



FOCUS



Supporting families with children
who are deaf & hard of hearing

HANDS &
VOICES™
MINNESOTA

Your IEP Meeting: A Great Place to Practice Self-Advocacy Skills by PACER

Your Individualized Education Program (IEP) Meeting is a great place to practice self advocacy skills that are a key step in becoming an adult. It means looking out for yourself, telling others what you need, and knowing how to take responsibility. These skills are needed over a lifetime, and everyone has to learn them. Here is some great information that can start you on your way!

What is self-advocacy?

- Describe your strengths, disability, needs, and wishes.
- Take responsibility for yourself.
- Recognize your rights.
- Identify who to ask if you have a question or need help.

Where can I practice self-advocacy skills?

A great place to practice self-advocacy skills is in your IEP meetings, with the support of your team members so you can learn ways to:

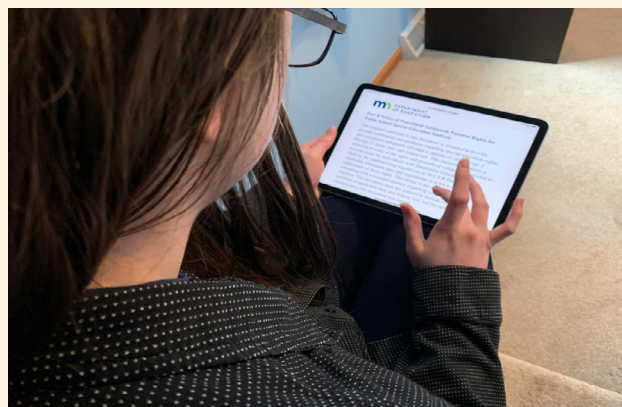
- Explain your disability to others.
- Set goals for yourself.
- Build teamwork skills.
- Share what works or doesn't work for you.
- Ask for accommodations.
- Accept help from others.
- Lead all or part of the IEP meeting.

But I don't like going to these meetings!

Sometimes students are uncomfortable in IEP meetings. There are many ways you can be involved in team decisions and some of these ideas might work for you:

- Come to the meeting for just a few minutes and share what is working and not working for you.
- Write down your ideas and questions ahead of time.
- Practice or role-play what you want to say.
- Introduce yourself.

- Tell team members about your interests, strengths, and desires for the future.
- Explain to the team what it is like to have your disability.
- Help your special education teacher write the agenda.
- Help the team develop IEP goal areas.
- Ask for explanations if you don't understand.
- At the end of the meeting, review what was decided.
- If you choose not to attend the meeting, share your input with your parent(s) or special education teacher before the meeting and then review the results afterward.



Be prepared! Most people are more comfortable at meetings if they have had some time to think about what they want to say. Before your IEP meeting, you might think about these questions:

- What are my strengths?
- What do I want to learn or work on improving this year?
- What are my special concerns?
- How do I learn best?
- What do I need to be successful?
- What would make learning easier for me?
- What positive information about myself can I share at the meeting?

Your IEP Meeting continued on the next page

Your IEP Meeting continued from the front page.

What does the law say about me attending IEP meetings?

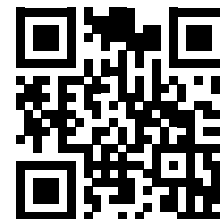
The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) says that you must automatically be invited to all of your IEP meetings once you are age 16. You don't have to go, but it's a good idea. You can be very helpful at the meeting. Minnesota law says that your IEP team needs to invite you beginning at age 14 or when you are in 9th grade to talk about transition services. You may want to discuss attending your IEP meeting with your parents. Transition is about planning for your future. You will look at your skills in three areas:

- Employment
- Postsecondary education
- Independent living

Planning and self-advocacy will help you succeed after high school. When you turn 18, you will be considered an adult and will need to make decisions on your own,

including signing your own IEP. This is why it is a great idea to practice self-advocacy skills as much as possible. Learning good self-advocacy skills is cool. It will help you while you are in school and when you become an adult. Knowing and exercising your rights are important steps in becoming a strong self-advocate.

For more information on PACER, go to PACER.org or use this QR code.



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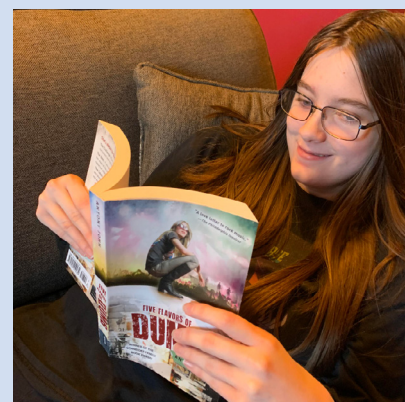
Calling All Readers - Join the MNH&V Virtual Book Club

The virtual book club began in 2019, near the start of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. "I wanted a way for DHH children to be able to come get together and socialize. Our family has always loved books, so I thought that a club for discussing books featuring DHH characters would be perfect. Our first selection was *El Deafo*, but because so many virtual experiences were aimed at younger children we pivoted to focus more on middle schoolers and older kids," NE Parent Guide Marie Pank states.

The book club has been very well received by families. Here are what some families had to say, "I love to READ." "Thanks for the Book Club." "I'm excited for the next one."

The Books and links are publicized ahead of the book club meetings so the kids have time to read the book beforehand. If they don't finish the book, they are still strongly encouraged to attend, because a variety of topics are always discussed including Deaf culture, requesting accommodations, and friendships. Also, the Deaf Mentors and DHH Guides who attend, generously share about their own lived experiences as Deaf and hard of hearing people.

Meetings are held twice during the school year, with a different book being discussed each time. Families can provide their own book, borrow a copy from the local library or they can request a free copy to keep by contacting Event Coordinator Leslie Carnegie-Hilde at leslie.carnegie-hilde@lssmn.org.



Pictured above is Allison Pank reading the book *Five Flavors of DUMB*.

Use the QR code below to visit a list of books that have characters who are deaf or are hard of hearing.



Pictured above are past Book Club book selections.

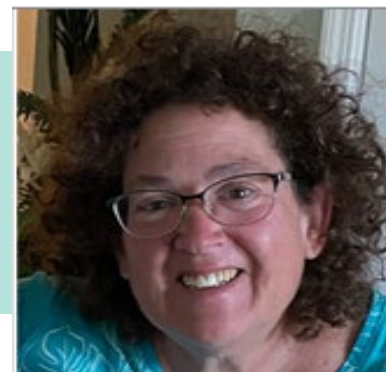


Minnesota Department of Education

Hi! My name is Mary Cashman-Bakken. I am Deaf and I am the State Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) Specialist for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). I grew up in Minnesota, went to college at St. Benedict in St. Joseph, Minnesota and graduated with a B.A. in Education. I attended Gallaudet University in Washington, D.C., to obtain my M.A. in Deaf Education. My first teaching job was in St. Maries, Idaho where I taught for two years. After this, I returned to Minnesota to become a DHH itinerant teacher.

During ten years as an itinerant teacher, I also attended Mitchell Hamline School of Law in St. Paul. After I graduated, I worked at the Minnesota State Academy for the Deaf for 19 years as director of the Minnesota Resource Center for the Deaf. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, I have been working remotely for MDE. I am one of several low incidence specialists. Some specialists also work offsite as part of the Minnesota Low Incidence Projects.

We have specialists in Autism Spectrum Disorders, Assistive Technology, Blind-Visually Impaired, DeafBlind, Deaf Hard of Hearing, Developmental Adapted Physical Education, Developmental Cognitive Disabilities, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, Traumatic Brain Injury and Physically Impaired.



The specialists meet almost monthly with Regional Low Incidence Facilitators (RLIFs). The State of Minnesota is broken up into eleven regions and MDE uses these regions to organize them into nine educational service cooperatives.

There is one RLIF in each of those regions. The RLIFs convene disability-specific groups and create yearly plans in each of the low incidence areas. After this, they present their plans to MDE for approval and additional partnerships. The specialists bring topics to the attention of the RLIFs and the RLIFs bring topics and concerns back to the specialists. Some specialists have state meetings for teachers that have been selected by the RLIF in their region to attend and those teachers bring back that information to the region and share it at regional communities of practice.

I have been working in education for 42 years and have seen much change in the field, including:

- ASL proficiency requirements for DHH teachers working with Deaf students.
- Meeting access needs such as captioning and the quality of interpreters, which has grown by leaps and bounds.
- Minnesota's Safe Learning Models and other measures being implemented to protect the health, safety and well-being of Minnesotans during COVID-19.
- American Sign Language (ASL) being an accepted language for school language credits.
- Many students taking ASL classes.

IN YOUR CORNER

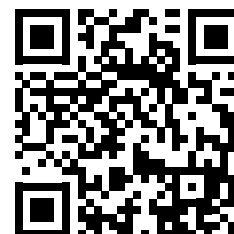
with Mary Cashman-Bakken

- Assistive technology helping us to provide information in a timely manner, helping us grow the knowledge base and find other ways to continue to address any incidental learning gaps for DHH students.
- Increased student proficiency with computers and social media, which can assist them in developing their communication skills, pragmatism and increase their general knowledge.
- DHH students utilizing work-based opportunities to help them focus on their learning and careers.
- DHH students having much to look forward to around robotics, coding, amazing visuals, and artificial intelligence.

I am excited to see what is next! If you have educational questions, you can reach me at Mary.Cashman-Bakken@state.mn.us.

Mary also serves on the MN Hands & Voices Advisory Committee.

For more information about Low Incidence Projects, please visit their website: mnlowincidenceprojects.org or use the QR Code here



MNH&V TRANSITION TALK with H&V Military Project

Since the birth of this country, there have been service members fighting for our freedom. We are all probably familiar with the story of how our militia fought for our freedom and founded a new country. Through the bravery of men and the women and families who supported them fighting for our freedom, the United States was established. A lot has changed in 200 years, but one thing remains, we will always have service members fighting for our freedom. As times change, our Active-Duty members' responsibilities change, and as a result, the roles of military spouses have also evolved. Like many other cultures, the military is a diverse group under an umbrella group called the Armed Forces. One thing that all military families have in common is the experience stressors related to frequent moves and deployment. Though there is much to celebrate about the resiliency, these situations are known to create challenges, stress, and anxiety.

“Don't ask us when we're leaving;
ask how long you have us for.”

- A military spouse

The Hands & Voices Military Project aims to connect military families to the local Hands & Voices Chapter to help them feel prepared to navigate through each new duty station.

It is hoped that parents will find more ease in transitioning the medical and educational homes for their children with this connection.

There is a growing support group on Facebook, specifically for military families with children with hearing loss.
<https://facebook.com/groups/HandsVoicesMilitarySupport/>

This virtual community is a place to share experiences, ask questions, and help others with questions. Learn more about duty stations, and create new and lasting friendships with families walking a similar journey. Resources are shared that are beneficial to military families.

General information about hearing loss is also shared to help grow knowledge of the child's hearing level.

[Helpful Links for Military Families](#)

[Find a Local Hands & Voices Chapter](#)

[Overview of the Exceptional Family Member Program](#)

[Extended Health Care Option](#)

[Tricare](#): Tricare currently covers Hearing Aids for Active Duty dependents and Cochlear Implants and Bone Anchored Hearing Devices for all dependents, given they meet FDA criteria.

[Learning to advocate for your child during transitions;](#)

[Hands & Voices ASTra files](#)

[Military Interstate Children's Compact Commission](#)

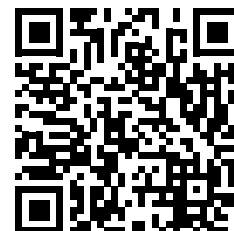
[Wrightslaw on Military and Department of Defense Special Education](#)

[PCS checklist](#): Checklist to organize your child's transition to a new medical and educational home.

[All About My Child](#): Document to introduce your child to his/her new provider to ensure all of their medical needs are met.



Learn more about the H&V Military Program by using this QR Code here or contact a Project Leader by email at handsandvoicesmp@gmail.com



H&V Military Project Leaders

LaShawna Sims - Air Force spouse

Jennifer Swan - Army spouse

Chelsea Hull - Navy spouse

Amanda McGaven - Coast Guard spouse

Panel de Padres Cultural

El pasado Febrero, Padres Guías Culturales de MN Hands & Voices Yodit Amare, Nura Hersi, Lee Vang y Elena Miranda; fueron invitadas a participar en el Panel de Padres Culturales en la reunión de Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) de forma virtual a Nivel Nacional. El objetivo de este panel fue compartir sus experiencias personales y profesionales siendo madres de niños sordos/sordos parciales, educando, criando y buscando recursos para sus hijos. Y como lograr que los servicios de intervención temprana sean bien recibidos por las familias.

Entre las preguntas que se les hicieron a los Padres Guías se encontraban, ¿cuáles han sido las experiencias más difíciles que han enfrentado con la pérdida de la audición de su hijo? Las respuestas fueron desde la aceptación, el proceso del diagnóstico, los retos del idioma, el sistema de salud, el aislamiento, por mencionar solo algunos.

Se discutió el papel que juega la cultura en la manera de aceptar, procesar, enfrentar y buscar recursos para sus hijos. Ellas también compartieron tips culturales para lograr una exitosa visita a domicilio por parte de los servicios de intervención temprana.

Cada una de ellas tuvieron la oportunidad de compartir sus experiencias personales y recomendaciones para construir una relación profesional y de confianza con los con las familias de niños sordos/sordos parciales culturalmente diversas. Cabe aclarar que los primeros años de vida de un niño son los de mayor impacto en cuanto al desarrollo del lenguaje sea cual sea el modo de comunicación que los padres elijan, desarrollo cognitivo y las habilidades sociales.

Para mayor información sobre los programas, servicios y recursos de MN Hand & Voices visite nuestro website: <https://www.lssmn.org/mnhandsandvoices> Si desea contactar a su Padre Guía, comuníquese con Elena Miranda Elena.

LATINO CULTURES

with Elena Miranda

Cultural Awareness Parent Panel

Last February, Minnesota Hands & Voices Cultural Parent Guides Yodit Amare, Nura Hersi, Lee Vang and Elena Miranda were invited to participate in the Cultural Awareness Parent Panel at the national Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) virtual meeting.

The goal of this panel was to share their personal and professional experiences as mothers of Deaf or Hard of Hearing children. The panelists addressed educating, raising and seeking resources for their children as well as how to ensure that early intervention services are well received by families.

One question that resonated with the Parent Guides was "What have been the most difficult experiences you have faced with your child's hearing loss?" Not surprisingly, the responses were varied, ranging from acceptance, the diagnosis process, language challenges, the health system and isolation, to name just a few.

The role of culture in accepting, processing, coping and seeking resources for children was also discussed. The panelists also shared cultural tips to achieve a successful home visit by early intervention services. Each Parent Guide also had the opportunity to share their personal experiences and recommendations on how to build a professional and trusting relationship with culturally diverse families of deaf or hard of hearing children.



Pictured above left to right: SE Asian Community Parent Guide Lee Vang, Metro Parent Guide Yodit Amare, Metro Parent Guide Mary Stadelman, Lead Cultural Parent Guide Elena Miranda and NE African Community Parent Guide Nura Hersi.

For more information about MN Hand & Voices programs, visit our website at [lssmn.org/mnhandsandvoices](https://www.lssmn.org/mnhandsandvoices)

If you would like to contact your Parent Guide, please contact Lead Cultural Parent Guide Elena Miranda by email at elena.miranda@lssmn.org or by phone at 651.265.2383.

..... CONTACT

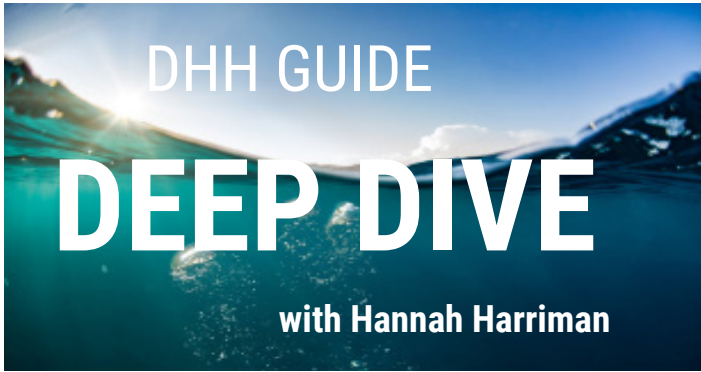
 651.265.2435

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 [@mnhandsandvoices](https://www.instagram.com/mnhandsandvoices)



My name is Hannah Harriman, and I am a Deaf and Hard of Hearing Guide with Minnesota Hands and Voices. I am totally blind with unilateral hearing loss. Some of my hobbies include reading, writing, singing, and spending time with family.

I didn't realize that people who are blind could participate in sports until I was in high school. For a few summers in high school, I attended Camp Abilities, a sports camp for the blind located in New York. My participation in sports extended beyond summer camp when I attended the Minnesota State Academy for the Blind (MSAB) for a year-and-a-half after high school. While attending MSAB, I played several sports as extracurricular activities. Below are some of my reflections on my athletic experiences.



Track & Field

Athletes running track hold a rope connected by two wooden posts. They run from one end of the rope to the other, turn, and run back. This is how laps are counted during track meets. If the runner lets go of the rope or loses contact with the rope, they are disqualified in a tournament situation.

The running long jump is performed by the athlete running as fast as they can and jumping when a sighted individual tells them to jump. The standing long jump is done by simply jumping as far as possible from a standing position.

Swimming

When it comes to swimming, the sport is similar to how sighted people would swim. The blind or visually impaired individual can feel the ropes that separate the lanes but they swim the same strokes as their sighted peers.

I struggled with swimming due to the acoustics and making sure my ears didn't get plugged. Swimming wasn't my most competitive sport, but I still enjoyed it.

Beep Baseball

Another sport that was played at Camp Abilities was Beep Baseball. Similar to swimming, I struggled because of my hearing loss, but still enjoyed the sport.

In Beep Baseball, the ball and the bases have different toned beeps so that those batting and those in the outfield could hear their respective positions. It is important to note that all players were blind folded so that everyone was on the same playing field, regardless of the amount of vision loss.

Although I enjoyed beep baseball, competing frequencies of sound were overstimulating, and localizing the direction of the sound was challenging. I was thankful to be playing with supportive teammates, which made it an enjoyable experience.

Goal Ball

One of my favorite sports is called Goal Ball. This is a sport specifically played in the blind/visually impaired community. Goal Ball is played using a basketball with a bell inside of it. Once again, all players are blind folded to create an equal playing field.

Each team has three individuals. They kneel on the ground; the positions are left wing, center, and right wing. As the ball is rolled from one side of the court to the other, the players lay on the ground to block the ball from going into the goal, which is located behind them. There are tactile lines on the ground marking the boundaries for each position and the goal line. When I played Goal Ball, I requested to play left wing so that the ball would always be on my right side.



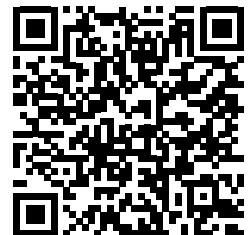
Another aspect of this game I enjoyed is that the environment needs to be completely quiet. All spectators and teammates who aren't currently playing are instructed to not speak or even whisper, as the acoustics in the gym can distract the players from hearing the very quiet bell within the basketball.

Adaptive sports are a lot of fun. As with everything, the experience is enhanced with a supportive team, strong self-advocacy skills, and a willingness to learn and adapt.

My favorite sports were goal ball and track, but I enjoyed the challenges and growth opportunities that swimming and beep baseball offered.

Learn more about the DHH Guide Program by using the QR Code or contact:

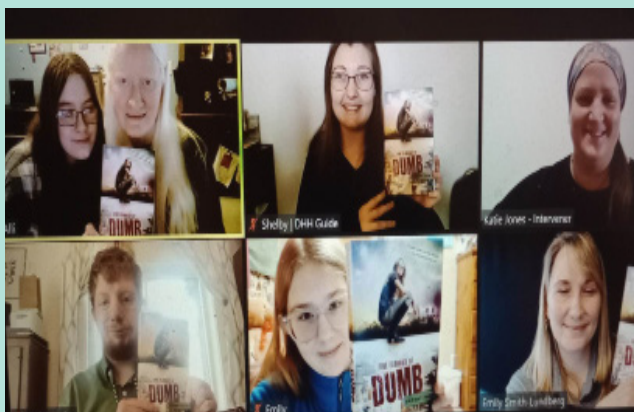
Heidy Nazario
DHH Guide Supervisor
Phone: (612) 297-6603
(TEXT ONLY)



.. Coffee Chat ..



.. Book Club ..



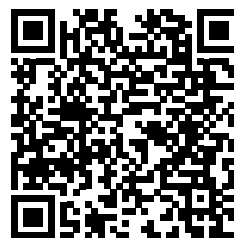
• TRF Family Connect •



... Roller Skating ...



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



MNH&V EVENTS

STATEWIDE

Roller Skating in Coon Rapids



EVENTS

IN-PERSON

- Roller Skating Coon Rapids
- Family Connect Thief River Falls

ONLINE

- Book Cluk Five Flavors of DUMB
- Coffee Chat Deafplus

THANK YOU for helping make these events possible! DHS, Department of Natural Resources, J.M. Smucker Company



HANDS & VOICES™
MINNESOTA

709 University Avenue West
Saint Paul, MN 55104

FOCUS

NEWSLETTER



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

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

April 2024

Metro Picnic!

THURSDAY, AUGUST 1, 2024

5:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Use the QR code below to register
for the Metro Picnic Event.

Registration begins April 15, 2024



Calling all Superheroes in the MN Hands & Voices Community. Dust off your superhero costumes, don a cape or mask, or just come as you are. Whatever you do, don't miss out on your children joining the Hands & Voices' League of Heroes. The Hero Within!

Great opportunity for families to meet and have fun! MNH&V Parent Guides, DHH Guides, and LSS Deaf Mentors will be on hand to visit with families.

To view more MNH&V events go to;

<https://www.eventbrite.com/o/minnesota-hands-amp-voices-also-9882223703>

Disclaimer

We use the words 'Deaf and hard of hearing' and 'DHH' as inclusive terms for all Deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, and late-deafened children.