



FOCUS

April 2023



**HANDS &
VOICES™
MINNESOTA**

Supporting families with children who
are deaf, deafblind & hard of hearing

Assess and Support Self-Determination in Deaf Youth

It's been a tumultuous time for young people over the past few years. Online learning, mask mandates, family health and financial instability, and other changes have impacted youth, who are already feeling uncertain or apprehensive about their transition into adulthood. This is compounded for deaf youth, who must face all these challenges plus barriers to accessibility that are still far too common throughout society. That's why nurturing the vital skill of self-determination is so important for deaf youth. Self-determination gives them tools to act or cause things to happen in their life so that they can reach their goals, even in the midst of challenges.

To help assess and strengthen self-determination development among deaf youth, the National Center on Postsecondary Outcomes (NDC) and their partners worked together to develop an ASL-accessible measure of self-determination, the SDI:SR ASL. As part of this work, they have published an article in the *Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education*, the top ranked journal in deaf studies and deaf education, that describes the reliability and validity of this measure. The article was a collaboration between NDC and scholars at the University of Kansas, including NDC team members Carrie Lou Garberoglio, Jeffrey Levi Palmer, Jennifer Higgins, and Stephanie W Cawthon, along with former NDC GRAs Claire Ryan and Paige Johnson, and Karrie A Shogren and her colleagues from University of Kansas. In it, they find this measure is a reliable way to assess and support the continued development of self-determination among deaf youth.

Why Assessments Matter

In the article, the team analyzes data about the measure, which is one of very few that is accessible via sign language, and validates it for use with deaf youth. They show that this assessment is accurate and reliable for use with deaf youth, making it an excellent tool to measure self-determination and develop goals accordingly as part of transition planning like individualized education plans (IEPs), vocational rehabilitation meetings, and pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS).

Their findings also show that deaf youth who took the SDI:SR ASL scored comparably to youth without disabilities, and higher than youth with disabilities. This points to the need

for continued research to better understand what factors contribute to stronger self-determination skills among deaf youth. The authors suggest that deaf youth may develop stronger self-determination skills because of the pervasive nature of inaccessible environments – deaf young people have to constantly practice advocating for themselves in many different settings.

Self-Determination Assessments in Transition Planning

The SDI:SR ASL measure is an excellent resource to track and measure self-determination in the deaf youth you work with.



After completing the SDI:SR ASL, students will receive a student report with their score, along with an ASL video that explains what the report means. Students can share this report with their families, teachers, and vocational rehabilitation counselors, to help develop plans for strengthening self-determination.

Families and professionals can use this report guide to work together on setting goals and developing plans. This is important because self-determination skills contribute to college and career readiness for deaf youth. Research shows deaf youth with higher levels of self-determination during high school are more likely to enroll in college, live independently, have positive self-beliefs, make more money at work, and have more opportunities for career advancement.

Assess & Support Self-Determination in Deaf Youth continued

People who are self-determined are good problem solvers because they figure out how to reach goals at school, work, and home, even when they run into problems.

Resources and Tools

In conjunction with the self-determination assessment, you can use NDC's Choose Your Future! Activity Kit to discuss deaf youth's strengths, interests, and needs. Then empower them to develop a detailed plan for reaching their goals.

You can also incorporate Deafverse, a free online game that gives deaf youth a safe space to practice applying self-determination skills at home, in school, and in the community. Read more about Deafverse below.

Additional expansion activities are also available in downloadable Strategy Guides.

For families:

- This resource shares tips for strengthening self-determination at home among deaf teens, while this resource has tips that are applicable to all teens.

For teachers:

- Use the self-determined learning model of instruction (SDLMI) to improve teaching practice and strengthen students' self-determined actions.

For vocational rehabilitation counselors;

- This Pre-ETS guide addresses instruction in self-advocacy and suggests additional resources about self-determination.

This information is from the original article "Assess and Support Self-Determination in Deaf Youth", published July, 26 2022 by the National Deaf Center. This work is licensed under a CC BY-NC-ND 4.0 International.

The game **Deafverse** and its curriculum are designed, written, and engineered by deaf creators, software engineers, artists, and researchers at the National Deaf Center on Postsecondary Outcomes. It is a series of choose-your-own-adventure online games with an opportunity for deaf teens to practice self-determination — the process by which people make their own choices and decisions — and build self-advocacy skills by allowing them to make mistakes in a safe environment. Research shows these skills and self-beliefs are essential for success during and after high school.

Deafverse's learning objectives align with transition milestones and can be used in transition planning, including IEP planning and pre-employment transition services.

World 1: Duel of the Bots focuses on strengthening self-determination skills and preparedness for life after high school. These learning objectives align with the self-advocacy category of pre-employment transition services.

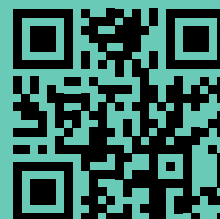
Players will be able to:

- Identify accommodation options for postsecondary environments
- Evaluate different communication strategies across a range of settings
- Align accommodations with personal communication preferences
- Understand options for accessibility of emergency alerts
- Identify assistive technology options for communication access
- Initiate choices based on personal preferences and interests
- Apply strategies for advocating for greater access across a range of settings
- Evaluate options for responding to social challenges
- Apply strategies for working with interpreters in the classroom
- Understand the responsibility shift in requesting accommodations from high school to college

World Two: Revenge of the Deep focuses on vital skills needed to navigate the workplace. These learning objectives align with the workplace readiness category of pre-employment transition services.

Players will be able to:

- Identify strategies for disclosing deafness in the workplace.
- Evaluate options for requesting accommodations in the workplace.
- Demonstrate understanding of marketable skills that improve success during the job search process.
- Understand the role of a resume and cover letter in the job search process.
- Evaluate job responsibilities to make informed decisions about desired positions.
- Explore potential accommodations that can be used on the job.
- Demonstrate effective communication skills and teamwork strategies on the job.
- Apply strategies for navigating communication barriers and resolving conflicts.
- Initiate choices that demonstrate good time management skills.
- Select successful strategies for participating in job interviews.
- Demonstrate techniques for maintaining positive behavior and professional attitude on the job.



Volunteers of America

Volunteers of America's mission and approach is to support people building hope, resilience, and well-being. Our deaf and hard of hearing program was established in 2006 at the Vona Center for Mental Health. The clinic is located in New Hope, Minnesota, but we provide services throughout the Twin Cities Metro Area, Central Minnesota and Southeastern Minnesota in schools, homes, community settings and via telehealth. We offer culturally and linguistically affirming counseling and therapy services for youth, ages birth to 22, who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families.

Our team is made up of dedicated, highly trained professionals who are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL), familiar with Deaf culture, and committed to helping families through challenging times. Our therapists have a deep understanding of the physical and mental health needs of deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing youth and how these needs influence school and family life. We offer intensive therapy, skills building and rehabilitative services to help improve school performance, increase school attendance and foster healthy relationships. We focus on building youth's strengths and gaining skills to be successful in school, at home and in the community.

Every child and family is unique, which is why we never use a one-size-fits-all-approach. A compassionate therapist works with each family to establish a care plan that is adapted to fit the needs of the child and family, teaming up with them to build an empowering path forward. Support may include: diagnostic assessment, individual therapy, family therapy, group therapy,

IN YOUR CORNER

with VONA

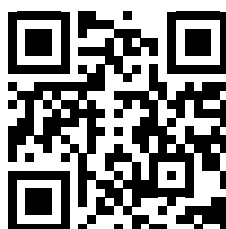
“Together, we can do more”

individual skill building, family skill building, group skill building, consultation to schools and teachers, psychiatric assessment and medication management, and psychological assessment.

A new service added to our team this year is Targeted Case Management. This service is for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing youth who experience severe emotional disturbance as determined by a mental health professional, and it includes four core components: assessment, planning, referral and linkage, and monitoring and coordination. Our case manager is currently Kelsey Dahl, and we are excited to report that we will add a second case manager and expand this service statewide beginning in July 2023.

Vona accepts and is in-network for most insurance companies, including Medical Assistance. This program is supported by a grant from the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division which allows consultation and coordination of care. Uninsured or underinsured clients might be eligible for resources available to support their access to treatment.


For more information, please contact Vona at 763.225.4052, or Lynn Bloom, MSW, LISCW, Deaf and Hard of Hearing program manager at 612.276.6111 or lynn.bloom@voamn.org.



Back row: Dr. Rebecca Goffman (clinical psychologist), Melinda Brown (therapist), Ingrid Benyaminowich (therapist), Lynn Bloom (supervisor/therapist), & Nicki Melby (therapist).

Front row: Jaime Monson (Associate Director), Kelsey Dahl (Targeted Case Manager), and Lauren Bain (therapist).

..... CONTACT

-  651.265.2435
-  mnhv@lssmn.org
-  mnhandandvoices.org
-  @MNHandsandVoic-
-  @mnhandsandvoices

DEAF EXPERIENCE

with Mujahid Zafar

Youth Leadership Award

On March 7, 2023 the Minnesota Commission of Deaf, Deaf-blind, and Hard of Hearing Lobby Day was held at the Minnesota State Capitol.

Lobby Day happens when members of the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities and supporters gather at the Minnesota State Capitol where they can sit down with legislators for a conversation to address pressing issues that impact their community.

Along with meeting the legislators, attendees were able to attend informative workshops on a variety of topics, explore booths for networking opportunities, discover the inner workings of the capitol with an accessible tour and attend a rally in the rotunda followed by community awards.

During the rally Governor Tim Walz, Lieutenant Governor Peggy Flanagan and Secretary of State Steve Simon all made an appearance.

Several individuals were recognized at the rally for their contributions to the deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing communities through advocacy, community engagement, education, improving accessibility, among other activities to improve the lives of our community members.

Among those recognized were Mujahid Zafar, the son of Sarah and Humayun Mohammad Zafar, for the Youth Leadership Award, which is given to youth who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing who have demonstrated strong leadership skills. Mujahid was in part awarded the Youth Leadership Award for his work and advocacy with Marcus Theaters to establish ongoing open captions at the movie theatre for the community.



Mujahid Zafar pictured with the Youth Leadership Award.

Celebrating Deaf History Month from March 13 - April 15

Deaf History Month takes place each year to honor three historic events in Deaf education and culture:

- America's first school for the Deaf was opened in April 1817.
- The first institute of higher learning for the Deaf, Gallaudet University, was opened in April 1864.
- The first deaf president of Gallaudet University was hired in March 1988

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota (LSS) celebrates National Deaf History Month! LSS is proud to serve Deaf and hard of hearing Minnesotans through Deaf & Hard of Hearing – Family Services. Our services offer unbiased, parent-to-parent support; instruction in American Sign Language (ASL); opportunities to develop relationships with successful Deaf and hard of hearing adults; and training in educational advocacy.

LSS Statewide Resources

MN Hands & Voices provides support to families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing through a statewide community. They offer support, information and connections to help families make informed decisions regarding communication and educational outcomes.

Deaf Mentor Family Services connects children who are deaf or hard of hearing with Deaf Mentors who are fluent in ASL to promote communication and early language skills.

Follow LSS' Deaf Mentor Family Services and MN Hands & Voices on Facebook and share their posts. This elevates awareness of these important services.

¿Involucrando a los Papás?

El pasado Septiembre del 2022 participe en una conferencia de Liderazgo a nivel nacional de Manos y Voces en Rochester, NY. Hubo muchos temas interesantes y mucho que aprender, pero he de confesar que uno de los temas que más llamaron mi atención fue "Papás Desconectados: Cómo involucrar a los papás".

Como Padre Guía Cultural para Manos y Voces de MN soy responsable de llamar y visitar a las familias que son referidas a nuestro programa, así que la gran mayoría de las referencias que recibimos es a nombre de la mamá y en muy pocos casos a nombre del papá. Dicho esto, mi interés por esta sesión era obvia.

Esta sesión fue llevada a cabo en una mesa redonda conformada solo por papás. La principal pregunta fue, ¿Cómo hacer que ellos tuvieran un rol más activo en la vida y toma de decisiones de sus niños con diferencias auditivas? Y entre las respuestas estuvieron; que las mamás estuviéramos abiertas a trabajar en equipo con ellos. Algunos padres dijeron que a ellos les funcionaba muy bien hacerse cargo de todo lo relacionado con la tecnología para sus niños, por ejemplo, los audífonos, los implantes cocleares, etc. Y para las mamás los aspectos educativos, como prepararse para el IEP, atender a las conferencias de padres, registrarse para eventos familiares, etc.

Los papás compartieron que para ellos ha sido especialmente retador combinar el trabajo con las citas médicas, las responsabilidades compartidas y tener la intención de verdaderamente involucrarse. Ellos concluyeron que la comunicación efectiva es pieza clave en este proceso. Aunque cada familia, cada experiencia y cada niño es único, encontré muy valioso escuchar lo que para otros papás ha funcionado.

Usted papá y/o mamá que nos está leyendo cuan involucrado se encuentra en la toma de decisiones de su hijo con diferencias de audición? ¿Hay algo que pueda cambiar para trabajar mejor en equipo?

“Las Manos de Apá.”

Engaging Fathers

Last September, I participated in the National Hands and Voices Leadership Conference in Rochester, New York. There were many interesting topics and a lot to learn, but I need to confess that one of the topics that caught my attention was "Dad's Unplug: How to Engage Fathers."

As a Cultural Parent Guide for Minnesota Hands and Voices, I am responsible for calling and visiting the families who are referred to our program. Most of the referrals we receive name the mother as the primary contact, and in very few cases the name of the father is mentioned. That being said, my interest in this session was obvious.

This session was carried out at a roundtable made up only of parents. The main question was, how to make fathers take a more active role in the life and decision-making of their children with hearing differences? Among the answers were that moms need to be more open to sharing duties and rely on teamwork. Some parents said that it worked very well for one parent to



take care of everything related to technology for their children; for example, hearing aids and cochlear implants, while the other parent takes care of the educational aspects, like being ready for the IEP, attending parent conferences and registering for family events.

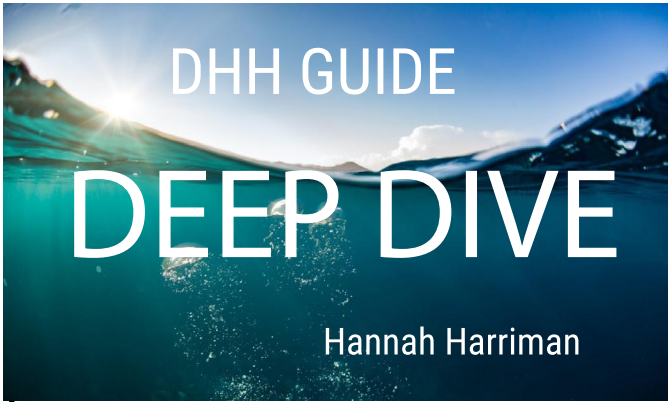
Dads shared that it has been especially challenging for them to combine work with doctor's appointments, shared responsibilities and the intentionality to truly get involved. They concluded that effective communication is a key element in this process.

Although each family, each experience and each child is unique, I found it very valuable to hear what has worked for other parents.

How involved are you in the decision-making of your child with hearing differences? Is there something you can change to work better as a team?

LATINO
CULTURES

with Elena Miranda



Individualized Education Programs (IEP), Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP), and Section 504 are critical to a child's long-term academic and personal success. IEPs focus on a child's academic needs from kindergarten through transitioning out of school. IFSPs focus on a child's needs from birth to three years of age. Not only are these plans foundational to a child's success in school, but their value extends far beyond the classroom. They lay the basis for collaboration, self-advocacy and personal reflection.

I started attending my own IEPs in fourth grade. In the beginning, I observed and learned the basics of how an IEP meeting works and learned the function of each team member. My parents and teachers taught me that although this meeting was about me, my objective was not to monopolize the meeting. Instead, my purpose was to advocate for my needs and come to a reasonable consensus pertaining to my goals. I learned that each individual offers a unique and valuable perspective and IEPs are safe places to advocate for oneself. When a certain accommodation or strategy didn't work, I felt comfortable presenting the issue with the knowledge that we would work together to find a solution. Self-advocacy is critical, as a problem can't be resolved if the student doesn't first let their team know that they are struggling.

There is also wisdom in the IEP team. For example, at the end of my junior year of high school, my IEP team and I discussed a transition program following high school. I was skeptical, as I thought a transition program would somehow minimize my academic achievements. That summer, I attended a transition program where I learned that there were some independent-living skills I had yet to develop. Not only did I lead my IEP meeting my senior year of high school, but I ended the meeting by thanking my team for sharing their wisdom with me, despite my initial skepticism regarding a transition program. IEPs lay the groundwork for important advocacy skills that build and grow as we move forward in college, the workforce, in our personal lives, and beyond.



Hannah is blind with unilateral hearing loss and wears one hearing aid. She uses spoken English and identifies as blind and hard-of-hearing particularly in social situations. Hannah is open to questions about deafblindness. It is important to note that deafblindness encompasses any combination of vision and hearing loss.

The popular Fostering Joy Journal for Kids is now available in Spanish!

This journal was designed for kids who are DHH to journal about their joys and accomplishments with a grown-up, ideally an adult who is D/HH themselves. Created by trained Hands & Voices DHH Adult Guides, the journal is a place where kids can capture all the great things they have done, to celebrate how special they are, and to share with their families that their story is so much more than their hearing difference.

The journal and its Spanish translation were created/funded by the MN Hands & Voices Deaf and Hard of Hearing Guide team. Learn more about the DHH Guide Program by using this QR Code, or contact:

Heidy Nazario
DHH Guide Supervisor
Phone: (612) 297-6603 (TEXT ONLY)
Email: heidy.nazario@lssmn.org



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• Sister's Perspective •



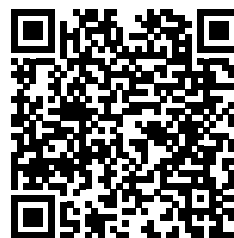
•• Book Club ••



•• Superpower's ••



Find a current list of MNH&V Family Events online, for more information and to registration scan QR Code below



MNH&V EVENTS

STATEWIDE

•• Roller Skating ••



••• EVENTS •••

IN-PERSON

- Roller Skating Coon Rapids
- Social Media & Mental Health Fergus Falls

ONLINE

- Book Club - The Silence Between Us
- What's Your Superpower?

THANK YOU for helping make these events possible! Fergus Falls Sertoma Club and Service Foods.



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FOCUS

NEWSLETTER



Hands and Voices Minnesota is a
program of Lutheran Social Service
of Minnesota

FOCUS | Supporting families with children who are deaf, deafblind & hard of hearing

April 2023

High Five Award



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The High Five Award is an opportunity for parents to publicly thank those who do more than expected on behalf of children who are DHH.

Parents are invited to nominate another parent, teacher, interpreter, medical provider, community advocate, role model, or anyone who inspires your family!

Email your nomination subject line "High Five Award", to
MNHV@lssmn.org

Winners will be announced at the MNH&V metro family picnic on Thursday, August 3rd. Recognition for winners will also take place at the picnic or, for Greater Minnesota recipients, in a community convenient for them and the nominating family.

MNH&V is accepting one nomination per family from parents now through July 1st 2023