



HANDS &
VOICES™
MINNESOTA

Supporting families
with children who are
deaf & hard of hearing



FOCUS

How to Talk to Children About Tolerance and Racial Justice

In our community and across the country parents are challenged with how to explain what is happening in the aftermath of George Floyd's murder in Minneapolis, May 25, 2020. This tragedy has been a defining moment in history triggering ongoing nation-wide protests, calls for changes in law enforcement and government policies. Unfortunately, COVID has limited our children's opportunities to gain knowledge and have healthy discussions with peers, teachers, extended family members, or to seek comfort from their faith community. More than ever parents are on the frontline to help their child emotionally process their thoughts and feelings during this time of great change towards a future that is more inclusive and safe for everyone.

"If tolerance, respect and equity permeate family life, they will translate into values that shape societies, nations and the world."

— Kofi Annan

Research shows that children recognize skin color differences as young as 3 months old naturally reacting differently to people who look like or don't look like their parents or caregivers. Talking to children about differences can seem overwhelming to parents, but in general children are more curious and open-minded about differences than adults. It

helps if parents take time to learn and understand their own personal biases, life experiences, and privilege to be able to talk about it with others. Children don't expect parents to have perfect words and it's ok to respond to a question with, "I don't know."

"No one is born hating another person because of the color of his skin, or his background, or his religion. People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to love, for love comes more naturally to the human heart than its opposite."

— Nelson Mandela

It's important for parents to establish they can be trusted to provide their child with answers to their questions honestly. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing (dhh) often don't overhear and can miss critical information. However, they can and do sense and observe when something is not right or different in their world. Missing contextual information is confusing to children when the adults in their lives are preoccupied or feel anxious, as well as exposure to media images, property damage, or protests, peaceful or otherwise. Talking openly to your child about what you are experiencing and seeing will help comfort them and open lines of communication.

How do you know how much to tell a child? Listen carefully to the question your child has asked and counter by asking the child to share what they think. Your child may surprise you with how much they do know about a topic or the misinformation they have. Confirming what they already know builds their confidence and clarifying information lifts confusion and builds trust. Let your child's own level of knowledge and responses be a guide to the level and amount of information you should share on a topic. As your child gets older their questions will become more sophisticated and challenging. As a parent you'll know when your child is ready to hear more information.

"To bring about change, you must not be afraid to take the first step. We will fail when we fail to try."

— Rosa Parks

A Teaching Tolerance publication, written by Dana Williams, "Beyond the Golden Rule, A Parent's Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice" is filled with ideas and examples of how to specifically tackle the topic of prejudice with children. The publication offers tips and insight in different age ranges; preschool (ages 2-5), preteen years (ages 6-12), and teen years (ages 13-17).

Tolerance and Racial Justice, continued on page 2

Tolerance and Racial Justice, continued from page 1

Preschool (ages 2-5)

- **Be honest.** Discuss differences openly and highlight diversity by choosing picture books, toys, games and videos that feature diverse characters in positive roles.
- **Embrace curiosity.** Try not to ignore or discourage your child's questions about differences among people, even if the questions make you uncomfortable.
- **Broaden choices.** Promote games, sports or activities for both girls and boys instead of imposing limitations.
- **Foster pride.** Talk to your child about your family heritage and encourage a positive self-concept.
- **Lead by example.** Widen your circle of friends and acquaintances to include people from different cultures.

Preteen Years (ages 6-12)

- **Model it.** Talking to your child about treating others with respect is essential, but it's not enough. Your actions, both subtle and overt, are what your child will emulate.
- **Acknowledge difference.** Celebrate the positive aspects of people's differences — language, music, and foods. Likewise discuss instances, historical and current, when people have been mistreated because of their differences. Encourage your child to explore what makes them different and similar to others, find strength in a common ground.
- **Challenge intolerance.** Call out your child's bias or prejudice when you see it and try to figure out where it originated. For example, ask "What made you say that about that person?" Then, explain why the action or comment was unacceptable and hurtful to the person.
- **Seize teachable moments.** Look for

everyday activities that can serve as springboards for discussion. Real-life examples are better than artificial or staged discussions about issues.

- **Emphasize the positive.** It's important to praise your child for behavior that shows respect and empathy for others.

Teen Years (ages 13-17)

- **Keep talking.** Find ways to bring up conversations about the issues of difference. Use current issues from the news as a springboard for discussion.
- **Stay involved.** Messages about differences exist all around: the Internet, music videos, commercials, social cliques at school. Ask your teen about the group or groups they most identify with at school. Discuss the labels that are associated with such groups.
- **Live congruently.** Teens are more likely to be influenced by what you do than what you say, so it's important for your words and behaviors are aligned.
- **Broaden opportunities.** Teens naturally hang out with the people they identify as being most like themselves. Provide other opportunities for your teen to interact with peers from different backgrounds. Suggest volunteer, extracurricular, worship and work opportunities that will broaden your teen's circle of friends.
- **Encourage activism.** Encourage your child to get together with peers to lobby city officials for a teen social center or skate park. When young people know they have a voice in their community, they are empowered to help resolve issues of injustice.

Find the publication, Beyond the Golden Rule, A Parent's Guide to Preventing and Responding to Prejudice, at www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/beyond_golden_rule.pdf



Photo found on Unsplash Photos for Everyone, published June 10, 2020

Below are more resources for counseling and parent guidance for having discussions with children about difficult topics such as racism and prejudice:

Volunteers of America, DHH Mental health
www.voamnwi.org

Family Tree Clinic
www.familytreeclinic.org/services/dbbh/

Hope and Healing Family Therapy
<http://www.hopeandhealingmn.com/>

NAMI Minnesota
<https://namimn.org/>

St. Paul/Minneapolis Black Deaf Advocates, Local Chapters
www.nbda.org

Therapeutic Services Agency (Greater MN)
<https://www.hoperealized.com/>

Virtual Visits and Helpful Accessible Videos Featuring MNH&V DHH Guides

In between virtual visits with families the MNH&V DHH Guides have been busy producing helpful and accessible videos available online. Geared to engage youth who are dhh and their families these videos are a great way to get to know the DHH Guides, learn something new, see different language modalities in action, and find real people your child who is dhh can identify with. Topics include personal introductions of each DHH Guide, word-of-the-day, back-to-school tips, self advocacy, communication corner, arts & crafts, reading, and much more.

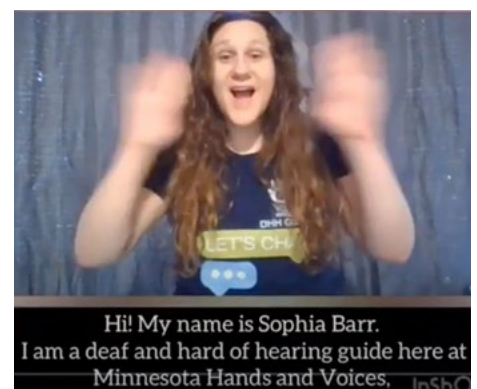
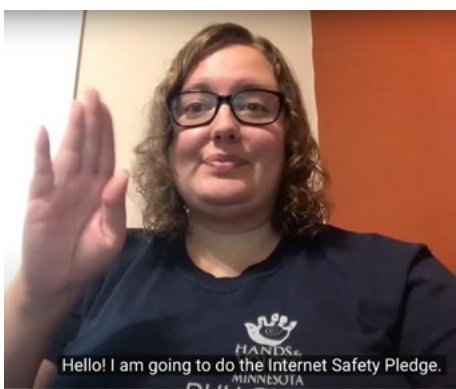
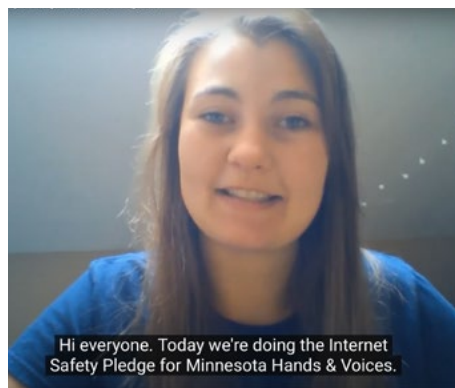
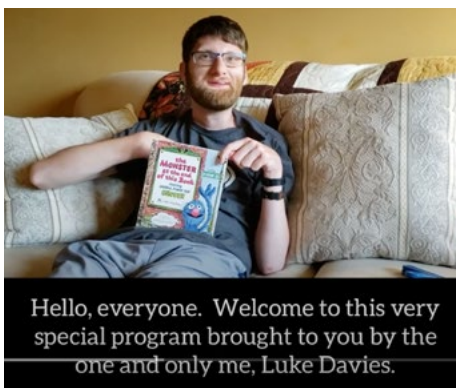
Initially the purpose of creating videos was to introduce new staff. Then it became a way to connection with more families who may be too busy to commitment to a specific time for a virtual visit. The videos have become popular with families and a fun creative outlet for the DHH Guides.

“The introduction videos started coming in,” said Heidi. “Eventually the DHH Guides thought it’d be great to teach some words in their home language and now ideas for videos just keep coming!”

Each video is short featuring the day-to-day activities of our DHH Guides who are dhh or DeafBlind. All videos are captioned, but otherwise meant to be low-tech, slice-of-life, and informational.

Find MNH&V DHH Guide YouTube videos at www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL56OYLLcfDZ2ceXsE_oCkhX8rA-dIOIMX

To request a virtual visit with a MNH&V DHH Guide please contact Heidi Liz Nazario, DHH Guide Supervisor, by text at 612-297-6603 or email at HeidyN@Lifetrack-mn.org.



MNH&V Transition Talk with Seth McGregor

MNH&V asked Seth, age 20, and his mother, Laura, a series of questions about Seth's experiences transitioning to adulthood. Seth lives independently in an apartment in Crookston, in northwest Minnesota. During the farming season he divides his time between living at home to work on the family farm and his apartment. In addition to farming Seth attends college, volunteers when he can, and enjoys hanging out with friends.

"My son Seth has overcome many obstacles with his hearing loss," said Laura. "We have never had him look at his hearing loss as a disability, but more of an obstacle."

Seth was identified as hard of hearing when he was young and has experienced a progressive decline in his hearing over the years. At this point he describes his hearing difference as "mostly deaf". Seth can read lips well, has good English skills, and uses American Sign Language. Throughout his school years and into college he has maintained an "A" Honor Roll. Seth is grateful his college education is mostly paid for through scholarships and his goal is to continue to receive good grades, so the scholarships can see him through the rest of his college years.

Seth has a refreshing sense of self confidence. When asked what he likes most about being deaf or hard of hearing Seth answered simply with "That I am different."

Both Seth and his mother Laura agree that strong self-advocacy skills have been key to his success throughout his life and as he transitions into adulthood. From an early age Seth's DHH teachers and ASL Interpreters helped by encouraging him to develop strong self-advocacy skills.

"They [DHH Teachers and ASL Interpreters] taught him and us many things," said Laura. "They were absolutely a big part of his younger years."



Seth McGregor

At work Seth finds ways to accommodate his hearing difference without asking for special treatment. He is very active in sports and at one point he had a job as a referee for the Crookston School District. Seth has worked different jobs over the years and has been told he is an exceptional employee.

"He is a kind young man. He has always been good to volunteer and help others," Laura said about her son. "We couldn't be more proud of him."

Transition

Transition

MNH&V Transition Talk

The MNH&V Transition Talk column is a new series to celebrate diversity within our community of transitioning young adults. It will feature comments from a diverse group of young adults who are dhh, DeafBlind, and dhh plus, along with comments from some of their parents.

The idea of this column series is to prompt family conversations and to gain perspective from the experiences of this diverse population of individuals who are or have transitioned to adulthood and the families that have and/or continue to support them.

"It is never too early to have conversations with your child about their future plans and really listen to their thoughts and ideas," said one mother with a son who is dhh. "Some of my son's ideas were very insightful and others were just plain hilarious, and always different every time."

According to Federal law transition planning is required to start by the time your child turns age 16, but in school districts across Minnesota IEP teams are starting earlier by including students in transition conversations. Families can also take an active role in teaching life skills to their children along the way.

We are asking more people to share their stories for this series, MNH&V Transition Talk. If you are a young adult who is dhh, DeafBlind, or dhh plus and in the process checking off transition skills or have a few years of adulthood under your belt or a parent of a recent adult, we would love to hear from you. Please email MNH&V, subject line "Transition Talks" to at mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org

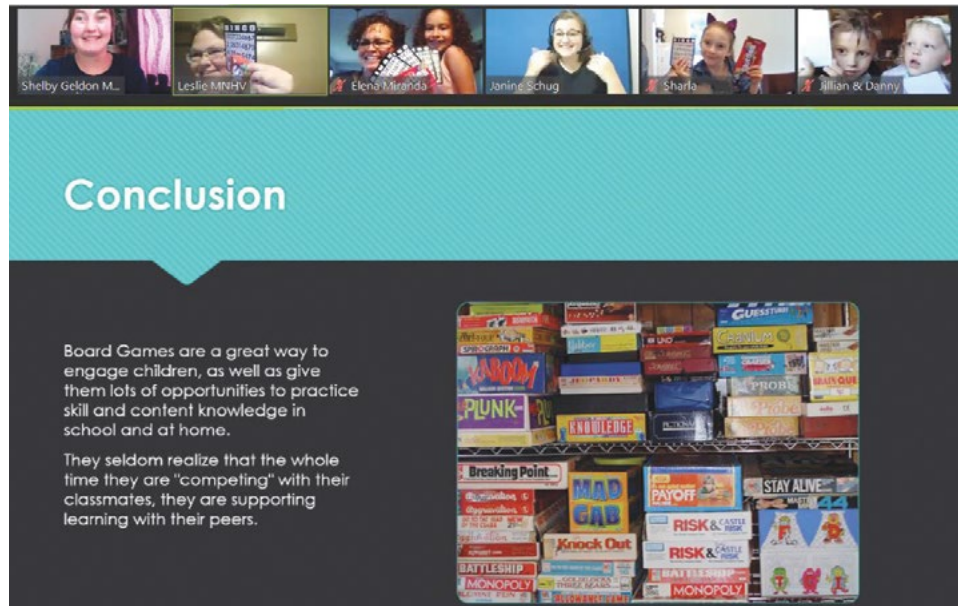
MNH&V Online Family Events are Like Distant Learning, But Way More Fun!

MNH&V Online Family Event: How Board Games Build Skills

Tuesday, July 14, 2020, Leslie Carnegie-Hilde, MNH&V Upper NW Parent Guide, hosted an Online Family Event: How Board Games Build Skills. For families that registered MNH&V mailed BINGO cards and Skittles candies to be used as number markers.

“At one point it was quiet,” laughed Leslie. “So I asked, ‘I don’t hear any BINGOs, did you eat all your skittles?’”

Study after study confirms that board games are a great activity for everyone, from preschool age to adulthood. There are many benefits for playing the game BINGO, such as improved cognitive function, memory, and hand-eye coordination to name a few.



Five families joined in the fun, played 2 games of BINGO, and two children called “BINGO!”

DHH Guide, Shelby Geldon, joined in on the fun.

MNH&V Online Family Event: Virtual Slumber Party

Wednesday, August 26, 2020, Suzanne Iwainat, MNH&V Central Parent Guide, hosted an Online Family Event: Virtual Slumber Party

For families that registered MNH&V mailed the book, *Let’s Have a Sleepover!*, by Norm Feuti, and a related activity. The activity was a picture of a tent where the children could draw a picture of their friends, family members, pets, or anyone else they would like to have at their sleepover. Then they had a chance to share their picture during the event.

“I wanted to get families together during this time and have fun,” said Suzanne. “Making it educational as well, focusing on literacy, social emotional and comprehension.

Over 20 people joined the slumber party. DHH Guides, Kobe and Kelsey, played a



game with the families called, Complete the Sentence. Sharon Rosen, Lifetrack’s Deaf Mentor, and Peggy Dolney, ASL Interpreter, joined the event, also.

The best part of the event was the kids who showed up in their pajamas with

sleeping bags and tent forts already to go!

“Bringing families together is the best part, watching the children’s face light up when the event begins brings me joy,” said Suzanne. “It was wonderful to see them in their pajamas and their forts!”

Find a current list of MNH&V Online Family Events on page 8 or go online for more information and registration at <https://www.eventbrite.com/o/minnesota-hands-amp-voices-at-lifetrack-9882223703>

MNH&V EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

MNH&V Parent Guide for the Northeast African Communities

The MNH&V NE African Communities Parent Guide position offers 10 flexible hours a week, some evenings and weekends, and a family-friendly work environment.

MNH&V Parent Guides receive specific training and team support. Parent Guides are responsible for the initial and follow-up connections critical to families who have a newly identified child who is deaf or hard of hearing (dhh). They work closely with the MNH&V team and learn the best way to support our MNH&V families. They organize and lead family events, represent MNH&V in the community, and participate in family support activities. Your personal experience of the challenges and joys of parenting a child who is dhh helps support other parents who are just starting their journey. Candidate for this position must be fluent in Somali.

To find out more or to apply and send a resume, please visit Lifetrack at <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/Details/117452>

MNH&V Welcomes, Hannah Harriman, DHH Guide

“MNH&V means a great deal to me because of their unbiased approach,” said Hannah Harriman, MNH&V DHH Guide. “I love working on a team where each individual’s experiences and communication preferences are valued.”

Hannah Harriman joined the MNH&V team as a DHH Guide in February 2020. Hannah currently lives in Stillwater, MN. She graduated from Bethel University in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Relational Communication. She is the oldest of three girls and the only person who is dhh and blind in her family.

“I am DeafBlind, which simply means I have a combined hearing and vision loss,” said Hannah. “I am blessed with two outstanding parents and two amazing younger sisters.”

Hannah is passionate about advocating for individuals who have disabilities; she has had experiences advocating on both the state and national level. In her free time Hannah enjoys reading, singing, and spending time outdoors.

“Because of my unique combination of disabilities, I strongly desire to serve and come alongside children and families with

diverse needs,” said Hannah.

You can contact Hannah directly by email at hannahh@lifetrack-mn.org. To set up a virtual visit with Hannah or any other DHH Guide email Heidi Nazario, at HeidyN@lifetrack-mn.org



Hannah Harriman, DHH Guide

May Newsletter CORRECTION

In the May edition of the *MNH&V FOCUS Newsletter*, the feature “Give a Hand to ...” on page 6 requires corrections:

While the Masonic Motorcycle Club International MN Chapter #24 and Freemason Corinthians Lodge #67 are both part of the larger entity of Freemasons, these organizations are independent of each other. The donations given to MNH&V by each organization were not related to each other and should have been honored in separate features in order to avoid confusion. In addition, Gordy Aune, Jr.’s name was misspelled. We regret these errors.

Thanks for your contribution!

We rely on your generous
support to build better lives
for children who are deaf
or hard of hearing.

Make a tax-deductible
donation today.

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Parent Safety Toolkit , O.U.R. Children's Safety Project, NEW Publication from Hands & Voices HQ

The *Parent Safety Toolkit, O.U.R. Children's Safety and Success Project*, published January 2020, is a new resource for families with a child who is dhh. The Toolkit addresses topics about child abuse and bullying that many parents may find uncomfortable but need to be aware of. Topics such as how to recognize the warning signs of abuse and how to support a child who has become a victim of maltreatment can be a lifeline to families. The reality is children with disabilities are three to four times more likely to experience abuse and neglect than their peers who are not disabled. This unacceptable statistic calls on all parents and caregivers of children who are dhh to do more and learn all they can to keep their child safe.

O.U.R. is an acronym that stands for Observe, Understand & Respond. O.U.R. Children's Safety Project is a concept based on understanding most children who are experiencing abuse and neglect demonstrate observable patterns of behavior and that parents and professionals can learn how to observe, understand and respond. The goal is to



“Bullying comes in many forms. It can happen in person, in writing, online, on cell phones, in school, on the bus, at home—anywhere. Wherever it happens, it’s NOT acceptable.”

— Hands & Voices: *What To Do If Your Child is Bullied*

reduce the overall incidences and duration that abuse and neglect happens to children with disabilities.

The *Parent Safety Toolkit* covers many of the main concerns parents have for their child's safety and offers steps to prevent or reduce maltreatment such as:

- What parents need to know about safety and modeling safety
- Abuse and bullying prevention, intervention, and reporting
- Safety considerations at home, school, on the internet, and in the community
- The importance of parent involvement during the teenage years and their child's emerging sexuality
- Parent support and resources

A PDF version of the *Parent Safety Toolkit, O.U.R. Children's Safety and Success Project* can be downloaded at <https://www.handsandvoices.org/pdf/OUR-Toolkit.pdf>

Find a wealth of information about how to keep your child safe, more resources for parents, and a complete description about the Observe, Understand & Respond: the O.U.R. Children's Safety Project and the research that has been done on this topic at the Hands & Voices HQ website: <https://www.handsandvoices.org/resources/OUR/index.htm>

Internet Safety Pledge

Parent Guides, Leslie Carnegie-Hilde and Marie Pank, are active in the O.U.R. Children's Safety Project and have written an Internet Safety Pledge for parents to use as a resource. The Pledge is available on YouTube in spoken English by Shelby Geldon, DHH Guide, and in ASL by Kelsey Woodward, DHH Guide. Both YouTube video versions are captioned.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w3Zn-Z6dlQI&t=13s>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVRP97_UzII&t=110s

Internet Safety Pledge:

- ___ I will never send or post personal information, such as my addresses, phone number, or school name.
- ___ I will never send a person my picture or anything else without my parent's or guardian's permission.
- ___ I will tell an adult right away if I come across or receive any information that makes me feel uncomfortable.
- ___ I will follow all the rules of the internet sites, including those rules that are based on age of use, parental approval and knowledge, and public laws.
- ___ I will never give out my passwords to anyone, except my parents.
- ___ I will never agree to get together with someone I “meet” online without first checking with my parents or guardian
- ___ I will practice “netiquette” (good manners) at all times when online.
- ___ I will not bully or tolerate bullying. I will tell a trusted adult if this is a problem.
- ___ I will remember what mode of communication works for me, may not work for someone else.
- ___ I will remember that everyone learns, signs/speaks and looks differently.
- ___ I won't use bad language.



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FOCUS

NEWSLETTER

Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS Newsletter

October 2020

7 Part In-Depth Educational Advocacy Training for Parents & Professionals

Over the course of 7 sessions MNH&V ASTra Guides, Shannon Hohrman and Robin Coninx, will walk participants through select chapters in the *Hands & Voices Educational Advocacy Guidebook*. These sessions are specifically designed in an order that will best illuminate the ins and outs of educational advocacy unique to students who are dhh.

Registration: www.eventbrite.com/o/minnesota-hands-amp-voices-atlifetrack-9882223703

January 28	7:30 - 9 pm	Chapters 1 & 4	Introduction to Special Education ABC's of FAPE and LRE
February 4	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 2	Special Considerations for Students who are dhh
February 11	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 3	Question of Eligibility
February 18	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 7	Procedural Safeguards
February 25	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 5	Assessments & Evaluations
March 4	7:30 - 9pm	Chapter 6	IEP's
March 11	7:30 - 9pm		Conclusion



All attendees should have the *Hands & Voices Educational Advocacy Guidebook*. If you are a parent of a child who is dhh and do not have the guidebook, email ShannonH@lifetrack-mn.org to receive one FREE. If you are a professional working students who are dhh and need to order a guidebook (\$40.00 includes shipping and handling) email RobinC@lifetrack-mn.org