



HANDS & VOICES™ ILLINOIS

# ILLINOIS E.A.R.S

E.A.R.S = EVENTS AND RESOURCES STATEWIDE



GUIDE BY YOUR SIDE™ ILLINOIS

*"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."*™

## WHO ARE WE?

**The Illinois Families for Hands & Voices mission:** A parent-driven, non-profit organization that supports families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodologies.

**The Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side mission:** Provides free, unbiased emotional support and resources by trained Parent Guides to families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

If you are looking for resources, parent support, events or anything else, we want to help! View our contact information on page 21.



**SNIPPETS are:**

- Simple
- Concise
- Easy to read
- Shareable
- Educational
- Information at your fingertips

**Languages available:**

- English
- Arabic
- Chinese
- French
- German
- Korean
- Polish
- Russian
- Tagalog

**Current List of SNIPPET Topics:**

- Agency & Program Acronyms \*
- Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder
- Aural (Re)habilitation
- All about ASL (American Sign Language)
- Audiologists
- Benefits of Music
- Benefits of DHH Guide Support
- Bone Conduction Hearing Aid
- Building Confidence in Children with Hearing Loss
- CHARGE Syndrome
- Choosing a Daycare
- CMV Prevention
- Common Acronyms
- Communication Strategies
- Communicating with your Child
- Communication Tips
- Conductive Hearing Loss
- Developmental Therapist - Hearing (DT/H)
- Early Intervention (EI) Clearinghouse \*
- Fostering Joy
- From Culture to Connection
- Genetic Testing
- Hearing Device Tips
- Literacy Development
- Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)
- Microtia / Atresia
- Mixed Hearing Loss
- More Than Hearing Loss
- Navigating Early Intervention (EI) in Illinois \*
- Pediatric Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist (ENT)
- Receptive Language Development Tests
- Sensorineural Hearing Loss
- Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)

Page 11 | 8 NEW SNIPPET Topics - Just Released!

Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> / 8pm CST

**HELPING EXTENDED FAMILY UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD WITH HEARING LOSS**

Explore how to educate family with kindness while creating a supportive and inclusive home environment

Join us for a free informal webinar on zoom

To receive the zoom link register here or with QR code: <http://tinyurl.com/ILHVSigup2025>

Page 15 | Upcoming Events

**BE ALARMED!**

**SMOKE ALARM INSTALLATION PROGRAM**

**IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO BE PREPARED**

Arlington Heights Fire Department, along with the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance, is offering free **Safe Awake bed-shaking smoke alarms** to individuals and families who are deaf or hard of hearing. This important safety device can be installed in your home, for through the **Be Alarmed Smoke Alarm Installation** program.

If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please contact David Roberts, Division Chief at the Arlington Heights Fire Department. Chief Roberts can be reached at 847-437-7000 or [droberts@avab.com](mailto:droberts@avab.com).

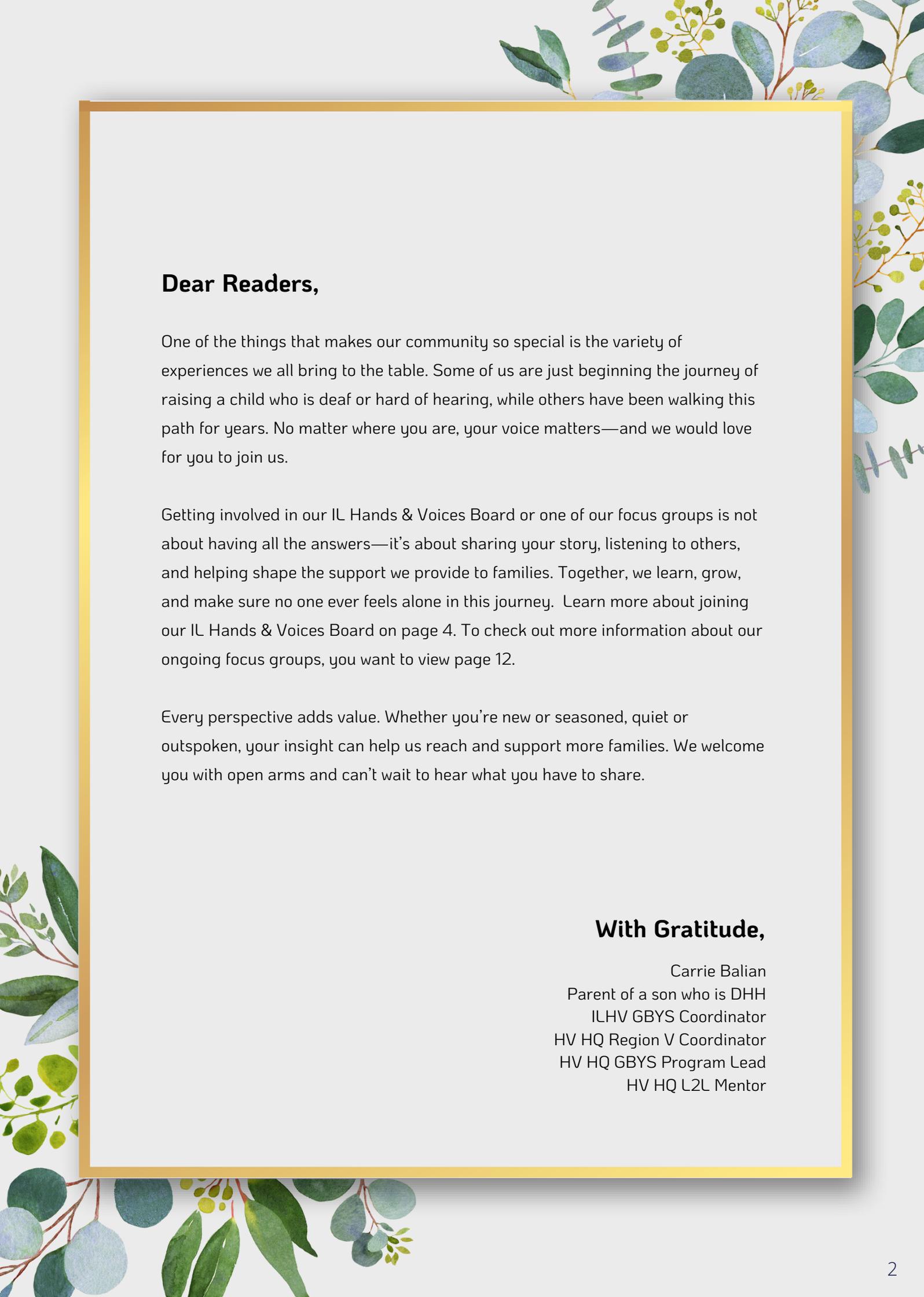
Offer available to all Illinois residents and not limited to residents of Arlington Heights. **Page 7 | Free Smoke Alarms**

# PARENT CONFERENCES

For families/caregivers of children who are deaf/hard of hearing



Page 18 | Free Parent Conferences - Register today!



## Dear Readers,

One of the things that makes our community so special is the variety of experiences we all bring to the table. Some of us are just beginning the journey of raising a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, while others have been walking this path for years. No matter where you are, your voice matters—and we would love for you to join us.

Getting involved in our IL Hands & Voices Board or one of our focus groups is not about having all the answers—it's about sharing your story, listening to others, and helping shape the support we provide to families. Together, we learn, grow, and make sure no one ever feels alone in this journey. Learn more about joining our IL Hands & Voices Board on page 4. To check out more information about our ongoing focus groups, you want to view page 12.

Every perspective adds value. Whether you're new or seasoned, quiet or outspoken, your insight can help us reach and support more families. We welcome you with open arms and can't wait to hear what you have to share.

## With Gratitude,

Carrie Balian  
Parent of a son who is DHH  
ILHV GBYS Coordinator  
HV HQ Region V Coordinator  
HV HQ GBYS Program Lead  
HV HQ L2L Mentor

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## Acronyms

So many acronyms!  
Start here to learn what  
they stand for.



HANDS &  
VOICES™  
ILLINOIS

News from our Illinois  
Hands & Voices President,  
Amy Keslinke



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# President's Corner

It's hard to believe summer has already come and gone!

We were excited to bring two new board members onto our team this summer. Both new board members, Katie Chamberlain Kritikos and Kiara Chavez, are parents of young DHH children and bring valuable strengths to the board. We are excited for what they both will bring to Illinois Hands & Voices!

Have you ever thought about getting involved in ILHV? Many parents of DHH kids think of Parent Guides as the way to get involved, but being a board member is a great opportunity to help families of children who are deaf and hard of hearing in a different way. Our board is made up of volunteer parents, professionals, and DHH individuals who are passionate about helping families and creating connection across Illinois.

Many people mention that they don't have board experience or that they are new to the DHH world as reasons not to apply for the ILHV board of directors. That's ok! We all had to start somewhere, and we are more than willing to have new board members learning as they go. If you are passionate about helping DHH families, no matter what choices they make about amplification and communication, and if you can devote a few hours a month to our board meeting and committee work, we would love to have you.

The ILHV Board is currently looking for more parent board members. If you are interested in learning more, please email me at [amy.keslinke@ilhandsandvoices.com](mailto:amy.keslinke@ilhandsandvoices.com) or [click here to apply](#).

Wishing you all a fabulous fall!



# In Search of Support

Written by: Karen Kockler, MA, CCC, SLP-L  
ASHA State Education Advocacy Leader for Illinois

Are you a parent or guardian in search of appropriate supports and services for your child? If your child has been receiving services through Early Intervention (EI) and is about to transition to Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) or preschool within a school setting, are you ready? Are you aware of the differences between EI services and school-based services? There are so many acronyms used in describing programs, services, and service providers! Let this article serve as an introduction to a few of the most critical acronyms and terms used in special education, especially those relevant to the early stages of special education provision.

Services provided by speech language pathologists (SLPs), audiologists, occupational therapists (OTs), physical therapists (PTs), school nurses, social workers, hearing itinerants (or Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing), vision itinerants, and other specialists as required, are offered in the preschool and school settings. Just before a child's third birthday, the Early Intervention (EI) team working with the child and his/her family, will call a meeting with the family's local school district's Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) team to review the IFSP (Individual Family Service Plan), and to determine continued needs (if any). In most cases, an IEP, or Individualized Education Plan, will be considered and written if the child requires continued services. Sometimes, additional evaluations may be required as well.

When a team convenes to discuss special education services for a student, and, in the school setting, whether or not support and/or services will be provided, the team must determine the student's eligibility for services. In order to make such a determination, three major issues must be addressed: 1) the student's current skills and/or performance, 2) whether or not there are adverse effects that may 3) impact the student's educational and/or functional performance in the school setting that may ultimately hinder the student's access to a "free appropriate public education" (FAPE). One task to be accomplished during a transition meeting is to review the most recent evaluation that was completed, and then to identify the need for additional evaluations. This is a critical time in development to talk about the child's readiness for learning and for literacy development. Let's take a closer look at the three major criteria required for school-based special education services.

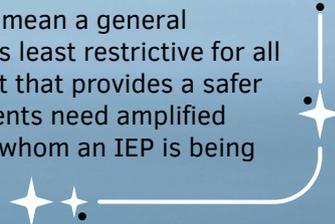
First, it is important to document the child's (or student's) current skills and abilities. In Eligibility and/or IEP documentation, this is called the "Present Levels of Performance", or PLOPs. Team members, including input from parents/guardians, document what the child/student is currently able to do independently or with some support.

Next, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) states that students are eligible for special education services if/when an adverse effect is identified. IDEA states that school districts must provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to "any individual child with a disability requiring special education and related services (specialized instruction), even if the child has not failed or been retained in a course or grade, and is advancing from grade to grade.". So, what is the meaning of "adverse effect"? An "Adverse effect" means significant and consistent negative impact on academic achievement or functional performance.

Finally, how the adverse effect(s) may impact the child's/student's educational and/or functional performance must be discussed. Educational performance refers to academic achievement, literacy skills, language use and understanding. Functional performance refers to activities such as social-emotional skills, behavior, general communication skills, navigating the building/environment, self-care, and nutritional intake (feeding/swallowing).

One other critical consideration when students are identified as needing some level of support is the principle of least restrictive environment (LRE). IDEA's Sec. 300.114 (a) (2) (i) states that the LRE is the environment in which "To the maximum extent appropriate, children with disabilities, including children in public or private institutions or other care facilities, are educated with children who are nondisabled; and (ii) Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of children with disabilities from the regular educational environment occurs only if the nature or severity of the disability is such that education in regular classes with the use of supplementary aids and services cannot be achieved satisfactorily." Though the LRE can mean a general education classroom for some students, it doesn't mean a general education classroom is least restrictive for all students. Some students require smaller class sizes. Some students need an environment that provides a safer floor plan (i.e. fewer desks, different arrangements of desks/other furniture). Some students need amplified classrooms. It is up to the team to decide what the LRE is for each individual student for whom an IEP is being written.

NOTE: Many resources were used in the writing of this article. Links to these resources are available upon request.



# Board of Director Spotlight

by Andrea Marwah, ILHV Executive Director

## AMY KESLINKE

Amy has been with the IL Hands & Voices Board of Directors for almost 3 years and spent a few years as a Parent Guide. She is our Board President and a terrific leader. Her background in education and social work as well as being Evan's mom has added to our team. I now get to share her with you. If you have questions for Amy, you can reach her at the contact information below. Enjoy getting to know her!



### Amy.....

- ....lives with her husband Dan and children Emerie and Evan in Gilberts.
- ....is a teacher by trade and seeking her masters degree is social work.
- ....discovered very early on in her career path that she liked to help people, specifically helping people live the lives they want to be living. This discovery lead her to teaching and now she is seeking her social work where she can continue to make a difference in peoples lives.
- ....would be "Anne" from Anne of Green Gables if she had to be a fictional character.
- ....would tell her younger self "Listen to your gut, when your gut tells you it's not right, it likely isn't."
- ....finds that when she has an overwhelming day or time in her life she has recurring dreams about tornado's and whales, often at the same time.
- ....is good at taking the big picture and putting it into practice, taking something from an idea to an actuality.
- ....would be the Disney princess with the crazy hair Merida from brave because she's tough and brave.

### Fun Facts about Amy:

- She is known as Ms. Slinky to a certain 3<sup>rd</sup> grade class that couldn't pronounce her last name correctly.
- She wouldn't change her name because she feels that Amy just fits her.
- She chose Jeweled "Taylor Swift" as her stage entry song!
- The funniest thing on her desk, Evan's slipper. Apparently they are everywhere in the Keslinke household.
- Her most amusing or quirky habit is when she gets a hankering to organize things, starts by emptying everything out but then loses momentum half way through.
- She ziplined in the Dominican Republic.
- She shared two bucket list items she hopes to accomplish soon, her social word masters degree and having a house on a lake.

**Amy's advice to families:** "Listen to your gut! When it tells you it doesn't feel right, it probably isn't!"

Amy Keslinke  
IL Hands & Voices President  
[amy.keslinke@ilhandsandvoices.com](mailto:amy.keslinke@ilhandsandvoices.com)



Illinois Families for Hands & Voices is a  
501c3 Non-Profit Organization, EIN 06-1724201

[www.ilhandsandvoices.org](http://www.ilhandsandvoices.org)



## **IT'S NEVER TOO EARLY TO BE PREPARED**

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The Arlington Heights Fire Department, along with the Illinois Fire Safety Alliance, is offering free Safe Awake bed-shaking smoke alarms to individuals and families who are deaf or hard of hearing. This important safety device can be installed in your home, for free, through the Be Alarmed Smoke Alarm Installation program.

If you would like to take advantage of this offer, please contact David Roberts, Division Chief at the Arlington Heights Fire Department. Chief Roberts can be reached at 847-368-5450 or [droberts@vah.com](mailto:droberts@vah.com).

This offer is available to any family in Illinois, and is not limited to residents of Arlington Heights.



# SUPPORTING SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Written by: Hanna Swearinger, IL Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side Parent Guide

Back-to-school season is here, and just like the falling leaves, kids are learning to let go of old routines and step into new ones. Fall is a time of change—and with change comes big feelings! Social emotional learning (SEL) helps children notice those feelings, name them, and grow stronger through them. Supporting SEL during childhood helps set the stage for resilience, empathy, and lifelong learning.

## 1. Name and validate feelings.

Young children often experience strong emotions but don't always have the words to express them. Try labeling emotions as they arise —“You're feeling frustrated because the block tower fell.” Validating their experience teaches that all feelings are normal and manageable. Take this one step further by naming your feelings in moments of tension or light stress.

## 2. Practice calming strategies together.

Deep breaths, stretching, coloring, or squeezing a favorite stuffed animal can help children regulate emotions. Modeling these strategies in the moment shows your child how to manage stress in healthy ways.

## 3. Encourage empathy and kindness.

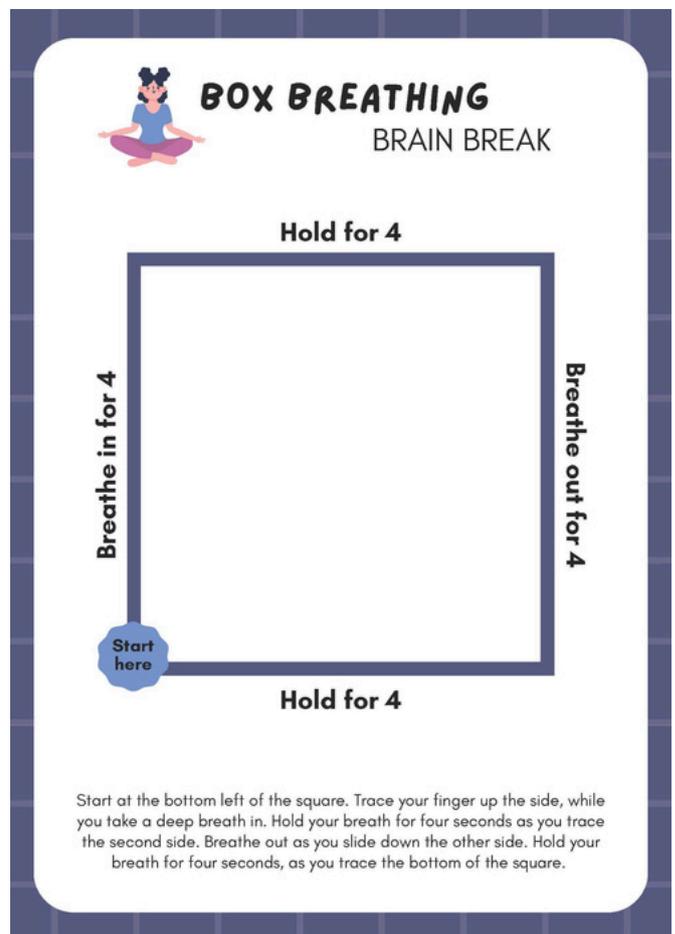
Identifying emotions in others helps children build empathy, strengthen friendships, and learn how to respond with care and understanding in social situations. To practice this, point out when someone looks happy, sad, or upset, and talk about how we can respond.

## 4. Support problem-solving skills.

When conflicts arise—such as sharing toys—guide children to think of solutions instead of jumping in with an answer. Asking, “What do you think we can do?” empowers them to build confidence and independence.

## 5. Model social skills daily.

Children learn by watching the adults around them. Saying “please” and “thank you,” taking turns, and listening with attention all model positive interactions.



SEL is not something that happens overnight, small steps each day = big progress over time. By nurturing empathy, problem-solving, and emotional awareness, we help children build skills for lifelong well-being. To support this, we've included a **Box Breathing worksheet**—a simple tool to practice calm and resilience together.





ESTABLISHED

10/21/2014

## ILLINOIS DEAF CAMPERS



We are thrilled to announce the Illinois Deaf Campers (IDC), established in 2004, as a beacon of community and connection. My husband, Brent E Bowen, and I, Anita Cervantes Bowen, have proudly served as long-time members of this non-profit organization for 21 years. Our journey began in 2006 through IDC, blossoming into a loving relationship that culminated in our marriage during the IDC event in the sweltering summer of 2018. Together, we cherish the joys of outdoor camping and the friendships we've built with families, children, and individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, DeafBlind, hearing siblings, friends, and CODA.



As passionate performers, Brent and I delight in bringing joy to our community as IDC Deaf clowns, entertaining at camping events and stage performances. We are grateful to the IL Hands and Voices Guide By Your Side (H&V GBYS) non-profit organization for the chance to engage with others during 5K fundraisers and family events. Our heartfelt thanks extend to the amazing IDC board members, known as "Wagon Officers," the IDC members, and non-member visitors for their unwavering support throughout our 21 years, even during the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. We honor the memories of those members we've lost along the way, cherishing their contributions during the difficult year of 2020; they will forever be remembered. With immense gratitude, we strive to make IDC a truly special community filled with heartfelt appreciation.



We invite you to check out page 20 in this newsletter to view our upcoming event. All are welcome!

Director of IDC, Anita Cervantes Bowen



# CHARGE SYNDROME FOUNDATION WALK & ROLL



Every May, the CHARGE Syndrome Foundation hosts a virtual 5k. This year's Walk and Roll for CHARGE raised just over \$68,000 for the Foundation, with more than 420 people participating across the United States and Canada. These efforts help increase awareness of CHARGE syndrome and support the CHARGE community through outreach, research, and direct assistance.



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**Languages available:**

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- Spanish
- Tagalog
- Vietnamese

Scan the QR code to view our SNIPPET library



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- Aural (Re)habilitation
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- More Than Hearing Loss
- Navigating Early Intervention (EI) in Illinois \*
- Pediatric Ear, Nose and Throat Specialist (ENT)
- Receptive Language
- Recommended Tests
- Sensorineural Hearing Loss
- Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)
- State Funded Resources \*
- Strategies for Language Development
- Supporting Literacy
- Unilateral Hearing Loss / Single Sided Hearing Loss
- What is an Audiogram
- What is Cytomegalovirus (CMV)?
- What is DSCC? \*

\*These topics are specific to Illinois (IL)

For more information or to suggest future topics email [ilhvgbys@gmail.com](mailto:ilhvgbys@gmail.com)





# Get paid for your input!



We need Illinois parents of children who are deaf/hard of hearing to help review parent materials

Review meetings will be held in the evening and some work will be done on your own beforehand.

Only 6 participants needed per session. One session is 3 hours of work during the month.

We are looking to host multiple review committees over the next year. Selection is ongoing, and we will keep all submissions on file to potentially contact for a committee at a later date.



Scan the QR code. It will take you to the google form with more information and to submit your name as a potential participant.

<https://forms.gle/F5q4TC2E58urm5Ph7>

# Deaf & Hard of Hearing Guides share with families:

- ▶ Their unique lived experiences
- ▶ Technology tips
- ▶ How they navigate social situations
- ▶ How they developed their personal identity
- ▶ And so much more



## NOW

Contact us to get connected for free!

224.343.1873 Voice/Text

ilhvgbys@gmail.com

## AVAILABLE!



HANDS &  
VOICES™  
ILLINOIS



GUIDE BY  
YOUR SIDE™  
ILLINOIS

What do you do to make sure you don't miss hearing announcements in environments like an airport?



# Illinois Sound Beginnings



[www.illinoisoundbeginnings.org](http://www.illinoisoundbeginnings.org)

## Resources for Families

# Illinois EHQDI

## Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

Everything you need to know about hearing screening, diagnostics to intervention and beyond.

Check It Out!!



**Illinois EHQDI Program**  
at Illinois Department of Public Health  
Phone: [217-782-4733](tel:217-782-4733)  
Email: [DPH.newbornhearing@illinois.gov](mailto:DPH.newbornhearing@illinois.gov)

Oct. 22<sup>nd</sup> / 8pm CST

# GROWING UP MULTILINGUAL: SIGN, SPOKEN LANGUAGE, AND NATIVE LANGUAGES FOR D/HH KIDS

Discover how raising your D/HH child with sign and your family's home language supports growth and identity from multicultural parents and deaf adults.



- Join us for a free informal webinar on zoom
- To receive the zoom link register here or with QR code:  
<http://tinyurl.com/ILHVSsignup2025>



## Illinois Sound Beginnings

a partnership of the IL Department of Public Health, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, and IL Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side. Committed to supporting families with children who are deaf/ hard of hearing and deafblind TOGETHER.



*"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."*<sup>TM</sup>



Nov. 5<sup>th</sup> / 8pm CST

# HELPING EXTENDED FAMILY UNDERSTAND YOUR CHILD WITH HEARING LOSS

Explore how to educate family with kindness while creating a supportive and inclusive home environment



- Join us for a free informal webinar on zoom
- To receive the zoom link register here or with QR code:  
<http://tinyurl.com/ILHVSsignup2025>



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*"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."*<sup>TM</sup>



Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> / 8pm CST

# FUN AND GAMES: TIPS AND IDEAS FOR PLAYTIME WITH YOUR FAMILY

Turn classic games and creative activities into opportunities for connection, learning, and laughter for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children.



- Join us for a free informal webinar on zoom
- To receive the zoom link register here or with QR code: <http://tinyurl.com/ILHVSignup2025>



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a partnership of the IL Department of Public Health, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, and IL Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side. Committed to supporting families with children who are deaf/ hard of hearing and deafblind TOGETHER.



*"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."*™



Illinois School for the Deaf Outreach

## In Person Annual Statewide

All session topics will address

Early Intervention, pre-school & school success

ISBE PD and IL EI Credit Offered

# PARENT CONFERENCES

For families/caregivers of children who are deaf/hard of hearing



Choose from  
3 statewide locations

Register today for the location nearest you:

South of Eighty  
Jacksonville  
SEPTEMBER 13

South of Seventy  
Ina  
SEPTEMBER 20

North of Eighty  
Oak Forest  
OCTOBER 11



Childcare ages 3-12



Sessions for parents and adult caretakers, and DHH kids 13+



<https://forms.office.com/g/BTS40KV5zs>

Contact us for more information :  
[andrea.marwah@illinois.gov](mailto:andrea.marwah@illinois.gov)

Please Note: We need at least 6 families to hold this event at the given location, we will cancel if we do not have enough registrants.



# HANDS UP

**FOR HUMOR**

JOIN US FOR A SIDE-SPLITTING  
FAMILY FRIENDLY ASL COMEDY EVENT  
WITH

**KEITH WANN**

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2025**

RICHWOODS HIGH SCHOOL AUDITORIUM  
6301 N. UNIVERSITY ST., PEORIA

**TICKETS: \$3 AT THE DOOR**

4:00PM - DOORS OPEN

4:30 - 5:30PM - PRE-EVENT SOCIAL & SNACKS

6:00PM - SHOW



# Illinois Deaf Campers

Host

## Oktoberfest

October 10th to 12th, 2025

Casey KOA Journey

1248 E. 1250th Road

Casey, Illinois, 62420

Website: [koa.com](http://koa.com)

Reserve: 1-800-562-9113



Dinner on Saturday

Combo \$ 10.00 for brats, chips, cob of corn  
soda or water, desserts.

Please inform us after reserve the campground.

Deadline: 10/5/25 for the headcount

Keith: (815)-220-5097 VP

Anita: [Executor\\_idcnfp2014@outlook.com](mailto:Executor_idcnfp2014@outlook.com)



Game ??

# ACRONYMS

HERE ARE SOME ACRONYMS THAT YOU MAY SEE THROUGHOUT THIS NEWSLETTER OR IN INFORMATION ONLINE

**1-3-6** - Hearing screened by 1 months of age, Diagnostic testing by 3 months of age, and enrolled in Early Intervention and parent support by 6 months of age

**AAP** - American Academy of Pediatrics

**ADA** - Americans With Disabilities Act

**ASL** - American Sign Language

**CMV** - Cytomegalovirus

**DBA** - Doing Business as Agreement

**DEI** - Diversity & Equity Infusion

**DHH** - Deaf Hard of Hearing

**EHDI** - Early Hearing Detection & Intervention

**IDEA** - Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

**IDPH** - Illinois Department of Public Health

**IEP** - Individualized Education Program

**ILHV** - Illinois Hands & Voices

**ISRC** - Illinois Service Resource Center

**GBYS** - Guide By Your Side

**JCIH** - Joint Committee on Infant Hearing

**LTF** - Lost to Follow-up

**L2L** - Leadership to Leadership

**NCHAM** - National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management

**PG** - Parent Guides (parents of children who are deaf/hard of hearing)

**SNIPPET** - Simple N Informative Parent-to-Parent Education Tools

**Learn more on common acronyms here:**

<https://www.illinoissoundbeginnings.com/acronyms>

Illinois Hands & Voices, Guide By Your Side does not support or endorse any specific organization, communication or amplification choice.

The information in this newsletter is to simply share with families and professionals the resources and events available to them.

## FIND US HERE...



### Follow us on Social Media:



@illinoishandsandvoices



@ilhandsandvoices

### IL Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side (ILHV GBYS)

Carrie Balian, Program Coordinator

Phone: (224) 343-1873

Email: [ilhvgbys@gmail.com](mailto:ilhvgbys@gmail.com)

Andrea Marwah, Executive Director

Email: [executivedirector@ilhandsandvoices.com](mailto:executivedirector@ilhandsandvoices.com)

Web: [www.ilhandsandvoices.org](http://www.ilhandsandvoices.org)

### IL EHDI Program

Phone: 217-782-4733

Email: [DPH.newbornhearing@illinois.gov](mailto:DPH.newbornhearing@illinois.gov)

Web: [www.illinoissoundbeginnings.org](http://www.illinoissoundbeginnings.org)

**ILHV GBYS and IL EHDI work together on many initiatives  
and call themselves The IL Sound Beginnings Team**