:

1. PreventionGenetics has been selected as the new genetic testing vendor for the program
2. Eligibility criteria have been expanded to include individuals under 40 years of age in the U.S. with at least one of the following:
 - Bilateral sensorineural hearing loss (by auditory brainstem response or behavioral testing) of moderate, moderately severe, severe, or profound degree
 - Auditory neuropathy
3. To simplify the process, providers (including audiologists) can now choose to refer patients to InformedDNA for pre- and post-testing counseling and genetic test ordering.

For more information:

<https://akouosresonate.com/>



Be Prepared for Your Next School Meeting!

Timely, practical, specific information for parents and professionals supporting students who are deaf or hard of hearing. From an introduction to Special Education Law to Assessments and Evaluations, learn how to leap "Hurdle Talk" in meetings from early intervention through transition from high school.

0-15% discount available for volume orders.
2nd Edition now on sale!

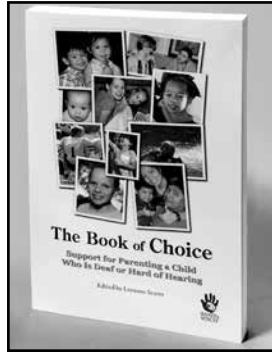
Order online at www.handsandvoices.org
Questions? email parentadvocate@handsandvoices.org

The Book of Choice

Support for Parenting a Child Who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Now Available in Spanish

The Book of Choice is written for families by families with the deft and unbiased touch of Hands & Voices. Perfect for EHDI systems, Part C programs, Guide By Your Side and any agency or service provider that supports families with newly identified babies. Here are thoughtful family stories from seasoned parents sharing insight about what they wish they'd known from the beginning about raising a child with hearing loss. Order *The Book of Choice* at www.handsandvoices.org.



CAN YOUR OLD CAR ADVOCATE AT AN IEP? IT CAN IF YOU DONATE IT TO HANDS & VOICES



Do you have an old car just sitting out in front of the house? Are you dreading going through the process of putting an ad in the paper and then haggling your way to a sale?

Well, with one easy call you can:

- Donate your used car to Hands & Voices
- Receive a charitable tax deduction
- Have it towed away (if necessary) at no charge
- Provide support to Hands & Voices Programs

To find out more about Hands & Voices vehicle donation program, or to donate a vehicle call 1-866-628-2277 or go to www.vehiclesforcharity.org and choose H&V as the charity of choice.

HANDS & VOICES:

Get cutting edge news from around the country!

We're a non-profit organization dedicated to supporting families of children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing with info & resources so they can make the best choices for their child. We are non-biased about communication modes or methodologies, and believe that given good information and support, fami-

lies can make the choice that is right for their child. We also open our organization to professionals who are interested in a family/child-focused approach to service delivery.

As a non-profit organization, we are dependent upon subscriptions to our newsletter, registration fees at our spon-

sored events, grants and other donations in order to function. Therefore, we invite all our membership to donate a nominal, tax-deductible donation of \$25.00 a year/parent, \$40.00 a year/professional, to receive our mailings and newsletters, support the cost of our events, and to ensure that a non-biased

voice remains available to families. Anyone who cannot afford the annual membership dues but wishes to receive our mailings may check the box marked "Scholarship" on the registration form below. If you're not current in our database, please take a few moments to fill this out and send it in.

Name _____ Telephone # (_____)

Address _____ School Dist/BOCES _____

_____ Email: _____

Children (deaf/hh & siblings, ages) _____

Circle one: Parent Professional Other

Membership donation enclosed (circle one): \$25.00/parent \$40.00/professional Scholarship

To Pay by credit card: ___ Visa ___ MC Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____ Amount _____

Printed Name on Card _____ Signature _____

Your 2024 contribution will go directly to your local Chapter if there is a H&V Chapter in your state/province.

Mail this form to: Hands & Voices, PO Box 3093, Boulder CO 80307 or to the H&V Chapter in your State/Province (see www.handsandvoices.org for a complete listing)