



ILLINOIS E.A.R.S.

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

"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 25.

Celebrating Anniversaries

2nd ANNIVERSARY

Elsa Huerta

5th ANNIVERSARY

Sara Siddiqui

Hanna Swearinger

Alicia Aaron

Sarah Esperanza

Ramona Martin

15th ANNIVERSARY

Jaclyn Urbanski

We celebrate and thank the following team members for their dedication to our program!

HANDS & VOICES ILLINOIS **GUIDE BY YOUR SIDE ILLINOIS**

Page 5 | Celebrating Anniversaries

SAVE THE DATE!

Moms Night Inn
2026

April 25-26, 2026
Schaumburg

ENTER YOUR EMAIL FOR MORE INFO!

Page 19 | Moms Night Inn
Save the Date

SHARE YOUR FAMILY'S STORY

Your family's journey matters. By sharing your experience of learning about your child's hearing loss and the early days that followed, you can help improve support for families now and in the future.

WHY SHARE YOUR STORY?

Help policymakers, providers, and partners understand the real impact of early diagnosis. Highlight the importance of family support and collaboration. Give hope and reassurance to families just starting their journey.

HOW YOUR STORY WILL BE USED:

- To educate stakeholders and partners
- To strengthen family-centered practices and programs
- To raise awareness of the family experience within Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Program

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE:

Submit your story using our short online form.

Join an introductory workshop to get tips and learn more.

Your voice can make a difference for families like yours.

Page 13 | Share Your Story

CAMP LIONS
2026
SUMMER CAMP FOR BLIND & DEAF

CAMP LIONS
FOUNDATION
LIONS OF ILLINOIS
Serving People with Vision and Hearing Needs
Since 1957

Page 24 | Free Summer Camps **JUNE 7th - JUNE 13th**
YOUTH WEEK

Dear Readers,

Every family's journey begins with a moment that forever changes the way they see the world. For families learning about their child's hearing loss, that moment often comes with a mix of questions, emotions, and decisions that must be made quickly. While no two journeys are the same, the stories families carry are powerful and they matter deeply.

Parent stories help put faces and voices to the systems, programs, and services designed to support children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. They remind professionals, policymakers, and partners why early identification, timely follow-up, and strong family support are so essential. Most importantly, they help ensure that families remain at the center of every decision and in collaboration within the EHDI system.

When parents share their experiences whether about the day of diagnosis, the early months of learning and adjusting, or the supports that made a difference they help others understand what is working well and where continued growth is needed. These stories guide improvement, strengthen partnerships, and inspire more family-centered practices across programs and communities.

In this issue, we are inviting families to share their stories so they can be used to educate stakeholders and highlight the real-life impact of early diagnosis and support. If you have ever wondered whether your story could make a difference, the answer is yes.

Turn to page 13 for more information about how you can participate. You'll find details on an upcoming introductory workshop designed to help you reflect on and craft your story, as well as instructions for submitting your story if you are ready now. We hope you will consider lending your voice because your experience has the power to shape the future for families who follow.

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

TABLE OF *contents*

4

President's Spotlight

A word from our IL Hands & Voices President.

5

Celebrating Anniversaries

Recognizing 2, 5 and 15 years!

6

In the Spotlight

Highlighting one of our IL Hands & Voices Board of Directors.

7

Leaps & Bounds

An IL family shares their journey.

8

IL Event Wrap-Up

Showcasing a recent IL Hands & Voices event.

11

All Things SPED

Information and support - all things Special Education.

12

Resources For All

Information about free online and local resources.

17

Events For All

From in-person to virtual, there are events for all! Check out all the pages so you don't miss out!

25

Acronyms

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



HANDS &
VOICES™
ILLINOIS

News from our Illinois
Hands & Voices President,
Amy Keslinke

President's Corner



Happy new year! Here at ILHV GBYS, we finished the year strong with a great Stuff the Board fundraiser, and started 2026 with a fun family library event. We were excited to be able to offer TWO locations for our library event, at both the Schaumburg Public Library and Cook Memorial Library in Libertyville.

Late winter and early spring are always a busy and exciting time in the Hands & Voices world! Several conferences in the DHH community happen at this time of year, including the Illinois Teachers of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing annual conference and the national Early Hearing Detection and Intervention conference. Not only are these great opportunities to network with professionals in the field, but they are great learning experiences. Additionally, several of us are presenting in order to make sure parent voices are heard in the broader professional community.

Spring is truly the most wonderful time of the year because it holds one of our very favorite events: Moms Night Inn! This event is a retreat for moms and female caregivers of DHH kids and will be held on April 25-26 in Schaumburg. Specific details are coming very soon, so be sure to use the QR code in this newsletter to sign up to get more information about it as soon as it's available. Trust me--once you've gone to Moms Night Inn, you won't want to miss a single year!

Can't wait to see everyone soon!

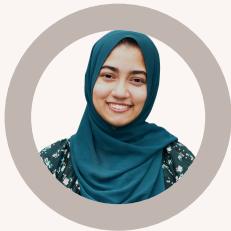
IL Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side Team Members

Celebrating Anniversaries

2nd
ANNIVERSARY



Elsa Huerta



Sara Siddiqui



Hanna Swearerger

5th
ANNIVERSARY



Alicia Aaron



Sarah Esparza



Ramona Martin

15th
ANNIVERSARY



Jaclyn Urbanski

We celebrate and
thank the
following team
members for their
dedication to our
program!



In November, we recognized our Guides who had celebrated their Anniversaries with IL Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side in 2025!

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to our Programs and the families we serve!

Board of Director Spotlight

by Andrea Marwah, ILHV Executive Director

KARI TAYLOR

Kari has been with the IL Hands & Voices Board of Directors since 2023. Her background as a deaf individual and a behavior coach is a significant asset to our organization. I had the pleasure of interviewing Kari and getting to know her a bit better, now I share her with you. If you have questions for Kari, you can reach her at the contact information below. Enjoy getting to know her!

Kari.....

-lives in Sycamore and grew up in Rockford, she has 3 daughters who are all CODA's (Child or Deaf Adult).
-was the first class of the NIA (Northern Illinois Association) Co-Operative, which is still serving students. This was in the early 70's, the first in the area to have deaf ed classrooms using ASL.
-has a bachelor's degree in Education and a Master's Degree in Rehab Counseling.
-became interested in behavior analysis because, from her experience, there were only a couple of behavior analysts who were deaf.
-would tell her younger self, "Do what you want to do, not what others tell you to do."
-would tell her older self, "Let it go. Let everything go."
-is particularly proud of her contribution to the ISRC's "Parent University" Training modules.
-advocates for children who are deaf/hard of hearing passionately.
-still hears her friends call her by her college nickname of "Petey" because she was Kari Peterson back then.
-has a toy PT Cruiser on her desk that was her late father's.

Kari's advice to families: "Things may get worse before they get better, Have patience, don't take it personally!"



Fun Facts about Kari:

- She has a vast connection to the deaf community and loves to help parents make connections.
- She would recommend that all parents read as much as they can about behavior analysis.
- Her go-to dance move when no one is watching is the "80's moves like the Fresh Prince of Bel-Aire".
- One bucket list item is to paraglide.
- If she had a talking pet, she would like to have a parrot that would have meaningful conversations with her.
- Kari's most adventurous thing? Skydiving, her next goal is to dive from a higher point.
- She chose Girl on Fire by Alicia Keys" as her stage entry song!
- If she could rename herself, she would choose Penelope because it's such a unique name, she just loves it.

Kari Taylor
ISRC Behavior Coach, ILHV Board Treasurer
treasurer@ilhandsandvoices.com



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

Opening Doors

WRITTEN BY: EMILY DIETZ



My husband and I received the diagnosis for our little boy, Bear, as hard of hearing in August. He had not passed any hearing tests since birth. Originally, as his parents and advocates, my husband John and I felt shocked, overwhelmed, and alone. While there are multiple people in our family line who also have hearing loss, it was never to the degree that they required hearing aids at such an early age. We had one neighbor who had a child with similar hearing loss, decades ago, and that was the only person I knew who had hearing aids as a youth. Yet even in our scariest and loneliest times, I find the words Jesus said in Matthew 6:26 to be true: "Look at the birds of the air, they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?" Isn't Bear, or us making decisions for him, or any other person with a daunting mountain before them to climb, much more valuable than they? In just a short five months of navigating this new diagnosis, God has opened doors to relationships and opportunities that only He could provide. In a rural town of only 1,300 people, this is a huge deal. This summer, we underwent multiple ABR tests and numerous doctor's appointments in multiple cities up to three hours away. In parallel, unbeknownst to us, our local school was introducing a new line of life skills classes, geared to children with special needs including those who are non-verbal. Out of that, there has been a requirement and an urgency of learning new methods of teaching and communication – a notable method being the use of sign language in the classroom. When we decided to learn ASL to give Bear another avenue of communication, our local school was rolling out the use of functional sign language, and I was also able to take part in those classes to jumpstart my education of a second language.

Between the excitement of the staff and the families at the school, and people in our community now seeing Bear with his bright baby-blue hearing aids, there sparked not only an interest in how to also speak sign language, but also how our community can better connect with and understand what we are going through. This turned into our public library bringing in new resources to learn ASL and hosting a four-week sign language class at the end of this month. The church we attend is not only open to us starting a sign language club, but the attendance of that club has been up to 20 people at any given meeting in the past month. When people in our community see me speaking sign to my child, or see Bear wearing his hearing aids, they come up to confide in me that they are also deaf or they learned sign language in the past as a child, and I would have never known that otherwise. The camaraderie and hope these interactions inspire is both beautiful and uplifting. I am so incredibly thankful for our community who steps alongside us in the challenging and rewarding ebbs and flows of life, but I am also grateful for programs such as IL Hands and Voices that uplift, encourage, and educate the parents like us who felt very lost in a sea of a heavy diagnosis, before we even knew what we were getting into. I am at a loss for words of how much the phone calls with my parent guide, Hanna, and the information she has shared mean to me. In only five months, I know that God redeemed what could have been a scary and isolating diagnosis to a walk of new friendships, grace-filled learning, and an adorable almost two-year old astonishing his mother by overcoming obstacles we never expected in leaps and bounds.

Parents and professionals are welcome to contribute to our newsletter. Please contact Carrie at ilhvgbys@gmail.com for more information.

DREAM BIG

MLK Event

IL Hands & Voices

IL Hands & Voices proudly hosted two engaging in-person events, one in the vibrant community of Schaumburg, IL, and the other in the charming town of Libertyville, IL. Our mission is to foster a sense of community and belonging in environments where all deaf and hard-of-hearing children can connect, share experiences, and enjoy quality time with their families and peers who understand their unique journeys.



Inclusion/diversity

"On this day, we honor Dr. King not only by remembering his words, but by practicing his vision—ensuring that justice, dignity, and access reach every voice, including the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community."

Activities

During our activities, children participated in a cloud-themed art project where they wrote their own dreams—or their parents' dreams for them—on cloud cutouts. Each child traced their hand and connected it to their cloud with a ribbon, symbolizing reaching for their dreams. Additional activities included a color-by-number page and a bingo game to engage children as time allowed.

The event also featured a read-aloud with ASL interpreter access in Schaumburg, IL. The books shared were *Let's Rumble* by Rachel G. Payne, which highlights a main character who uses hearing aids, and *Dinky the Tinysaur* by Maggie Edkins Willis, reinforcing the message that differences are accepted and celebrated.



Dream Big

Closing Statement

“As parents, we come to this work from lived experience. We advocate not because it is easy, but because our children deserve access, respect, and opportunity in every space they enter.

At Illinois Hands & Voices, families lead because families know their children best. Today’s gathering reflects our shared commitment to honoring all communication choices and ensuring Deaf and Hard of Hearing children are fully supported, seen, and valued.

As we leave today, we do so connected by community and purpose—ready to continue building inclusive spaces where every child can thrive and every voice truly matters.”

-Maira Nava



More Events

<https://www.ilhandsandvoices.org/events>



IL HANDS & VOICES IS OUT & ABOUT

By Elsa Huerta

IL Hands & Voices often participates in community outreach so we can share about our programs while also meeting and partnering with organizations that support families throughout IL. Last fall, we participated in Laramont School's Special Needs Resource Fair & Fall Festival/Trunk or Treat. It was held on Saturday, October 4th. The event was from 10:00am–1:00pm. The event had about 45 vendors with resource booths inside the gym. Outside, there were about 30–35 cars that participated in the Trunk or Treat, including 9 vendor-decorated vehicles.

The event was well-organized and set to accommodate Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) attendees, with an ASL interpreter who was easily accessible, if needed. At our booth, we had baskets filled with candy and fidget toys for the kids to enjoy! There were more than 300 attendees at this resources fair and overall, it was a great success!

Whether we provide outreach to professionals at a meeting, in-service or participate in fun family resource events like this, it allows us to share more information on who we are and how we support families throughout IL. We genuinely enjoy meeting new families, sharing stories and answering questions.

If you know of or are hosting an event that we can be part of please reach out to ilhvgbys@gmail.com. We are also available to provide a short presentation on our programs and resources to professionals.



ALL THINGS SPED

Information and support
ALL THINGS SPecial EDucation

Written by: Andrea Marwah

For a meeting to determine the child's eligibility for special education, the written material must include all evaluations and collected data that will be considered at the meeting. For a child who is already eligible for special education and related services, the written material must include a copy of all IEP components that will be discussed by the IEP team, other than the components related to the educational and related service minutes proposed for the child and the child's placement." Here are some key points to know:

1. Receiving Documents Before Meetings

- Illinois law requires parents to get all written materials to be reviewed 3 school days before the IEP meeting (23 Ill. Adm. Code § 226.110(d)).
- Includes: evaluation reports, progress data, and (except at initial eligibility) draft IEP components excluding service minutes & placement.

2. Initial Eligibility Meetings

- Draft IEPs are not required before eligibility (23 Ill. Adm. Code § 226.110(c)).
- Evaluations and written data must still be shared at least 3 school days in advance.
- Parents can request the IEP portion later, allowing time to review drafts to ensure meaningful participation.

3. Timeline to Finalize IEP

- After eligibility, districts have up to 30 calendar days to finalize the IEP (23 Ill. Adm. Code § 226.110(e)).
- This gives parents time to review drafts, ask questions, and ensure all of their child's needs are addressed.

4. Parent Scripts: What to Say If...

Situation	Script
Documents not shared	"Illinois law requires parents to receive all written materials 3 school days in advance. I need these to fully participate in decisions about my child's education."
Drafts "cause predetermination"	"Drafts are allowed as long as the team is open to discussion. Reviewing drafts ahead of time supports informed decisions about my child's needs."
Initial eligibility, nothing shared	"Even at eligibility, all evaluations and data must be shared 3 days in advance. I need time to review to ensure I am ready to participate."
Seeing evaluations for the first time	"I'm not prepared to discuss eligibility today. I request we pause and reconvene after I've reviewed these reports."
School wants to finish IEP same day	"Illinois law allows 30 calendar days after eligibility to finalize the IEP. I request time to review drafts and ensure I am ready to actively participate."
School pushes back	"Please document that I requested advance access to documents and additional review time to protect my child's rights, and that my request was denied."

Please note, Andrea Marwah is not an attorney so this information should be considered educational only, not legal advice. If you require legal advice you should contact a special education attorney or www.equipforequality.org.



SNIPPETS are:

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

Languages available:

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

Scan the QR code to view our SNIPPET library



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
- 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 DSCH? *

*These topics are specific to Illinois (IL)

For more information or to suggest future topics
email ilhvgbys@gmail.com



SHARE YOUR FAMILY'S STORY

Your family's journey matters.

By sharing your experience of learning about your child's hearing loss and the early days that followed, you can help improve support for families now and in the future.

WHY SHARE YOUR STORY?

- Help policymakers, providers, and partners understand the real impact of early diagnosis
- Highlight the importance of family support and collaboration
- Give hope and reassurance to families just starting their journey

HOW YOUR STORY WILL BE USED:

- To educate stakeholders and partners
- To strengthen family-centered practices and programs
- To raise awareness of the family experience within Early Hearing Detection & Intervention Program

WAYS TO PARTICIPATE:

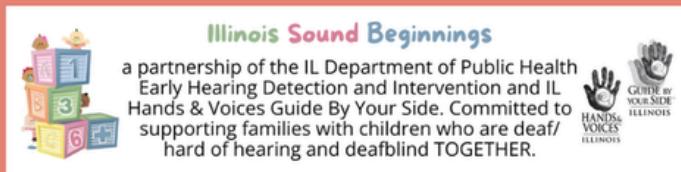


Submit your story using our short online form:

Join an introductory workshop to get tips and learn more:



Your voice can make a difference for families like yours.



Illinois Hands & Voices is a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization EIN 06-1724201
"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."



Get paid for your input!



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

A graphic of several overlapping speech bubbles in various colors (blue, orange, yellow) arranged in a cluster.

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

AVAILABLE!

Contact us to get connected for free!

224.343.1873 Voice/Text

ilhvgbys@gmail.com



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



Illinois Sound Beginnings



www.illinoissoundbeginnings.org

Resources for Families

Illinois EHDI

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

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

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





HANDS &
VOICES™
ILLINOIS

7:00 - 8:00 PM CST
February 11th



GUIDE BY
YOUR SIDE™
ILLINOIS

Getting to Know You

Please join us on an informal Zoom meeting to get to know other families with children who have a hearing loss from across the state of Illinois.

PLEASE REGISTER AT THIS LINK

<https://tinyurl.com/ILHVSsignup2026>

OR SCAN THE QR CODE

A ZOOM LINK WILL BE SENT TO YOU BEFORE THE EVENT



This event is hosted by our Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side program. All families who have a child that has any type or degree of hearing loss are welcome to join this event.



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.



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

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

Live Q&A

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11
7:30 PM (CT)

What do you like
to do for fun?

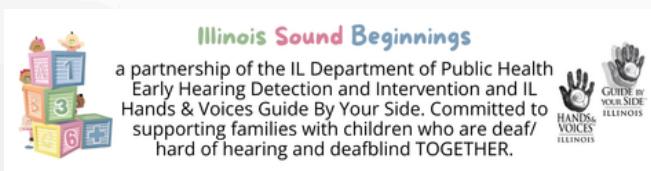
What advice do you
have for my family?

Join us for an opportunity to ask questions
and learn more from our team of deaf and
hard of hearing (DHH) Guides.

Register through the QR code or at
https://tinyurl.com/ILHVS_signup_2026
to receive the zoom link.



Illinois Hands & Voices is a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization EIN 06-1724201
"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."™



SAVE THE DATE!

Moms Night Inn 2026

April 25-26, 2026
Schaumburg



**ENTER YOUR EMAIL
FOR MORE INFO!**



Illinois Hands & Voices is a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization EIN 06-1724201
"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."™

Mom's Night Inn is a wonderful overnight retreat for moms and female caregivers. It's an opportunity to meet many other moms who are navigating similar journeys while taking some time for pampering and enjoying meals you didn't have to cook or clean up! This is a once a year event and a fan favorite!

April 29th / 5pm CST

MORE ABOUT MICROTIA / ATRESIA

Join us for a free, interactive Zoom session designed for parents to connect, share experiences, and receive answers to their questions regarding their child's microtia and/or atresia diagnosis.

- Join us for a free informal webinar on zoom
- To receive the zoom link register here or with QR code:
https://tinyurl.com/ILHVS_signup_2026



Illinois Hands & Voices is a 501c3 Non-Profit Organization EIN 06-1724201
"What works for your child is what makes the choice right."™



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.





ILLINOIS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF OUTREACH

ITDHH EARLY INTERVENTION PRE-CONFERENCE 2026



**GOING
FOR
THE
GOLD**

Register Today

Date: Thursday March 5, 2026

Time: 8:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Location: Embassy Suites - East Peoria

Registration will open in early 2026

Registration is now open for the 2026 ITDHH Early Intervention Pre-Conference. Both EI and ISBE PD will be offered - full day credit.

Register Today:

<https://forms.office.com/g/eam6YVRpFR>



Questions: andrea.marwah@illinois.gov

INSTITUTE FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING



“It’s changed my world...(the Institute) opened my eyes to the diversity of hearing loss.”

Does Your Child have hearing loss?

Do you have questions about communication options, language development, amplification, social-emotional development and school programs?

All of your questions can be answered in one place!

June 9-13, 2026



What is the Institute?

The Institute is a free program for parents of children (through age 6) who have hearing loss. Parents and caregivers will learn about hearing loss and their child's individual strengths and needs. Participants will also meet other parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Mission Statement

The Institute provides information and support to families so they can make informed decisions on behalf of their child who is deaf or hard of hearing. “It’s our job as parents to stay informed and stay involved and keep learning,” an attending parent said. “The Parent Institute is perfect for that.”



Visit <https://go.uic.edu/InstituteVideos> for videos about the Institute's powerful impact on families.

Contact the Division of Specialized Care for Children at (800) 322-3722 or dsccinstitute@uic.edu.



ILLINOIS SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF OUTREACH

Calling All Early Intervention and Early Childhood Educators and Providers for:



Save the Date

Date: Monday, June 22 AND Tuesday, June 23

Time: 9:00 AM - 4:30 PM

Location: ISU Alumni Center, Normal

Registration will open in early April

Now seeking session proposals

Deadline March 15, 2026

Notification April 5, 2026

Seeking proposals that impact the development and education of children ages birth through 5 with vision and/or hearing concerns, Including those with additional disabilities.

Submit your proposal now:



Seeking Session Proposals

Conference Dates: June 22 - 23, 2026

Location: ISU Alumni Center, Normal

Submission Window Closes: March 15, 2026

Notification Date: April 5, 2026

Session Types to choose from:

Vision Impaired/Blind

Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Deafblind and/or additional disabilities

Provider Support

Submit your proposal now:

<https://forms.office.com/g/G4rSwKVHYS>



Questions: andrea.marwah@illinois.gov



CAMPER REGISTRATION OPEN!

CAMP LIONS 2026 SUMMER CAMP FOR BLIND & DEAF

JUNE 7th - JUNE 13th

Youth Week
Camp Red Leaf Village

26710 W Nippersink Road, Ingleside, IL 60041

JUNE 14th - JUNE 18th

Helen Keller Week
Camp Red Leaf Village

26710 W Nippersink Road, Ingleside, IL 60041

Camp This Year Sunday - Thursday

JULY 5th - JULY 11th

Youth Week
Camp DuBois Center

2651 Quarry Road, DuBois, IL 62831

JULY 12th - JULY 18th

HoH/Deaf Week
East Bay Camp

24248 Ron Smith Memorial Hwy., Hudson, IL 61748

JULY 19th - JULY 25th

LV/Blind Week
East Bay Camp

24248 Ron Smith Memorial Hwy.
Hudson, IL 61748



REGISTER ONLINE at: www.LionsofIllinoisFoundation.org



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

Andrea Marwah, Executive Director

Email: executivedirector@ilhandsandvoices.com

Web: www.ilhandsandvoices.org

IL EHDI Program

Phone: 217-782-4733

Email: DPH.newbornhearing@illinois.gov

Web: www.illinoissoundbeginnings.org

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