



MINNESOTA
HANDS &
VOICES™

FOCUS

Supporting families with children who are deaf & hard of hearing

TEAMWORK, Parents are Essential Members on their Child's IEP Team

As a parent, what do I know about developing an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for my child who is deaf or hard of hearing (DHH)? I don't have a degree in special education or in law or experience in the field of DHH education. Besides I don't know what the acronyms mean and the wording can be confusing? However, as a parent, what I do know is the "Individual". I am an essential member of the IEP team because I represent my child in a way no one else can, for which the IEP is being developed. I am grateful to have a team of experts who support my child and encourage my parenting while I learn all I can to be my child's number one advocate.

In Hands & Voices (H&V), Communication and Language Instruction for students who are deaf/hard of hearing they suggest parents should, "ASK, Participate, Advocate". They offer three main points:

- Participate in the IEP process.
- ASK questions about the *Language and Communication Plan* and program.
- Review the *Discussion Guide* and talk it through with the IEP Case Manager BEFORE the meeting.

The *Language and Communication Plan* is a two-page worksheet designed to give a general picture of the language and communication considerations for students who are DHH. The tool asks questions about their primary language mode, access to role models and peer groups, educational options, and delivery of language and communication,

as well as, checklists for necessary communication, assistive technologies, or physical accommodations.

<http://www.sde.ct.gov/sde/lib/sde/PDF/DEPS/Special/ED638.pdf>

The Language and Communication Focused IEPs for Learners Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: A Discussion Guide

is a 52-page comprehensive gold mine of information. Developed in Minnesota by a local team of professionals in DHH education and financial supported by the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans. Includes considerations for the diverse population of learners. Check lists and discussion prompts create a clear picture of the student. Pseudo student scenarios illustrate how to use the Student Based Needs, Measurable Annual Goals, and Short Term Objectives sections. A wealth of resource links is at the end of every section and concludes with a helpful glossary of terms.

<http://region10projects.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/07/FINALLanguage-and-Communication-Focused-IEPs-for-Learners-Who-Are-Deaf-or-Hard-of-Hearing-Discussion-Guide-Copyright-added-2-2-16.pdf>

For even more in depth understanding of the IEP process Hands & Voices has what you need. Their website offers many free downloads on the topic, ASTra webinars, a complete guidebook on Educational Advocacy, and much more. <http://handsandvoices.org/astra/index.html>

"Enabling parents to connect with each other can revolutionize the dynamics in a classroom or in a district. Connecting parents enables modeling and mentoring," article in 2016 Odyssey, vol. 17, by Patrick Graham, Sara Kennedy, and Johanna Lynch, "Advocacy skills are nurtured and not something you're born with."

Don't forget to check PACER Center for workshops, webinars, and events. PACER Center programs may not be specific to families with a child who is DHH, but many of the topics are relatable and relevant. Remember PACER Centers as another valuable resource of information and a way to broaden your knowledge. <http://www.pacer.org>

Network with other parents further down the road. Contact your local Minnesota Hands & Voices Parent Guide, meet with role models who are DHH, go to family events, camps, and talk to people about your child's specific needs to get ideas from many perspectives. <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org>

It is a steep learning curve for parents to know all about developing an IEP for their child who is DHH. The team approach helps bridge your learning gaps in the beginning and flexibility is key throughout your child's education. Your job is to read your child's IEP, ask questions, learn as much as possible, be an active IEP team member, and always keep the "Individual" at the forefront as their IEP is developed.

Parent Survey!

National Early Childhood Assessment Project

Hands & Voices in partnership with the University of Colorado-Boulder are currently seeking parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) to participate in a survey that will help them understand your experiences with early intervention services.

National Early Childhood Assessment Project (NECAP “kneecap”) principal investigator is Christine Yoshinaga-Itano, Ph.D and the project coordinator is Allison Sedey, Ph.D. Their hope is in sharing your experiences the information will bring guidance to those developing systems of care for all children who are DHH.

Please take part in this survey

- If you are a primary caregiver of a child who is DHH
- ages 0-36 months old.
- The survey takes only 10-15 minutes
- The survey is completely confidential and no identifying information will be shared with any Early Intervention programs.
- At the end of the survey, you may choose to enter a drawing for a \$100 Target gift card

Thank you in advanced for your time. As a parent-driven organization, Hands & Voices knows how busy your lives are and even ten minutes of your time is precious!

Click here to take the survey: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/necapfinal>

Questions about this survey, contact Janet DesGeorges, 303-492-6283 email janet@handsandvoices.org

MNH&V EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

Parent Guide for the Cultural Spanish-Speaking Community

MNH&V is looking for a Parent Guide to continue to serve families in our Spanish-Speaking Community. Candidates should be fluent in Spanish, from the community Latino themselves, and eager to support other parents with a child who is deaf, deafblind or hard of hearing. The program for the Spanish-Speaking Community is established, but in need of an individual to continue to provide emotional support, unbiased information, referral resources, and connect parents to other parents.

The Parent Guide for the MNH&V Spanish-speaking Community is responsible for organizing events, sustaining, and reporting activities related to these events. This person represents MNH&V in the community and participates in family support activities. The work schedule is flexible and 10 hours a week.

For a full outline of duties and application go to: www.lifetrack-mn.org/about/careers/parent-guide-10-hours-week

MNH&V Sponsors Two Resiliency Workshops

Please RSVP by July 16, 2016. Workshops are FREE events for families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Thursday, July 21, from 5:00 to 7:00 pm
Cambridge City Park, 701-743 3rd Ave SW, Cambridge, MN

Guest presenter: Jaime L. Monson, MSW, LICSW, Senior Manager of Clinical Mental Health Services, Volunteers of America, MN

Saturday, July 23, from 9:00 to 11:00 am
Memorial Park, Shelter 1, 1801 Co. Rd. 101, Shakopee, MN

Mental health practitioners, Lisa Harper and Nicki Melby, will share strategies your children can use to overcome obstacles and to strengthen their self-esteem.

For more Information and to RSVP go to <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/current-news-events.aspx>

26th ADA Celebration

The Disability Community presents the 26th Anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act on Tuesday, July 26, 3:00 to 8:30 pm at the Minnesota History Center, 345 W. Kellogg Blvd., St. Paul, MN. This event is free and open to the public.

Keynote address, from 3 to 5:00 pm, by Ken Rodgers, Minneapolis Advisory Committee on Disabilities Chair & Lively Panel Discussion. Entertainment, from 6:30 to 8:30 pm, will be Angelique Lele, 2015 Miss Wheelchair Minnesota, along with the Young Dance Company, and Tamarak Classic Rock-n-Roll.

For more information go to <http://www.disability.state.mn.us/ada/26th-ada-celebration/>

The View from Greater Minnesota



Welcome blanket recipients from Central Minnesota.

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.

[DONATE](#)

I am MNH&V

Mike Gill, at age three, was identified with a bilateral mild to moderate sensorineural hearing loss and was fitted with hearing aids. In preschool a specialist who works with children who are DHH taught him various skills to use in school, as well as, in life. They worked on lip reading and vocabulary, also, he was introduced to various assistive technology options.

At school Mike used an FM system and a Clarity phone, and in college a Sonic Alert Travel clock. Currently, he uses a Wake Assure alarm clock that vibrates and beeps, as well as, connects to his lamp to start flashing. He recently added a CapTel 2400i telephone with a display screen to read what a caller is saying.

Mike is currently a freelance musician. He has been playing the saxophone since the 6th grade. Mike began to take music seriously at the age of 13 teaching himself how to play acoustic guitar. After high school he studied classical saxophone at Southwest State University in Marshall, MN, then continued on to U of M-Morris.

When asked to share what he has learned with students who are DHH Mike said, "I



Mike Gill, photo used with permission by Daniel Brakke

Musician, Mike Gill

feel that with the FM system I was able to hear teachers well and I could comprehend their lessons efficiently. I did not use an FM in college and I regret it because, I feel I missed out on a lot of important information from the professors and it was reflected on my grades."

Regarding post secondary education Mike added, "When you are looking at different possible colleges, be sure to find out what the school provides for assistive listening devices and any other help for students who are DHH. Most colleges also provide a note taker for those who qualify."

Mike experienced challenges being a musician who is hard-of-hearing. Some digital hearing aids have a hard time processing brass instruments or cause feedback. Also, it was hard to hear his playing with so many other musicians playing. Mike finally found an audiologist who works with musicians, and after many appointments and testing back and forth, his hearing aids have a program specifically for playing music and a separate setting for the sounds of speech.

While attending UMM, Mike joined the group, Funky Gumbo, in which he sang and played saxophone. Ultimately his musical pursuits led him to the Twin Cities group, PHO. For three years with PHO they played at a variety of popular Twin Cities venues and toured outside the Twin Cities area. Mike also performed with The Walking Phoenixes, a Johnny Cash tribute band performing in Los Angeles, San Diego, and Folsom, California.

Mike offers another tip for people who are DHH, to learn as much as you can about your hearing, "People may come up to you and ask, 'What's that in your ear?' They are just curious and are not trying to be mean. Having a quick explanation of what the hearing aids are and why you wear them usually is enough information for the average inquiry."



911, What's Your Story?

The projected date to rollout Text to 911 in Minnesota will be the end of 2016. The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division and the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans are partnering with the Minnesota Department of Public Safety (DPS) on a promotion campaign related to the rollout of Text to 911. Also, the DPS wants to begin promoting Text to 911 to individuals who are DHH or DeafBlind.

DPS is looking for deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing individuals who have personally experienced challenges calling 911 in the past, and are willing to be interviewed, and possibly filmed, about their experiences. Anyone interested in sharing his or her story can email either Marie Koehler, marie.koehler@state.mn.us or Anne Sittner Anderson at anne.sittner-anderson@state.mn.us.

Veditz New Access Service for ASL Users

Exemplars, Inc. brand Veditz is focused on improving education for the global Deaf Community. In the USA alone, the drop out rate of high school students who are DHH is 314% higher, college is 71% higher, and unemployment is 265% higher, than peers that can hear. Veditz hopes to change that by providing access to ASL.

Veditz offers three different services.

- Free online practice site that matches people at the same skill level to practice sign language together.
- Online paid tutoring marketplace for people looking for skilled tutoring on K-12 through colleges level courses and other topics. Tutoring is in sign language, or a combination of sign language, spoken or written language.
- Online paid video remote interpreter marketplace to match up people and schools looking for skilled sign language interpreters for Education settings.

Veditz is currently focused on American Sign Language, but hopes to add other sign languages in the future. For more information go to <https://veditz.org>.

Haben Girma, Keynote Speaker at St. Catherine University, DeafBlind

St. Catherine University 2016 Spring Commencement keynote speaker was Haben Girma. Girma is the first person who is deafblind to graduate from Harvard Law School, also, a black women and daughter of refugees. In addition to many distinctions to her credit, Girma is a former staff attorney at Disability Rights Advocates at Berkeley and now is a national educator and advocate. She is an outspoken advocate for disability rights, more inclusive communities and better education for people who are deafblind.

A luncheon hosted by St. Kate's ASL and Interpreting program brought together students, parents, advocates and leaders from the DeafBlind community for a conversation about advocacy, access and inclusion. Haben Girma's challenged state leaders from the DeafBlind community to share their expertise.

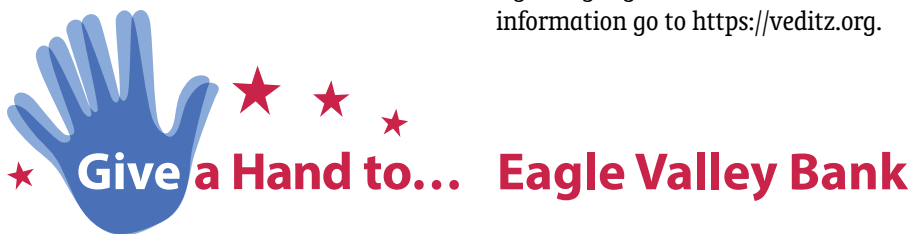
"We're all interdependent, so sharing information from Minnesota to the rest of the world benefits everyone," says Girma.

Girma's overall message was that every individual has the power to create change, "The Americans with Disabilities Act requires — its promise of access depends on — people advocating for change."

Girma has left litigation, but encourages people to step forward and take legal action if necessary to enforce policy, "Lawyers can't make change without plaintiffs. Change can't occur unless people with disabilities ask for the change and are willing to advocate."

Full story found online at <https://www.stkate.edu/news-and-events/news/girma-state-deafblind-leaders>

St. Catherine University commencement address by Haben Girma, <https://www.stkate.edu/news-and-events/news/haben-girma-commencement-address>



Welcome blankets in cute little mesh bags were donated to MNH&V made by the staff at Eagle Valley Bank.

Emory David Dively

Appointed First Assistant Director of the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing Minnesotans

Emory David Dively, as Assistant Director of the Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans, will work with the Commission's operations director and represent the Commission when the Executive Director is not available. His focus will be on organization, supporting staff, reporting outcomes, and helping to comply with state policies and procedures. In this position Emory Dively will assist the commission to advance their mission — to advocate for equal opportunity for the 20% of Minnesotans who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing.

Emory Dively has an M.A. in Communication and Leadership and a B.A. in Deaf Culture Ministries. He is a CODA (Child of Deaf Adults) and he is hard of hearing himself. He has six years of supervisory experience and has skills in developing office policies and procedures and performance measurement systems.

Officially Emory Dively starts his new position on July 5th, 2016 and he plans to attend the national Hearing Loss Association of America Conference in July.



Emory David Dively

2016 Metro Raising Readers Family Event Photos



Take Away from the Transition Program Graduation

Transition. Parenting a child is a long series of transitions from one phase to the next. And as much as change can be stressful, many transitions are welcomed too. Parenting a child who is deaf and hard of hearing involves lots of transitions and often, those transitions are more intense because many of our children have a team of professionals that may not continue on with our child to the next phase. Once again, we may find ourselves explaining our child and her needs to yet another group.

So, our family went through another transition in June. Our son who is deaf and 21 finished a transition program, affording him some extra time to work on employment, college and life skills. We're grateful for that option as even many typically hearing and typically developing young people aren't 100% ready for their next phase of life promptly upon high school graduation. The program invited us to a graduation ceremony for the 40 students who would also be officially moving on to their adult life, and having shed a few tears at my son's "other" graduation with his class, I expected to feel less emotion. I was wrong.

The graduation ceremony was one of the most moving and inspiring events I've ever attended. Admittedly, it wasn't my son standing at the podium sharing a few words of insight that got me. (I was extremely proud of him, don't get me wrong!) It was the 39 other student's sharings that made the tears flow. Starting from the first young man who motored up by electric wheelchair. He said his speech, dropped the mic, and motored away while the students still in the program literally roared their delight at his bold and slightly defiant move! The other students proceeded to sign, speak, respond to prompting questions from a teacher, play a prerecorded message or stand while their thoughts were read for them. But each shared what they liked

In Your Corner

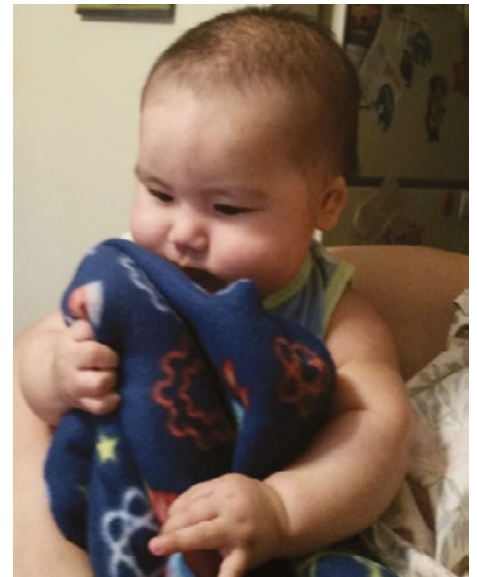


about the program, their plans for the future, and thanked teachers and parents for all their support.

What I will always remember is that more than a few students thanked their parents for "putting up with them" and all the challenges it took to get them to that day. My heart sunk a bit, thinking these kids internalized that they were somehow difficult and a burden to their families. The reality is, there probably were difficult times. Our world is becoming more sensitive to the needs of individuals with differences in learning, communicating, physical abilities, and hearing levels. But there is a long way to go. And I'm well aware that as my son officially enters adulthood and adult services, there will be plenty of barriers and hurdles to overcome. And I'm sure I'll look back at his educational experience and be so grateful for all the staff and programming that he took full advantage of.

My favorite moment of that graduation will be one lovely young lady who was assisted through her speech by a teacher who asked, "What do you want to say to your parents?" She responded in completely enthusiastic and genuinely excited voice, "I want to thank them for a REALLY GOOD TIME!" And the audience went wild and more tears streamed down my face. Yes, that was it. I want my son to look back at his childhood and think, "That was a really good time!" What a great reminder when the stress of negotiating services, or the less than sensitive comments from a stranger or the fighting for equal rights in the community come ... and they will. Let's focus on the joy, the common ground and the opportunities to make this world a little better than when we started.

Metro Welcome Blanket Recipients



Back-to-School Checklist Starter for Parents with Children who are DHH

Parents with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) have additional considerations before their child heads back to school in the fall. The more parents can get done this summer to prepare their child for the school year the better they can focus on learning.

Health and Wellness

Schedule annual appointments far in advanced during summer break or for after-school to minimize disruptions in your child's learning.

Well-care Visit

A well-care visit establishes a baseline of your child's general health with a doctor you can trust. Many children who are DHH have ongoing health issues that can be noted as part of the child's baseline health. Should your child become ill, the well-care notes along with a doctor who is familiar with your child can streamline a diagnosis for any new concerns.

Update Immunizations

Remember to ask for a copy of your child's immunization records. This saves time filling out health forms for fieldtrips, activities, emergency health cards, etc.

Medication Check

If your child is on medications have a doctor double-check the dose for their age, weight, effectiveness, etc. Extra time for your child to adjust to changes in medications would be helpful before school starts. Make sure your child's current prescription is filled and ready before school starts.

Physical Paperwork

Sports, camps, summer school, etc. often require health forms signed by a doctor. Bringing the forms to their appointment will save time. Doctors can sign forms any time, but it can take extra time to process.

Visit the Dentist and/or Orthodontist

Schedule appointments sooner than later, because the best times fill up fast.

Vision Check

Children who are DHH need to have optimal vision. An annual eye exam is recommended whether your child wears corrective eyewear or not. If your child has glasses, in addition to checking the lens prescription, check for stretches that can obscure their vision. Make sure their frames are the right size with no pressure points and adjusted to fit properly.

Audiologist Visit

Before school starts have your audiologist check the working order your child's equipment, make sure the program is set for optimal sound and amplification. If possible create a separate program for any auxiliary equipment used at school. Your audiologist can answer any questions and make sure you and your child understand how to change programs, batteries and general care of the equipment. Remember to have for your child's old CI processors and hearing aids programmed as up-to-date as possible. Old equipment is a viable back-up plan should something happen to their newer equipment.

TIP: Take notes for your school audiologist or bring their contact information to give to your general audiologist. You'll need to sign a HIPAA form, but then the two can work together on optimizing sound in different learning environments.

Review Insurance and Warranties

Depending on your child's age, maturity, and many other variables it can be unsettling to send them to school with expensive equipment. Reduce anxiety by having a plan should something happen to their equipment. Most homeowner insurance does not cover this equipment. Talk to your audiologist, check product warranties and contact your healthcare customer service to figure out the most economical insurance coverage available.

At Home

Find a safe and accessible place to charge batteries and keep equipment.

Label everything going to school.

Set up a distraction-free place to study and keep extra school supplies.

Have your child memorize their home address and important phone numbers to reach their parents if need be.

Update your contact list to include the bus service, IEP manager, DHH and general ed teacher/s, school nurse, attendance line, food service, etc.

Check the school website for important dates: parent/teacher conferences, school events, and a list of days school is not in session.

At School

Check for a VISUAL alert system and review safety plans with your child.

Check tech devices for captioning capabilities; computers, televisions, etc.

See the school nurse if your child has severe allergies or takes medications during the school day.

Visit the school audiologist to touch base about your child's equipment and the auxiliary equipment used at school.

Send extra CI or hearing aid batteries to use for back-up if needed.

Check your child's classroom for ways to best accommodate their access to language in each environment.

Together with your IEP team review your child's accommodation needs with school administrators and, if appropriate, with fellow students.

If your child's accommodations includes interpreters, transliterators or a captionists make sure there is a back-up plan for unexpected absences.

For parents of a child who is DHH there is no one back-to-school checklist that covers personal choices and their child's unique situation. Develop your own checklist you can add to over time. You'll have peace of mind and more time for summer fun!

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St. Paul, MN 55104-4804



MINNESOTA
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Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS Newsletter

July-August 2016

FAMILY PICNIC

2016 Annual ★ Minnesota Hands & Voices ★ Metro

Free for Families:

- ★ Dinner
- ★ Fun Games
- ★ Entertainment
- ★ Face Painting
- ★ Door Prizes!

Date: Thursday, August 4th

Time: 5:00-8:30 pm (rain or shine)

Where: Como Park Midway Pavilion
1360 N Lexington Parkway, St. Paul, MN



HANDS & VOICES
LEAGUE OF HEROES
SUPERPOWERS WITHIN™

*Calling all the Superheroes in the MNH&V Community!
Dust off your superhero costume or come as you are to join our Hands & Voices' League of Heroes!*

Find more details online at www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/current-news-events.aspx