

FOCUS



Supporting families with children
who are deaf & hard of hearing

HANDS &
VOICES™
MINNESOTA

In A Perfect World: IEP Survival Kit by Leeanne Seaver

For many parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing, the earliest sign of spring is that growing knot in the stomach foretelling the approach of the annual IEP staffing season. I take comfort from many positive experiences with my son's Individual Education Program planning teams, but like a lot of you, the process has sometimes been tense and painful.

In preparation for this unique rite of spring, this issue features the collected wisdom of some ace educational advocates and experts who were invited to share their favorite tips for parents on not only surviving the IEP process, but actually making the most of it.

It's always encouraging to hear stories of how good things can be when everybody is on the same page about the child's needs and there are no hurdles in implementing the plan. When things are good, they're very, very good, but when the IEP meeting is bad, it's horrid. To further complicate things, all kinds of factors can contribute to a difficult IEP meeting that have nothing to do with writing measurable goals or improving access to communication for our kids. There are often elephants in the room that no one acknowledges like:

- Patronizing or condescending professional attitudes towards parents.
- Non-supportive administrators who limit the teachers' effectiveness (this is sometimes the reason the teacher won't look you in the eye and nurses a migraine for a week before and after the meeting).
- Staff territorialism and power struggles within a school building or district.
- Programmatic decisions that drive the school agenda.
- Unwritten administrative policies and practices that instantly stifle anything resembling creativity or innovation by the team.

Here are some talking points to use to take on these challenges:

- "I'm sure you don't intend to make me (uncomfortable/feel dismissed/upset), but your comments are not helping me feel like an equal member of this team."
- "Is there anything limiting our discussion of what it will take to meet my child's individual needs that you are all aware of that I'm not?"
- "Can you tell me how your suggestion/idea/proposal/decision relates to my child's unique, individual needs, and

what evidence you have that it'll work?"

Don't Leave Home Without This Advice

Parents can often affect changes from their vantage point "outside" the educational system more effectively than teachers can on the "inside." Most of us don't draw a paycheck from the system and aren't functionally-bound by school "culture", so the same limitations don't apply.



Bolstered by a good understanding of the procedural safeguards and their legal rights, the best parent advocates I know employ strategies not found in the canon of IDEA regulations.

Many of our state chapters have parent-advocate networks to help each other out at the local level. If you want to be that person in your state chapter, we want to hear from you! Email us at parentadvocate@handsandvoices.org. And if you want to dive deeper into this topic, there's plenty of material at http://www.handsandvoices.org/articles/articles_index.html#adv

Amidst All the Variables... The Constant Parent

Every year, IEP teams bring new people and perspectives to weigh in on what it's going to take to educate our children and launch them into the highest stratosphere of their potential. With each new year, our child also presents new issues and challenges to be met. From the first IFSP meeting until the last IEP, the constant presence of an empowered and effective parent is the key to the survival of your vision for this child's

In A Perfect World: IEP Survival Kit continued on the next page

In A Perfect World: IEP Survival Kit continued from the front page.

future. The sooner a parent understands that s/he is in charge of the care and feeding of the IEP team, the deeper the investment of that parent in the process. The professionals are more respectful and responsive in return. The combined efforts of deeply invested parents partnered with responsive, qualified educators are far more likely to produce successful kids because...

- Everyone hold themselves equally accountable for results—parents and professionals alike.
- Everybody does their homework; they know what this child needs and apply evidence-based solutions, but keep an open mind and genuinely engage in a dialogue of discovery of what will work.
- They've read about and employ the newest recommended instructional practices in deaf education (see:) they also seek answers outside the boundaries of deaf ed.
- They are pro-active, equally-yoked members of the IEP team and jointly set the agenda for a staffing.
- Everybody does what they say they'll do.

- Everyone puts their requests in writing and shares them with the full team well ahead of time...whether it's a draft IEP or a brand new idea to consider.

- They all follow the four Rs of Advocacy. Hands & Voices :: RAdvocacy (handsandvoices.org)

Perhaps as important as any of this is the ability to maintain a sense of humor. Whether you're wrapping up a four-hour IEP meeting, or just trying to find a snappy ending to your column, in a perfect world, you always leave'em laughing

<https://www.handsandvoices.org/articles/perfect/V12-3-IEPSurvkit.htm>

Abridged with permission from Hands & Voices. The article was originally published in the Hands & Voices Communicator, Spring 2009. Volume XII, Issue 3. See more about our Hands & Voices mission and vision, local chapters, resources, and programs for families with deaf/hard of hearing children and the professionals who serve them at <https://handsandvoices.org/>

Professional Joy Ambassadors Wanted

Jennifer Clark and Candace Lindow-Davies, Fostering Joy Core Team Members

Fostering Joy is a movement that began in 2017 to support the intentional practice of looking for and encouraging joyful moments between families and/or caregivers and their children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). The aim of Fostering Joy is to spark collaboration among families, caregivers, professionals and leaders who are DHH, to encourage a collective shift in focus from mitigating the challenges of raising and supporting DHH children to celebrating these children, their growth, and the many positive impacts they have on our lives. While you might have heard about the Family Arm of the Fostering Joy Project (hosted by Hands & Voices headquarters), you might not know that Fostering Joy also includes a "professional arm" hosted by The Institute at the Children's Center for Communication.

Dolly Parton once said, "When I'm inspired, I get excited because I can't wait to see what I'll come up with next." Professionals in the Fostering Joy movement get excited about finding ways to incorporate joy into their fields of deaf education, audiology, speech pathology, etc. They believe that joy can and should have a seat at the table and space in the sound booth, too. They review and discuss research and the science of joy, and ask questions such as, "How can we add joy into an IFSP?" or, "While collecting data and sharing information with families, how do we do this through the lens of joy?" Fostering Joy has gained momentum and is recruiting "Joy Ambassadors" to help families have positive social and emotional development and well-being. In the process, we hope to inspire professionals to increase their daily joy.

Sidebar:

How can professionals become Joy Ambassadors?

- Check out the Fostering Joy for Professionals webpage at; <https://cccbsd.org/programs/institute/fostering-joy-professionals/>
- Join the Fostering Joy Facebook group for professionals.
- Participate in the Fostering Joy Book Club for professionals.
- Attend Fostering Joy for professionals meetings.
- Infuse Fostering Joy into your work with families.
- Connect families with MNH&V DHH Guides who can lead activities with the Fostering Joy Journal for Kids.
- Invite families to join the Fostering Joy Facebook group for families.
- Encourage colleagues to become Joy Ambassadors, too.



Early Hearing Detection & Intervention

Hello! My name is Jess Moen, and I am the Minnesota statewide specialist for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI). I have been in this role since September 2022, when Kathy Anderson retired from the position. I hold teaching licenses in both Early Childhood Education and Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Prior to filling this role, I worked as a teacher for Deaf or Hard of Hearing students in Northern Minnesota, serving in an individual school district as well as an itinerant teacher in multiple rural districts. My passion for working with the youngest children and their families led me to originally participate in my regional EHDI team and focus more attention on early childhood.

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention refers to a wide array of interagency, medical, educational and community initiatives to support young children who have been identified with a hearing difference, their families, and the professionals who serve them.

IN YOUR CORNER

with Jess Moen

“Alone we can do so little;
together we can do so much.”
Helen Keller.

In Minnesota, the overarching goals of the Minnesota’s Interagency EHDI initiatives are to ensure that:

- Young children who have hearing loss are able to maximize their communication and learning potential, regardless of the type and degree of their hearing loss.
- Young children who have hearing loss are able to begin kindergarten with communication, social and early literacy skills at developmental levels similar to those of their typically-hearing peers or comparable to their cognitive abilities.
- Each family receives the quality individualized supports and services they need to help their child grow and learn.

I also work as a Minnesota Centers of Excellence for Young Children (MNCoe) with Disabilities Coordinator. MNCoe is part of Minnesota’s comprehensive system of personal development (CSPD) for early childhood special education. The MNCoe team supports educators in implementing all Part C and Part B/619 requirements, including overseeing the preparation, training, and ongoing support to personnel.

What a great daily blend of the work I get to do! While I enjoy my work in support of deaf and hard-of-hearing children and their families, I also love my time with my family and friends. I live in Northern Minnesota with my three children (Mia age 17, Eli age 14, and Evan age 11), and I happily follow them around to all of their activities and cheer them on in all they do. For me, there is nothing that makes me happier than seeing my children find their passion!

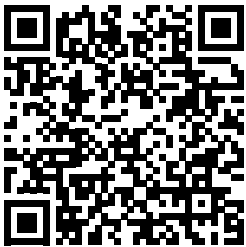


Living in Minnesota is also the perfect place for doing hobbies that bring me joy, like camping, hiking, skiing, biking and traveling.

I look forward to continuing the work of the EHDI program in Minnesota and supporting young children and their families.

Jess Moen
jess.moen@metroecu.org
612.638.1508

For more information on the EHDI program, use the QR code below.



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- @mnhandsandvoices

DEAF EXPERIENCE

with Elena Miranda

This is the story shared by two Latino families. They have many things in common and some differences, and they have fostered true friendship between them and their respective daughters over the years.

Mercy and Elizabeth met when their girls, Scarlet and Haily were receiving speech therapy at the same hospital back in 2011. They began to greet each other, more cordially every time, and their girls began to play together.

Both girls have genetic bilateral hearing loss, both use cochlear implants, and both started going to the same school in kindergarten. The friendship grew and they felt seen, because they have many things in common. Both speak perfect Spanish, English and ASL.

When they entered seventh grade, Mercy and her family moved, and the girls were separated. A year later, Elizabeth

and her family moved to the same school district so that the two girls would attend the same school again. Scarlet wants to run and win medals, and she really enjoys nature and being outside when the weather allows it. One of the many moments that has changed her way of seeing the world is when she went to Ecuador without her mother. She realized how different life is there and how fewer opportunities are there in that beautiful country. Mercy says, "Scarlet has become more mature."

Haily enjoys communicating in a variety of ways. However, she does get tired of explaining to new people about her cochlear implant, but says, "It's almost always the little kids who ask me out of curiosity and that's ok." Haily wants to be a professional makeup artist and do star makeup and nail art. She says, "I'm going to learn to do it very well. I don't know how, but I'll do it."

Mercy has attended various Minnesota Hands & Voices (MNH&V) events. "It has been very important for me to attend these events because it is an opportunity to learn and meet other families," she says.

Elizabeth shares that for her the key to achieving her daughter's happiness is "patience and unconditional love." Mercy says that "never giving up and believing in yourself is a guiding principle she wants to instill in her daughter."

Take a look at Scarlet and Haily in the photographs on the next page within the Latino Cultures Column.

Welcome Back!

Mary worked at Minnesota Hands & Voices (MNH&V) as a Metro Parent Guide from 2018 to 2020 and returned to the team in 2023. She has been involved with MNH&V in many ways: as a mother who first contacted MNH&V nearly 20 years ago looking for support; as a volunteer at family events; and as a small business owner who designed many previous resource materials and wrote and produced the Focus Newsletter. In addition, she is a Metro Parent Guide, ready to support families with a child who is deaf or hard of hearing just as MNH&V supported her family over the years.

Mary and her husband, Stephen, have five adult children. Their youngest, Luke, is deaf (bilateral profound), and the older four children have typical hearing. Luke attends college at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and lives near campus. He was born in 2001 just before hospitals were required to do newborn hearing screenings. As a result, Luke wasn't identified as deaf until he was 15 months old. The audiologist recommended they call their local school district which recommended they contact MNH&V.

Mary's main career has been in graphic design, and she continues to dabble in it on a project-to-project basis. For many years she worked in area schools as a DHH preschool program assistant and as a Deafblind Intervener. She continues to work as a Community Deafblind Intervener a few

evenings during the week and for special events. Her position as Metro Parent Guide, combined with other projects, more than fills her workdays with variety and interest.

In her spare time Mary enjoys her large growing family, hiking, camping, art activities, rock hounding, yard work, "power hours," fidget toys, Saturday sister chats, audiobooks, Sudoku and collecting random items.

Mary Stadelman
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¿Amistad sin límites?

Esta es la historia que comparten dos familias Latinas que comparten muchas cosas en común y muchas diferencias, pero que han logrado fomentar a través de los años la amistad verdadera entre sus respectivas hijas.

Mercy y Elizabeth se conocieron cuando ambas niñas tomaban terapia de lenguaje en el mismo hospital en el 2011, empezaron a saludarse y cada vez que se veían se saludaban con más cordialidad, las niñas empezaban a jugar.

Ambas niñas tienen pérdida auditiva bilateral genética, ambas usan implantes cocleares, ambas empezaron a ir a la misma escuela desde kindergarden. La amistad fue creciendo, ellas se sienten muy identificadas, pues tienen muchas cosas en común, las dos hablan perfecto Español, Inglés y también ASL.

Cuando entraron al grado 7, Mercy y su familia se cambiaron de domicilio y entonces las niñas se separaron. Un año más tarde Elizabeth y su familia se mudaron al mismo distrito escolar para que volvieran las dos niñas a la misma escuela.

LATINO CULTURES

with Elena Miranda

“LA VERDADERA AMISTAD RESISTE EL TIEMPO, LA DISTANCIA, Y EL SILENCIO.”

Scarlet cuenta que para ella uno de los muchos momentos que han cambiado su manera de ver el mundo es cuando ella fue a Ecuador sin su mamá, se dio cuenta cuan diferente es la vida y las oportunidades allá en aquel bello país de donde son originarios sus papas. Su mamá dice “Scarlet volvió más madura”. Otra de las cosas que ella comparte le han cambiado su perspectiva es ir de campamento con la escuela cuando estaban en 5º. Grado.

Haily, comparte que ella disfruta poder comunicarse de diversas maneras y que lo único que está cansada es de explicar a las nuevas personas que es su implante coclear y porque lo



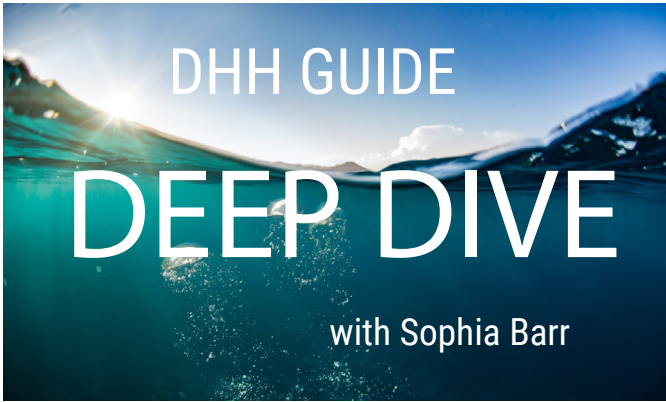
usa, pero dice “Casi siempre son los niños pequeños los que me preguntan por curiosidad”

Scarlet quiere correr y ganar premios, le gusta mucho estar en la naturaleza y disfruta mucho estar afuera de la casa cuando el clima lo permite, dice Scarlet.

Haily quiere ser maquillista profesional y maquillar estrellas y poner uñas. Haily dice: “Voy a aprender a hacerlo muy bien y no sé como, pero lo lograré”

Mercy ha asistido a varios eventos de MNH&V, “ha sido muy importante para mí asistir a estos eventos porque es una oportunidad de aprender y conocer a otras familias” dice Mercy.

Elizabeth comparte que para ella la clave de lograr la felicidad de su hija es paciencia y amor incondicional. Mientras que Mercy nos comparte que “nunca darse por vencidos y creer en uno mismo.



office regularly, expressing my need for an interpreter and inquiring about any progress. Although it took until the beginning of my senior year, I finally secured an interpreter for two of my five classes. While it was not a comprehensive solution, it was a significant improvement and brought me a sense of relief.

Through my experience, I learned the profound importance of self-advocacy. By voicing my needs and persistently pursuing appropriate accommodations, I gained a better understanding of my rights as a student, and I secured the necessary support and accommodations I required. I realized that the empowerment I felt had come from my self-advocacy. Although I wish I had started advocating for myself earlier, I am grateful for the progress I made and the invaluable lessons I learned.

Throughout my school years, I had never actively participated in my Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings. The thought of discussing my accommodations and hearing about and acknowledging my academic challenges was uncomfortable, leading me to avoid the meetings altogether. However, it wasn't until the end of my freshman year in high school that I realized the consequences of not taking charge of my educational needs.



This lack of self-advocacy prevented me from actively participating in decisions about my education. At the end of my freshman year, I realized the detrimental effects of allowing others to make decisions on my behalf. One such decision was the elimination of my ASL interpreter, a crucial accommodation for effective communication. While the school aimed to foster independence by removing this accommodation, it hindered my ability to comprehend class material and fully engage in my education.

During my sophomore and junior years, I faced significant challenges in my classes. Despite having an FM system and sitting next to friends who tried to assist me, the situation was far from ideal. I recognized that it was unfair to burden my friends with responsibilities that should have been addressed by the school through appropriate accommodations.

I realized that I needed to take control of my education, so I decided to be proactive. I began visiting the superintendent's

The Deaf and Hard of Hearing Guide program focuses exclusively on the needs of families and their children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH). A diverse group of DHH adults with a wide range of experiences related to individual hearing levels and all who use different modes of communication and may or may not use technology. Families can meet positive role models who share their own experiences growing up. Learn more about the DHH Guide Program by using this QR Code, or contact:

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



• Oh, My Flowers! •



•• Pottery Burn ••



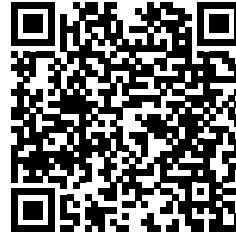
•• Northfield Picnic ••



••• Mom's Retreat •••



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



MNH&V EVENTS

STATEWIDE



Pottery Burn Event



Northfield Family Picnic

••• EVENTS •••

IN-PERSON

- Mom's Retreat
- Oh, My Flowers!
- Pottery Burn
- Northfield Picnic

ONLINE

- Preparing for College
- THANK YOU for helping make these events possible!
DHS, A Mothers Rest, Linda Takke



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NEWSLETTER



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

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

July 2023

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!*

IN PERSON FAMILY EVENT
FREE FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING

2023 Annual • Minnesota Hands & Voices • Metro

DATE: Thursday, August 3rd

TIME: 5:00-8:00 p.m. (rain or shine)

WHERE: Como Park Midway Pavilion 1199 Midway Parkway
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55018



<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/2022-mn-hands-voices-annual-metro-picnic-tickets-275272376087>