



MINNESOTA
HANDS &
VOICES™

Supporting families
with children who are
deaf & hard of hearing

FOCUS

Supporting Self-Advocacy Skills in Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

As parents, we may not always have patience when our child insists on doing things by themselves, especially when we are running late, but this independence is a sign of self-advocating. Self-advocacy skills are important to encourage in children who are deaf or hard of hearing (dhh). When a young child or infant is first identified as dhh parents, educators, audiologists, and health professionals make educated decisions to help support the child's needs. When children are infants or very young and have little or no language skills of their own, parents often rely on their instincts to make life decisions on their child's behalf. Parents are their child's front-line advocates and always will be, but especially until the child is capable of self-advocating. When children do start to self-advocate, parents can then follow their lead.

Wrightslaw, leading website for special education law and advocacy, offers this content-packed definition, "Self-Advocacy is learning how to speak up for yourself, making your own decisions about your own life, learning how to get information so that you can understand things that are of interest to you, finding out who will support you in your journey, knowing your rights and responsibilities, problem solving, listening and learning, reaching out to others when you need help and friendship, and learning about self-determination." <http://www.wrightslaw.com/info/self.advocacy.htm>. This definition of self-advocacy is written

to span over a person's lifetime and is relevant to children and adults of all ages.

Your child's experience as an individual who is dhh is uniquely their own. When it comes to what helps them best access information and develop language, only they can answer this question. This is why it is especially important for children who are dhh to learn self-advocacy skills as early as possible. Learning self-advocacy skills can begin as infants and toddlers. Parents naturally help build their child's self-advocacy skills just by helping them become self-aware. Making eye contact, showing affection, imitating their expressions, and responding to a crying child are all ways parents help them learn about themselves and the power of communication. Self-advocacy begins in many small and meaningful ways.

Ideas to encourage self-advocacy in young children (list adapted from Milestones Autism Resources, <http://milestones.org/individuals-with-asd/self-advocacy/>).

- Teach how to say "yes" and "no"
- Encourage self-determination by honoring requests when reasonable
- Foster connection between asking (or advocating) for a toy and receiving it
- Expose the child to problem-solving by showing how to handle a problem (like showing how tracked in dirt is messy, figure out which tools to use, and then the ease of cleaning up)

- Encourage the ability to communicate preferences for clothing, food, activities
- Foster decision-making by offering two good choices (apple or banana, a book or a game)

There are many resources for developing self-advocacy skills in school-age children who are dhh. Educators will sometimes use two worksheets specific to students who are dhh to assess emerging self-advocacy skills, the *Guide to Self-Advocacy Skill Development* and the *Informal Inventory of Independence and Self-Advocacy Skills for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students*.

"Access CANNOT be fully achieved with the use of hearing technology, visual communication, and teacher accommodations alone. Full participation requires that the student advocate for his or her own access/learning needs. Work begins in preschool to recognize how hearing loss and the listening situation impact understanding and what THEY can do,"

— Karen Anderson, Director of Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss.

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Supporting Self-Advocacy Skills in Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing continued from page 1

The *Guide to Self-Advocacy Skill Development* lists self-advocacy skills and a grade level to expect these skills to emerge. Every child develops differently so do not focus on the grade level; it is important to factor in your child's unique characteristics, cognitive abilities, and other specific needs. The guide is geared for an educational environment, but parents can adapt it to support and promote self-advocacy skills at home. For example the first skill listed in the guide at the preschool level reads, "Be responsible to put own hearing devices on and report when problems occur." Designate a central location in your home as a hearing device station to charge batteries, find replacement batteries, and store their hearing devices at bedtime. Take time with your child to practice checking batteries, putting on their hearing devices in the morning, changing batteries, and how to properly store them at bedtime. The *Guide to Self-Advocacy Skill Development* is made available through Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss at <http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com>.

The *Informal Inventory of Independence and Self-Advocacy Skills for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students* provides a list of goals or skills to look for over the years and check competency on a scale from 1 to 5. Students, parents, and the educational team use the inventory collaboratively to set Individual Education Plan goals for self-advocacy. The worksheet looks at the student's level of independence and self-advocacy in the areas of student services, peer interactions, and community. This inventory is geared for older students (middle school to transitioning to adulthood) highlighting common everyday activities that are sometimes a

challenge for individuals who are dhh. For example, under the community section, the inventory reads, "Demonstrates independence skills in community at large (orders for self in restaurants, makes own purchases, etc.)". Families can create opportunities to practice these self-advocating skills earlier and more often. *Informal Inventory of Independence and Self-Advocacy Skills for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students*, by George Clark, MS.Ed, CI, NAD IV, Certified Interpreter & Laura Scheele, MS Ed, Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing (2005), can be found at <http://successforkidswithhearingloss.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/informal-inventory-of-independence-and-self-advocacy-skills-for-deaf-hard-of-hearing-students.pdf>

A parent's ability to effectively advocate for their child who is dhh depends greatly on their emotional state, coping skills, their own life experiences, and over all understanding of the issues facing individuals who are dhh. The same is true for children who are dhh working on developing effective self-advocacy skills. Parents of an older child can help them help themselves by advocating in three parts: ASK + LISTEN + ACT.

- ASK what do they want, what do they need, and how can you help?
- LISTEN to what your child is really saying, do not project or assume.
- ACT: if your child gives you a task or an action item; follow through is critical.

Self-advocacy skills are important to develop over time. Parents are advocacy role models in the beginning as their child starts to understand their needs, and later as their lives become complex and they venture out in the world. Sometimes supporting self-advocacy just takes letting your child know you're in their corner.



Lineup Owner Deb Erickson and Daughter, Trisha

MNH&V volunteer and Lineup business owner, Deb Erickson and daughter Trisha made 75 pilot caps for MNH&V Parent Guides to bring to new families. Lineup makes dance and cheerleading costumes and the caps were made with the scrap material. The pilot caps are in a variety of colors and patterns in baby/toddler sizes.

MNH&V is so grateful for the donation and will be sending them to the guides throughout the state to give to families who may want/need them.

MNH&V Events

Saturday, June 23

“Keeping your Kids Safe Online:
A Parent’s Guide”

9:00 am to Noon

Lifetrack, 709 University Ave. W.,
St. Paul, MN

Saturday, June 23

“Little People, Big Feelings:
Fostering Emotional Expression
in young DHH Children”

2:00 pm to 4:00 pm

Quarry Hill Nature Center,
Rochester, MN

Thursday, August 2

Metro Annual Family Picnic

5:00 pm to 8:30 pm

Como Park Midway Pavilion

Tuesday August 14

Southwest Region
Annual Family Picnic

5:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Sibley Park, 900 Mound Ave.,
Mankato, MN

Saturday October 6th

“Daily Technology”

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Engwall’s Corn Maze
Hermantown, MN

Saturday, October 13

“Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of
Hearing Student Transition Fair
(For students ages 14+)”

10:30 am to 2:30 pm

Saint Paul College, St. Paul, MN

Saturday, October 27

Topic TBD

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Paul Bunyon Land, Brainard, MN

Saturday December 8

Topic TBD Family Event

1:00 pm to 3:00 pm

Apollo Senior High School,
St. Cloud, MN

MN Hands & Voices Welcomes Krista Blood

Dual Role, SouthWest MN Parent Guide & Statewide ASL Parent Guide

“My advice for any new parent with a child who is dhh, is to explore and do as much research as you can, take the resources and help that is offered to you, and no matter what never stop being the best advocate you can be for your child/ren,” offered Krista Blood, MNH&V SouthWest MN Parent Guide & Statewide ASL Parent Guide, when asked what advice she had for MNH&V families.

Krista was born and raised in Fairmont MN. She moved to Faribault, MN, at age 14 years old and attended the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD). She ended up receiving her diploma from Faribault Senior High school.

Krista married her MSAD crush, Corey. Her oldest daughter is a CODA (child of a deaf adult) and active on the Faribault Emerald Dance Team. Corey and Krista are busy with their three other children, all with different levels of dhh. Their oldest son is profoundly deaf, middle son has Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSD), and the youngest daughter is profoundly deaf in one ear and hard of hearing in the other. As a family they enjoy camping up North and fishing.

Krista is excited to work with MNH&V families and offer them the amazing amount of support she herself was offered



Krista Blood, MNH&V SouthWest MN Parent Guide & Statewide ASL Parent Guide

by MNH&V. She looks forward to sharing all that she has learned while training for her position at MNH&V, as an advocate for her children, and as an individual who is dhh. When she is not busy working and parenting she has a passion for transforming old and broken things into new and rustic. She also enjoys playing volleyball, roller-blading, and most of all spending time with her family. The best way for MNH&V families to contact Krista is by email at kristaB@Lifetrack-mn.org.

“Keep an open mind and always make sure your child has equal access,” added Krista.



Communication Card for MN Law Enforcement and Drivers who are DHH

A new communication card helps Minnesotans who are dhh and police officers communicate better during a traffic stop. The Minnesota Department of Human Service's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division (DHHSD) worked with the Department of Public Safety (DPS) and Minnesotans who are dhh to develop the communication card.

The top of the front of the card clearly identifies the driver who is dhh by stating, "I am Deaf or Hard of Hearing" and explains the purpose of the card. Next it lists helpful tips for communicating best with individuals who are dhh, such as "Maintain eye contact with me while speaking" and "Shining a flashlight in my face will make it hard for me to understand you." Then a set of icons to suggest the best way to communicate, such as writing or lip-reading. Next a set of icons representing the information police officers typically need, such as a driver's license or insurance card. The bottom of the card has a set of icons to explain what help the driver needs: Hospital? Tow truck? Directions?

On the back of the card there are icons to communicate why the driver was pulled over, such as the speed limit sign or traffic light. Also on back is a section of icons to help explain what the police officer plans to do next, like write a ticket or tow the vehicle. The card ends with a list of things an individual who is dhh might need if arrested or brought in for questions, like assistive technology for phone calls and/or a sign language interpreter.

The card is laminated and meant to be kept in the vehicle glove compartment. To receive a Communication Card send an email to dhhs.metro@state.mn.us include your name, mailing address, and county of residence or call 651-431-5940.



Driving: What to Do and What to Expect If You're Pulled Over

If you are dhh and pulled over by law enforcement, remember to stay in your vehicle and keep your hands on your steering wheel where the police officer can see them. DO NOT dig in your glove compartment, purse or wallet; instead just wait.

The officer will approach the driver's side window and then roll it down. The officer will start to talk, which you may or may not understand. It is critical to establish an unambiguous line of communication. Calmly indicate that you are dhh as best you can with expression, voice, and/or slow deliberate gestures. Next, point to where you keep your communication card or your driver's license. With the officer's understanding and permission, slowly move to get the information.

Tip! Put a wallet-sized, "I am Deaf" or "I am hard of hearing", identification card behind your driver's license in your wallet or billfold.

Why move slowly? The job of Law Enforcement Personnel is to keep citizens safe by confronting people who are dangerous or under the influence. They are ready for anything and approach all vehicles with caution. Fast movements can be misinterpreted as aggressive.

Transition

MSAD is Now Offering Classroom Instruction for Drivers Education

Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf (MSAD) is offering classroom instruction for drivers education to all Minnesota youth who are dhh. Classes are taught by certified/licensed instructors and includes the 30 hours of classroom instruction required by state law. Students must be 15 years old or turn 15 years old by the end of the course.

Students who successfully complete the course will receive the blue card they need to then take the written exam for their driving permit at a Driver and Vehicle Services location at their convenience.

August 13 to 24, 2018
Monday through Friday
11:00 to 2:00 pm
Located at MSAD with ASL interpreters
Cost: \$300 for instruction
\$50 lodging & meals at MSAD
Deadline for register is July 13, 2018

For questions, accommodations or to register, email Anne Grace Donatucci at annegrace.donatucci@msa.state.mn.us



MNH&V at the 2018 MN EHDI Public Health Conference



MNH&V Family Event, April 21, hosted by Laura Godfrey, MNH&V, at Lifetrack in St. Paul. The topic was about Growth Mindset (resiliency and positive approach to problem solving), Mindfulness and helping students who are dhh develop healthy social and emotional skills. Lead by Emily Manson and Emily Kedrowski, both itinerant teachers of students who are dhh for St. Paul Public School.

Calling All Parents! Nominate an Exceptional Individual for a High Five Award

The MNH&V High Five Award is an opportunity for parents to publicly thank those who do more than expected on behalf of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (dhh). Parents are invited to nominate another parent, teacher, interpreter, medical provider, community advocate, role model, or anyone who inspires your family!

Now through July 1st, MNH&V is accepting one nomination per family from parents.

To submit a nomination for the MNH&V High Five Award we ask parents to reply to the questions below in 200 words or less by July 1, 2018.

- 1) What has the nominee done above and beyond what is typical for their role or profession?
- 2) How has this individual made an impact on your child and/or the community? Please include at least one specific example of their service.



Email your nomination to mnhv@lifetrack-mn.org and include in the subject line "High Five Award".

To assist our Advisory Board when choosing recipients, we ask for only one nomination per family per year.

MNH&V staff will compile and forward the submissions to our Advisory Board who will select one or more winners to be announced at the metro MNH&V Family Picnic on Thursday, August 2, 2018. If a nominee and/or family nominating is from outside the Metro area and therefore not attending the picnic, recognition will take place in that community if they are selected.

MNH&V SOURCE

Keep Up to Date with the Latest MNH&V News & Events

Sign Up for the *MNH&V SOURCE*, which offers 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. To receive the *MNH&V SOURCE* weekly email, request to be signed up by email at www.mnhandsandvoices.org

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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Bad News and Tragedies: How to Talk to Children

We can't always control the exposure our children have to news and information any more than we can control negative events from happening. Media continually streams images of the most sensational tragedies and the worst natural disasters, which can prompt your child to ask challenging questions. The National Council on Family Relations provides a list of resources from reputable organizations to help parents learn how to talk to their children about disturbing news.

Sometimes seeing news reports about upsetting events — like terrorist attacks, mass shootings, and natural disasters — can make children worry about their own safety and the safety of their loved ones. It can also make them fearful of smaller everyday life events like a spring thunderstorm. Depending on their age or maturity, children might not understand

the differences between fact and fantasy.

Parents can help their children process disturbing stories and images by talking together and putting frightening information into a reasonable context. Encourage your child to talk openly about what concerns or fears they have. Focus the discussion only on their concerns and fears without adding more details. Offer clarity to any misinformation they may have. If your child does ask difficult questions be prepared to tell the truth, but only as much truth as they can process at their age level. The key is to help the child to feel safe.

Find the National Council on Family Relations, How to Talk to Children About Tragedies, list of resources updated February 20, 2018, at <https://www.ncfr.org/resources/resource-collections/how-talk-children-about-tragedies>

CueSign Summit

June 20-24, 2018

Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Ave NE, Washington, DC

CueSign Summit will provide American Sign Language (ASL) and Cued English classes, workshops, panel discussions, presentations, and socializing opportunities with professionals, parents, and family members. Friends from the deaf community and individuals who are dhh, ages 14 and older, are invited to attend. Meals are included from Thursday morning to Sunday morning.

CueSign, Inc., non-profit organization, believes children who are dhh should have the opportunity to have full and equal access to both ASL and English. They also offer a support and resources for families.

Registration for the CueSign Summit is at www.cuesigncamp.com



2018 MNH&V Annual Spring Training Event, April 27 through 29, MNH&V staff photo. Top row: Carina Figueroa, Laura Godfrey, Marie Pank. Middle row: Krista Blood, Brenda Hommerding, Elena Miranda, Sonya Giridhar. Bottom row: Saida Sheikh-Mohamed, Suzanne Iwainat, Mai Houa Lor, Anne Barlow, Shannon Hohrman, Robin Coninx. Not pictured Leslie Carnegie-Hilde



MNH&V and Lifetrack's Deaf Mentor Family Program both had tables at Deaf Awareness Day, April 21. Elena, MNH&V Spanish Speaking Community Parent Guide, and Robin, MNH&V Metro Parent Guide joined the event.

MN Hands & Voices Welcomes Sonya Giridhar

Southeast MN Parent Guide

"I am enthusiastic about my new position with MNH&V, because having a child identified as dhh can be a really chaotic time for families," said Sonya Giridhar about her position as MNH&V Southeast MN Parent Guide. "I think it's valuable to have a fellow parent rooting for you as you go through that process."

Sonya grew up in Plymouth, MN and went to the University of Minnesota where she studied Neuroscience and French. She then got her PhD in Pittsburgh, PA, which is also where she met and married her husband. Together they moved to San Francisco where both of their children were born. Now her family has settled in Rochester, where they plan to raise their family.

Sonya's oldest daughter is hard of hearing and her daughter's DHH teacher encouraged their family to attend a MNH&V Family Event in their area. In her past career pursuit as a neuroscientist Sonya worked with young patients who are dhh and their families making videos to document their journey using hearing technology. She enjoyed working with families so, when a position opened up with MNH&V, she readily applied.



Sonya Giridhar, MNH&V Southeast MN Parent Guide

"I really love MNH&V's model of providing unbiased support," added Sonya.

Sonya's passions include photography, ukulele sing-a-longs, and spending time outdoors with her family.

"Don't be a stranger! Get in touch with me at any time—that's what I'm here for," said Sonya. "Whether you are seeking information, need a listening ear for your struggles, or want to share your joys and successes, I want to hear from you!"

Reach Sonya by phone at 1-507-696-7550 or email at SonyaG@lifetrack-mn.org.

FREE Lifetime Access Pass to National Parks & Federal Recreational Lands for Individuals of All Ages with Disabilities and Their Families

A free lifetime Access Pass, providing admittance to more than 2,000 recreation sites managed by five Federal agencies, is available to all U.S. citizens or permanent residents of all ages who have a medically determined permanent disability.

What does having an Access Pass mean for families? It means huge savings on your next family road trip to a National Park! The Access Pass offers free admission per-vehicle for the pass owner and all passengers, and free admission per-person



for the pass owner and 3 accompanying adults where there is a per-person fee charged. At many sites the Access Pass provides the pass owner a discount on expanded amenity fees such as camping, swimming, and guided tours.

Get an Access Pass in person at a Federal Recreation site or through the mail using an online application. For more information visit <https://store.usgs.gov/access-pass>



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NEWSLETTER

Minnesota Hands & Voices FOCUS Newsletter

May-June 2018

2018 Annual ★ Minnesota Hands & Voices ★ Metro

Date: Thursday, August 2nd

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

Where: Como Park Midway Pavilion
1199 Midway Pkwy, St Paul, MN

Free for Families:

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

Dilly Bars
graciously
provided by



FAMILY PICNIC



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