



MINNESOTA  
HANDS &  
VOICES™

Supporting families  
with children who are  
deaf & hard of hearing

# FOCUS

## Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Who, What, When, Why, and Where

### Who uses Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS)?

VRS are for high school students and young adults who have a disability, but are otherwise willing to work. Individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing (dhh) often qualify for VRS due to the barrier created by accessible communication. In general the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), regulation 34 CFR, Section 300.7, defines deafness as when a child whose hearing difference affects processing linguistic formation, with or without amplification, and that adversely affects his or her educational performance. The VRS program is not an entitlement for individuals with disabilities, and not all applicants are eligible for services. Eligibility for VRS is based on three main factors: 1. A qualifying disability, 2. The disability creates difficulties obtaining or being successful at work, 3. A willingness to work

### What are VRS?

#### Job Exploration Counseling:

Students can learn about their vocational interests, the labor market, in-demand industries and occupations, and non-traditional employment options. They can help to identify career pathways and information on work-related experiences.

#### Work-Based Learning Experience:

Students can gain first-hand work experiences including job shadowing, career mentorship, informational

## Transition

interviews, paid and non-paid internships. They can also assist with courses, student-led projects, community service, volunteering, and workplace field trips.

#### Postsecondary Education Counseling:

Students can receive advice on academic courses, information about the college application and admissions processes, assistance completing the application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and resources that may be used to support student success in education and training (i.e., disability support services).

#### Workplace Readiness Training:

Students can learn financial literacy, benefits planning, job-seeking skills, how to navigate transportation options, and the benefits of rehabilitation technology. Additionally, they can learn “soft” skills of interpersonal communication and employer expectations for punctuality and performance.

#### Instruction in Self-Advocacy:

Students can learn about personal rights/responsibilities and how and when to request accommodations. They can also learn about various mentoring opportunities as well as youth leadership in educational or community settings.

#### Pre-Employment Transition Coordination Services:

VRS counselor can attend Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings and provide transitional information and support services. They can work with local employers to develop work opportunities for students such as internships, summer employment, and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year.

### When should VRS start?

In the state of Minnesota a VRS counselor is assigned to every high school. A VRS counselor can be invited to your child’s IEP meetings as early as freshman year of high school, although most VRS referrals begin junior year. Making an introduction between your child and their VRS counselor early in their transitional years will provide you and your child with more detailed information about VRS and how they can specifically help your child reach their full potential. Once a student has graduated from high school or a school transition program, the young adult may continue working with a VRS counselor in order to move forward with their employment plan.

### Why do individuals with disabilities benefit from VRS?

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, the unemployment rate

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*Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Who, What, When, Why, and Where, continued from page 1*

among individuals with disabilities is double that of those without disabilities. In Minnesota, a study published last summer from the University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business and MDI, a nonprofit manufacturing company, looks at employers' implicit bias when it comes to hiring Minnesotans with disabilities.

### Summary of the study findings:

- The study found that not only is the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities double that of those with no disability, it adds individuals with disabilities were more likely to work part time, work in service industries, and were less likely to have a management role.
- The study found no evidence that regulations such as Americans with Disabilities Act have helped to reduce unemployment rates among individuals with disabilities. However, regulations are effective at making sure employed individuals with disabilities receive appropriate accommodations and face no discriminations.

### Barriers to hiring individuals with disabilities

- Employers' lack of awareness about the capabilities of individuals with disabilities. Employers tended to group individuals with disabilities into a broad category of people who are not capable of performing basic or higher-level jobs. Employers write off individuals with disabilities before they can prove themselves.
- Employers' lack of open communication about disability issues. Many HR professionals are self-censoring in an effort to be mindful of the sensitive nature of disability. This can impede

the open dialog necessary to address some of the barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.

- The study revealed that employers' implicit biases towards individuals with disabilities exist. Employers' attitudes and stereotypes, without conscious knowledge, make them less willing to hire individuals with disabilities.

Additionally, the study points to barriers experienced by individuals with disabilities who are employed, such as discomfort with ambiguity in their tasks, working in new environments, and the logistics of transportation. Problems communicating or poor "soft" skills can make keeping a job difficult as well. In such cases, VRS can play a crucial role in helping individuals with disabilities. However for individuals with disabilities there is a lack of awareness of available employment resources: only 39 percent were aware of job placement agencies, 33 percent were aware of job coaches and state agencies, and 22 percent were aware of transition services.

Find the MDI and University of St. Thomas Opus College of Business study, *Promoting Gainful Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities*, at [https://www.mdi.org/sites/default/files/st.\\_thomas\\_study\\_on\\_mdi\\_firstpart.pdf](https://www.mdi.org/sites/default/files/st._thomas_study_on_mdi_firstpart.pdf).

### Where to find VRS?

Find your area VSR counselor listed at [https://mn.gov/deed/assets/transition-school-directory\\_tcm1045-131183.pdf](https://mn.gov/deed/assets/transition-school-directory_tcm1045-131183.pdf). Find a VRS office near you at <https://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/find-vrs/>.

★ **MNH&V Family Event** on February 16, *Empowering Teen Writers*, a VRS Counselor will be on hand to visit and answer questions. <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events> ★

## MNH&V EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

### MNH&V Parent Guide for Southeast Asian Communities

The MNH&V Southeast Asian Communities Parent Guide position offers 10 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 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 deaf or hard of hearing (dhh) helps support other parents who are just starting their journey.

To find out more or to apply and send a resume, please visit Lifetrack at <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/List/1442>



MNH&V newest welcome blanket recipient and her parents from the Metro area.

## Parent to Parent POINTERS

### ALL MNH&V Family Events, Near and Far, are for ALL MNH&V Families

For the record, ALL MNH&V Family Events are for ALL Minnesota families who have a child who is dhh. Whether you live in the metro area or in greater Minnesota, ALL MNH&V Family Events are open to you. Plan a road trip or plan a vacation and take in a MNH&V family event along the way.

MNH&V family events are not only fun, they are a rare chance for your child who is dhh to forge new friendships with other children who are dhh. Siblings can also find a fraternity of friends and support. For parents there is always a bonus educational take-away, plus an opportunity to meet other parents whose parenting journey is remarkably similar to your own.

For every 1,000 children only 2 to 3 are born with a detectable level of hearing difference in one or both ears. Statistically it is a challenge to find other families with children who is dhh. MNH&V Family Events are worth the drive.



2018 MNH&V Metro Family Picnic at Como Park.

### New ADA Website Technical Assistance Materials

U.S. Department of Justice has updated their Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) website. The ADA requires the Department of Justice to provide technical assistance to businesses, state and local governments, and individuals regarding the law. The new website has revamped the technical assistance materials page to be more organized and user friendly.

The new ADA Technical Assistance page offers a brief ADA overview and a short description for Title II and Title III. Click one of the Titles and find a complete listing of technical assistance for the Title. Materials are also arranged by the subject matter covered in each Title.

<https://www.ada.gov/ta-pubs-pg2.htm>

## MNH&V Events

### Saturday, January 26

We've Got the Beat—  
Using Rhythm to Regulate  
the Family System

**10:00 am to Noon**

709 University Avenue West,  
Saint Paul, MN

### Saturday, February 16

**For TEENS:**

Empowering Teen Writers  
to Become Published Authors

★ **For PARENTS:** ★

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor  
will be available to visit or answer  
any questions you have.

**10:00 am to 1:00 pm**

709 University Avenue West,  
Saint Paul, MN

### Thursday, February 21

Developing Spoken Language  
in Early Childhood (Part 1)

**5:30 to 7:30 pm**

1660 County B Road West,  
Roseville, MN

### ★★ Saturday, March 9 ★★

Family Tree Clinic Presents:  
Parents Are Sexuality Educators

**10:00 am to Noon**

709 University Avenue West,  
Saint Paul, MN

Please visit our website for event updates at <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events> or sign up to receive the MNH&V Weekly **SOURCE** email, offering the latest news and events in the MNH&V community and other community organizations of importance to families who have a child who is dhh, by sending your email address to us at [www.mnhandsandvoices.org](http://www.mnhandsandvoices.org).

★ Look for these stars throughout this newsletter to find article topics relating to specific MNH&V Family Events.

## 2019 New Year Brings Plans for an Exciting New Expansion for the MNH&V Team: DHH Guides

Plans are under way to expand the Minnesota Hands & Voices (MNH&V) program and provide additional services for families with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing (dhh). The MNH&V Parent Guides and the families they serve share the unique experience of raising a child who is dhh. This year MNH&V will be adding Guides with the unique experience of growing up dhh. DHH Guides, along with a wealth of knowledge and wisdom, will be joining the MNH&V team.

“We’re really excited to expand our staff by hiring DHH Guides,” commented Laura Godfrey, MNH&V Manager, “Minnesota is not the first to do this, other states have DHH Guides. H&V Headquarters has developed training materials and guidelines already to go.”

It is known that about 95% of children who are dhh are born to parents with typical hearing who may have little or no prior experiences with individuals who are dhh. Many parents and professionals with typical hearing can find it difficult to fully appreciate common life experiences faced by children who are dhh. In sharing their experiences and insights, DHH Guides may be able to articulate what the child cannot, which brings an important

perspective and credibility to discussions regarding the child and their needs. DHH Guides are uniquely qualified to provide parents and professionals with a positive and hopeful perspective from their day-to-day, real life experiences as a person who is dhh living in a hearing world.

Like MNH&V Parent Guides, DHH Guide will provide non-biased information and support to families. In addition, DHH guides offer:

- A safe place to ask questions about hearing differences or deafness
- Awareness of and sensitivity to issues faced by individuals who are dhh
- Hope for parents that their child who is dhh will have an opportunity to reach their full potential
- Information about the Deaf community, culture, and resources

DHH Guides will be specially trained to provide support to families. Heidi Nazario, MNH&V Lead DHH Guide will supervise the hiring and training of five additional DHH Guides to serve families in every region throughout Minnesota.

More about Heidi Nazario can be found on page 5.

### Save the date

## “i have a voice” Gala to Support Individuals with Down Syndrome

February 9, 2019

GiGi’s Playhouse 8th Annual Gala at Renaissance Minneapolis Hotel, The Depot. This special evening including a silent auction, dinner, program, live auction and paddle raise all to support individuals with Down syndrome in the Twin Cities. Guest speaker, Kayla McKeon, the first lobbyist on Capitol Hill with Down syndrome. Doors open at 5:30 pm.

GiGi’s Playhouse was created to change the way the world views people with Down syndrome and send a global message of acceptance for all.

Individual Tickets: \$175 (\$250 VIP)

Tables: \$1,750 (\$2,500 VIP)

VIP tickets includes parking, VIP reception with open bar during silent auction, opportunity to meet special guests, and other VIP upgrades.

For more information visit <https://one.bidpal.net/gigistwincities2019gala/welcome>

## MNH&V EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY

### MNH&V DHH Guide

The MNH&V DHH Guide position offers 10 hours a week, some evenings and weekends, and a family-friendly work environment.

MNH&V DHH Guides must be an individual who grew up deaf or hard of hearing and are now active and involved adults willing to share their personal stories with others. DHH Guides receive specific training and team support. DHH Guides are responsible for initial and follow-up connections with families who have child who is dhh. They work closely with the MNH&V team to learn the best way to support our MNH&V families.

They will collaborate and help with family events, represent MNH&V in the community, and participate in family support activities. As an individual who is dhh sharing your personal experiences, challenges, and joys will help support parents who are raising a child who is dhh.

To find out more or to apply and send a resume, please visit Lifetrack at <https://recruiting.paylocity.com/Recruiting/Jobs/List/1442>

## MNH&V Welcomes Heidy Nazario, Lead DHH Guide



Heidy Liz Nazario Negrón, Lead DHH Guide

and when she was 9 years old her family moved to Puerto Rico where her parents are from originally. Heidy is bilingual in Spanish and English, and she is in the process of learning American Sign Language. She identifies herself as hard of hearing and her hearing difference is genetic and progressive. She is also a certified teacher.

Heidy counts her family as the most supportive people in her life and very important—her parents, two brothers, and two nieces. Other important people in her life are her boyfriend and his family. Heidy and her boyfriend have two dogs named Graham and Luna.

“This new position means a lot to me and touches my heart in a special way as there is nothing I would like more than to help people like myself,” said Heidy who is dhh and the new Lead DHH Guide for MNH&V. “At one time I myself did not understand where to go to or what to do, and now I work with a great team whose goal is to provide that access.”

Heidy Liz Nazario Negrón is her full name and Heidy is pronounced “Haiti” like the country. Heidy was born in New York

“In my new role is Lead DHH Guide, I am excited to work with an awesome group of people,” added Heidy. “To bring new resources, tools, and insight to the community of families with children who are dhh.”

Eventually MNH&V families will be able to contact Heidy by phone when her captioned phone is set up. Until then Heidy can only be reached by email at [heidyn@lifetrack-mn.org](mailto:heidyn@lifetrack-mn.org).



## Mary McMenemy

Thank you Mary McMenemy from Maplewood for donating beautiful hand-made blankets and teddy bears for MNH&V Parent Guides to warmly welcome new families to our MNH&V community.



Thank you Southwest Intermediate School District 288, students ages elementary through high school. This district holds an annual event that includes a service project. Students have made blankets in the past to be given as welcome gifts to new families. This year they had the younger students decorate home visit bags and make greeting cards for the new families, and the older students created hearing devices, BAHAs and CIs, for the bears that we give to families. The teachers put a lot of creative thought and energy into the design for the BAHAs and CIs and the event was a blur of activity while all of the students were busy working on the projects for MNH&V.



## DHH Students from Southwest ISD 288

## The View from Greater Minnesota

### DHH Youth Group Planning Meeting

Saturday Jan 26th, 2019  
at Common Ground Coffee Bar and Deli, in Cloquet, MN

Join in the fun and connect with others at the first Youth Group meeting. The group is for youth in grades K-12 who are dhh and their parents. The agenda for the meeting will be to introduce everyone attending, decide on a name for the group, plan future meetings, discuss sponsorship ideas, and make recreation plans. Parents will have an opportunity to visit, while the volunteers lead fun and games with the youth group.

Joyce Atchison, former teacher of students who are dhh and who also has a severe-profound hearing loss, felt isolated in the mainstream environment in middle school and high school. Joyce organized this event, because she understands the social and emotional needs of youth who are dhh.

Volunteer interpreters will provide accessible communication for ALL! Please bring money for drinks and snacks.

Questions? Please contact Joyce Atchison, Coordinator, by email at [msjoyceatchison@gmail.com](mailto:msjoyceatchison@gmail.com) or text at 507-384-7575

### 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**

## Deaf, DeafBlind & Hard of Hearing Lobby Day

Wednesday, March 6, 2019  
9:00 am - 4:00 pm, Rally 1:00 pm

The 2019 Lobby Day will be held on Wednesday, March 6, at the Minnesota State Capital. Lobby Day is held every two years and brings together people who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing, friends, families, allies, and legislators. This is a valuable opportunity to gather as a community and to discuss with legislators face-to-face the issues important to individuals who are deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing.

Throughout the day legislators will be available to meet with individuals by appointment. An optional training session provided by the Commission for Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans is available for those who want help preparing for their scheduled appointment with a legislator. Early registration helps organizers ensure accommodations for Lobby Day and the Rally, including the accommodations necessary for the training sessions and for appointments with legislators.

Example topics:

- Issues important to you and your family, such as communication access and equal opportunities
- Additional funding for MNCDHH
- Grants for support service providers and interveners for individuals who are deafblind
- More funding for Deaf Mentor programs to support families with a child who is deaf, deafblind, or hard of hearing.

To sign up for updates or to access your subscriber preferences, please enter your contact information at <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/MNCDHH/subscriber/new?email=>

More details about Lobby Day can be found at <https://mn.gov/deaf-commission/get-involved/lobby-day/>



## Crosstown Sisterhood Morning Group



Thank you Crosstown Sisterhood Morning Group from River Valley Church for donating 28 beautiful hand-made blankets for MNH&V Parent Guides to warmly welcome new families to our MNH&V community.

## Partnership Agreement Between Lifetrack and Lutheran Social Services

As of January 1st, 2019, Lifetrack and Lutheran Social Services (LSS) have entered a management agreement that will benefit Lifetrack with technology and systems, as well as oversight of administrative functions. Minnesota Hands & Voices is one of many programs of Lifetrack that will benefit from this partnership.

Lifetrack approached LSS because of the organizations' shared philosophy. LSS is one of the largest nonprofit social service organizations in Minnesota with a strong financial base. The partnership between Lifetrack and LSS will help Lifetrack continue their mission, to strengthen the resiliency in families experiencing the greatest disparities in education, health, employment, and income.



Thank you, Latinas Unidas group, for making cards and decorating gift bags to carry welcome gifts to new MNH&V families. And many thanks extended to Elena Miranda, MNH&V Parent Guide for Spanish Speaking Community, for her part in organizing this service project and all that she does to support families with a child who is dhh in all communities across the state.

## Cued Speech Association of Minnesota Board Member Opportunities

Cued Speech Association of Minnesota (CSAM) is looking for parents and/or professionals who support and use Cued English to consider becoming CSAM board members

CSAM is a non-profit organization entirely run by volunteers who support the awareness and use of Cued English

through educational and social events. Our membership is made up of professionals, educators, adults who are dhh, and families with a child who is dhh.

Volunteer CSAM Board Member positions:

- Presidential nominee
- Member at Large—Activity planning
- Member at Large—Parent liaison

For more information go to CSAM at [www.cuedspeechminnesota.org](http://www.cuedspeechminnesota.org) or find CSAM on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/cuedspeechminnesota/](http://www.facebook.com/cuedspeechminnesota/)

For questions about CSAM email at [info@cuedspeechminnesota.org](mailto:info@cuedspeechminnesota.org)

## DCMP Membership for Accessible Videos

Described and Captioned Media Program (DCMP) provides equal access through described and captioned educational media. They support and improve the academic achievement of students who are dhh, blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind. DCMP makes streaming a wide variety of accessible videos at home or at school convenient.

Free membership to DCMP is offered to parents, teachers and other professionals who work with students who are dhh, blind, visually impaired and DeafBlind. There are no costs associated with any DCMP services.

Find membership registration at <https://dcmp.org/signup>

Sign up for the monthly DCMP Newsletter at <https://dcmp.us4.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=f29a35c7b34f89334cbd07f91&id=6acc9bf1e2>

## Hands & Voices — O.U.R. Children's Safety Project

Hands & Voices Head Quarters' (H&V HQ) website offers many resources, articles, and services on many different topics that are relevant to families with children who are dhh. One such topic is the O.U.R. Children's Safety Project.

*We don't like to think about it, but our kids who are dhh are at a higher risk for both abuse and neglect. Like any children, they are at risk. (H&V HQ O.U.R. Children's Safety Project website.)*

The O.U.R. acronym stands for Observe, Understand & Respond. The reality is children with disabilities are two to three times more likely to experience abuse and neglect than their peers who are not disabled. 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 be taught how to observe, understand and respond. The

### Hands & Voices Head Quarters

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

*Seventy-seven percent of deaf and hard-of-hearing respondents indicated experiencing some form of child maltreatment, compared with 49 percent among hearing respondents. (H&V HQ O.U.R. Children's Safety Project website.)*

Go to the H&V HQ website for additional information on O.U.R. Children's Safety Project at <http://www.handsandvoices.org/resources/OUR/index.htm>

★★ **MNH&V Family Event** on Saturday, March 9, 10:00 am to Noon, Family Tree Clinic Presents: Parents Are Sexuality Educators, 709 University Avenue West, Saint Paul, MN. <https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events> ★★



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709 University Ave. W.  
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NEWSLETTER

Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS Newsletter

January-February 2019

2019 Minnesota Hands & Voices FAMILY EVENT

BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND

# LET'S ROLL!

FREE for Families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing.  
Plus, the whole family will receive a coupon per person for a  
free hotdog, chips, & pop or, a vegetarian option, nachos & pop.

The Roller Garden will be closed to the general public so this is a great  
way for families to test their skating skills, socialize, and meet new friends!

**RSVP Online** <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/roller-skating-at-roller-garden-st-louis-park-tickets-54310280511>  
**Questions** please contact Anne Barlow, 651.265.2400 or [AnneB@lifetrack-mn.org](mailto:AnneB@lifetrack-mn.org)

**Date:** Sunday, February 24, 2019

**Time:** 5:00 to 7:00 pm

**Where:** Roller Garden  
5622 West Lake Street  
St. Louis Park, MN

Find more events online at [www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/current-news-events.aspx](http://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/news-events/current-news-events.aspx)