



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 33.

**Congratulations**

Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side

**PROMOTIONS**

**Lead Guide**

**Corie Fulton**  
Corie is the mother of two children, one who is deaf. Corie and her family live in Menard County.

**Megan Christoffel**  
Megan is the mother of three children, one who is hard of hearing. Megan and her family live in Will County.

**Maira Nava**  
Maira is the mother of two children, one who is deaf. She assists families as one of our Spanish speaking Parent Guides. Maira and her family live in DuPage County.

In October, we had two Parent Guides, Corie and Maira, promoted to Lead Guide and then

**PROMOTIONS**

**5K RUN/WALK**

**Saturday, April 20 2024**  
Phillips Park—Aurora, IL  
Packet Pick-Up 7:00 AM  
Race Time 8:30 AM

- Vendors
- Kids Activities
- Medals
- 50/50 Raffle
- Lots MORE!!

**Kids in costume entered in costume contest!**

**Page 21 | Family 5k**

Illinois Hands & Voices Invites You to

**Mom's Night Inn 2024**

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

An overnight retreat for moms and female caregivers who are raising children of all ages who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

Starts	May 4th at 3:00pm	Ends	May 5th at 12:00pm	Hyatt Place Warrenville	27576 Maccliff Dr, Warrenville, IL
Private Room \$175	Includes: private sleeping room, snacks, dinner, Sunday Breakfast and activities.				
Shared Room \$125	Includes: shared sleeping room, snacks, dinner, Sunday Breakfast, and activities.				
Day Only \$65	Includes: snacks, dinner and activities. (May 4th)				

**Mom's Night Inn Includes:**

- Meet and share experiences with other caregivers who are on a similar journey.
- Enjoy activities, games, crafts, socialization, and more!
- Enjoy a hot dinner
- Save time just for you!
- Eat sweet treats!
- Listen and learn from our Key-Note speaker
- Breakfast (for overnight registrants)
- Sunday- Panel & Closing Circle

[myurl.com/MNin2024](http://myurl.com/MNin2024)

**JOIN US!**

**SCAN HERE TO REGISTER**

**Page 22 | Mom's Night Inn**

**MARCH 16TH**  
**2:00-4:00**

HANDS & VOICES ILLINOIS

**St. Patrick's Eggstravaganza**

GUIDE BY YOUR SIDE ILLINOIS

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MARYKNOLL PARK



# LIFE IS A *Journey*

## Dear Readers,

Spring is almost here, and we're buzzing with excitement! With the promise of warmer days ahead, we're gearing up for a season filled with delightful family activities. From Mom's Night Inn just around the corner (details on page 22) to Easter egg hunts (page 20) and family-friendly 5K runs (page 21), there's something for everyone to enjoy.

While our program receives essential funding from a public health grant, there are additional services we're eager to provide that fall outside its coverage. This is where our fundraisers, like the upcoming SuperHEARo 5K, play a crucial role.

Mark your calendars for April 20th and join us at Phillips Park in Aurora for a day of fun and giving back. Not only will you be supporting our program's expansion, but you'll also get to experience the beauty of Phillips Park, complete with a free zoo!

From engaging activities for the kids to an official timed and chipped 5K race for serious runners, there's something for everyone at our fundraiser. Bring your neighbors, friends, and even the grandparents for a memorable day out.

And don't forget about our 50/50 raffle! Even if you can't make it to the event, you can still participate and win (winner does not need to be present).

Let's make this fundraiser a success together!

## See you at the park,

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

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

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## Acronyms

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



# Congratulations

Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side

## PROMOTIONS



## Lead Guide



Corie Fulton

Corie is the mother of two children, one who is deaf. Corie and her family live in Menard County.



Megan Christoffel

Megan is the mother of three children, one who is hard of hearing. Megan and her family live in Will County.



Maira Nava

Maira is the mother of two children, one who is deaf. She assists families as one of our Spanish speaking Parent Guides. Maira and her family live in DuPage County.

In October, we had two Parent Guides, Corie and Maira, promoted to Lead Guide and then immediately onto Senior Guide.

During the same month we also had Anita and Sarah promote to Senior Guide.

In December, Megan was promoted to Lead Guide.

Promotions are achieved by completing activities and earning points from completed tasks.

Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side

## PROMOTIONS



## Senior Guide



Anita Cervantes-Bowen

Anita is the mother of four children who are deaf or hard of hearing. She assists families as a Parent and Lead Deaf Guide. She is a Board Member of IL Hands & Voices and she lives in McLean County.



Corie Fulton

Corie is the mother of two children, one who is deaf. Corie and her family live in Menard County.



Maira Nava

Maira is the mother of two children, one who is deaf. She assists families as one of our Spanish speaking Parent Guides. Maira and her family live in DuPage County.



Sarah Esparza

Sarah is the mother of one child who is hard of hearing. Sarah and her family live in Will County.

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

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



# REACHING *Another Stage*

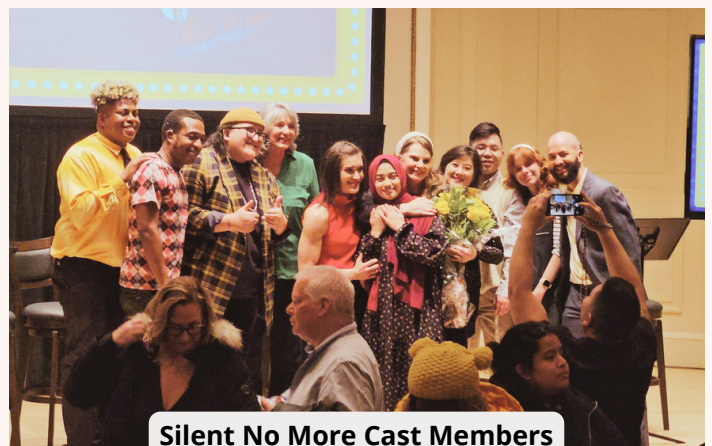
By Sara Siddiqui



**Sara with her parents and Michelle Christie, founder and Executive Director of No Limits for Deaf Children**

"You need to be more social!", "Why are you so quiet?", "Stop being so shy!" As a little girl, these were phrases I heard nearly every day. I never understood why being quiet was such a bad thing. For me, being quiet meant so much. It meant I wasn't mishearing what someone was saying, it meant I didn't have to smile and pretend I understood, even when I was trying my hardest, it meant I didn't have to rely on my cochlear implants and lip reading at the same time. It meant I was safe and comfortable. It wasn't until my second-grade teacher, Mrs. Carson taught me that being safe and comfortable wasn't going to change how people viewed me. At seven years old, Mrs. Carson saw more in me than I ever saw in myself; she pushed me to use my voice at every opportunity. She turned me from a small kid who stared at the ground, more interested in counting each carpet fiber, into a confident, talkative girl. In fourth grade, I was invited to speak at the Child's Voice Gala, the school I previously went to for the deaf and hard of hearing. I watched countless videos of Steve Jobs unveiling his newest Apple product. I watched as he walked across the stage with his thumb resting on his index finger, bouncing his hand in the same rhythm he talked. Each word he spoke influenced those listening, even if it was just for a second. At ten years old, I gave my first public speech, mimicking his confidence, cadence, and hand movements. This set me on a journey to this day I still look forward to.

I became addicted. I became addicted to watching the audience as their faces showed no expectations to complete awe, to how my voice echoed into a microphone. I became addicted knowing that my voice had a purpose. My public speaking journey continued, I spoke everywhere and anywhere I could. From Boston to Boise to Chicago, and my latest endeavor, Carnegie Hall in New York City. "Silent No More" a theatrical production featuring D/deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals helped me reach those audiences across the country. It was the first time I felt my world was acknowledged. Too "deaf" for the hearing world and not "deaf" enough for the Deaf world was my constant feeling, but with my fellow Silent No More speakers, that feeling dissipated. My speech at Carnegie Hall was similar to my previous ones in many ways, I embodied the confidence Mrs. Carson gave me and incorporated the lessons I've learned from my parents, teachers, and mentors. The smiles, laughter, and tears from that night were an unforgettable experience, but the most important aspect was my growth. Knowing the little girl who was so afraid of her own voice to the person I am today, jumping at every opportunity to speak, and watching the audience connect and benefit from our stories was worth every hurdle I needed to jump over. As I ended my speech on the Carnegie Hall stage, I realized being a deaf public speaker was never a label I had in mind, but I also realized the powerful weight that it carried.



**Silent No More Cast Members**

# MEANINGFUL STRIDES

See Page 21 for  
more information



At Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side, we believe in the power of community, wellness, and making a difference.

That's why we're thrilled to announce our upcoming Super HEARo 5K, and we want YOU to be a part of this inspiring journey!

On Saturday, April 20, 2024, lace up your running shoes and join us for our biannual 5K at Phillips Park in Aurora, Illinois. It's more than just a race—it's a celebration of unity and a stride towards a brighter future for families with children who are deaf/hard of hearing. Together, we'll embark on a scenic route through Phillips Park, showcasing the beauty of our community and the strength we embody when we come together.

Whether you're an avid runner, a casual jogger, or prefer a leisurely walk, this event is for you! It's an opportunity to show your support for Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side while enjoying a day of fun, fitness, and camaraderie.

Your participation and support will directly contribute to providing unbiased support, advocacy and resources to families with children who are deaf/hard of hearing. Every step you take helps us move closer to our goals and create a positive impact in the lives of those we serve.

Spread the word, gather your friends and family, and let's make this year's 5K our most successful yet! Together, we'll run towards a better tomorrow.

For more information and to register, please visit:  
<https://raceroster.com/events/2024/84012/superhearo-5k>

If you're unable to participate but still want to make a difference, consider making a donation or volunteering at the event. Every contribution counts!

Thank you for being an essential part of our mission. We can't wait to see you at the starting line!

**DETAILS:**  
**SATURDAY, APRIL 20, 2024**  
**8:30 AM 5K RUN/WALK STARTS**  
**PHILLIPS PARK - AURORA**  
**FREE PARKING!**  
**REGISTER TODAY!**





# LEAVING IMPRINTS

By Barbara Lesnicka



2020 was a bad year for many individuals, but for us we were overjoyed! We were pregnant with our first child, who was expected that year in May. We were over the moon when our little bundle of joy, Christian, was born. So many great memories were made that year with our son. Unfortunately, 2020 took a dark turn! Only a couple months into his young life Christian was diagnosed with bilateral retinoblastoma. At five months old, our son had to go through his first rounds of chemotherapy to help treat the cancer. We were in a whirlwind of emotions, grief, and stress in preparation for the many things that he needed to face, so early on in his life. By Christian's first birthday, he had completed his chemo treatments, several blood transfusions, blood draws and labs, eye exams, physical and occupational therapy, and many other treatments. He had endured so much in his first year! We celebrated Christian's accomplishment with a "Thankful One" Birthday party to support our strong and brave young boy! Our little cancer survivor was surrounded by lots of family and friends, a great support network for Christian, filled with kindness, caretaking, prayers, and much more.

By the following summer, we attended the Lighthouse Family Retreat, which was respite for families living with childhood cancer. Our family in the past year struggled with so many emotions, stress, and time apart due to long hospital stays so this was our time to reconnect with each other.

This was a life changing experience for our family, focusing on rest, hope, joy, restoration, relational connection, laughter, and much more. We connected, for the first time, with many other cancer families from across the country who have endured similar struggles as us. We also met so many wonderful people, who are now our friends, who helped our family during this much needed restoration week. This was exactly what our family needed to revitalize our strength and bring hope back after the trying times for our son and we were so blessed to have had this wonderful opportunity.

Beyond this, another amazing experience that we have been blessed with was the Parent Institute in Jacksonville, IL. The INSTITUTE FOR PARENTS OF PRESCHOOL CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD OF HEARING. We were skeptical at first because we knew that our son has hearing loss, but not severe or profound yet and so maybe there would be skills at home we can learn to help his hearing and language development. However, we knew that this would be another opportunity for our family to be able to learn more about our son's diagnosis and how hearing loss will affect him, his future, and learning development.

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***"We knew for his benefit, we needed to educate ourselves in order to be better equipped to advocate for our son and have all the resources available to help him on his hearing journey."***

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Christian's hearing journey started back in 2020 as well, when he was in the hospital going through daily numerous tests before, during, and after chemo. As a new mom that year, and alone in the hospital with my son (remember 2020, only one parent was allowed at the time in the hospital with the patient) and as someone new in the Cancer realm, all these doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, specialists became overwhelming; so what's the big deal if another person like an audiologist tests Christian, right, why not? I can clearly remember the first time the audiologist came into the room, using her handheld device, and started testing Christian's ear. As an advocate for my son, weary and stressed, all I could think to tell this person was "Um... my child has eye cancer, I don't think you are in the right room", to get a response back of "no, I am here to test Christian," and with confusion I asked her, "my son has eye cancer, why are you testing his ears?" The answer just added another wound to our already damaged hearts. She told us that not only does the chemotherapy have certain effects on children, but one specific treatment will cause hearing loss in our child, it would be progressive, and not able to be restored.

Continued to page 8



So much sadness drenched over us, we have already endured so much, but especially our son, who has to deal with eye cancer issues, future concerns, but now progressive hearing loss was thrown into the mix. Soon after we learned that not only does the chemotherapy medicine cause progressive hearing loss, our son also had the CMV virus and a genetic mutation that started all of the cancer things a while back which also played into effect for his hearing loss. Three solid reasons why our son has hearing loss. We learned that our son was considered Deaf plus. That was a hard pill to swallow. It's not reversible; how I hoped that was a possibility. Not only does he have vision issues as a result of the eye cancer, but now hearing issues as well. Can we catch a break?

For the next two years we struggled with navigating the hearing loss diagnosis and really didn't have too many answers besides your child needing hearing aids, ear tubes for other reasons, and speech therapy to help him become vocal, if that's a possibility. There was a lot to do to help our son, but we were determined to find a solution to help with the next thing.

We were left with so many questions and no one really to turn to or talk about the issues with. We lacked information on many powerful resources such as Illinois Hands and Voices and Guide by your side. Not until we made it to Jacksonville, Illinois in 2023, did we learn about all the possible resources out there. This was again an opportunity that we needed so much more than we could have imagined. We are so grateful that DSCC reached out to promote this opportunity for families to learn more information about deafness and hearing loss. Without it we would not have had all the great resources to be able to help our son, especially now that he was in preschool. The parent institute provided us with information about language development, communication, audiologist reports, hearing devices, and advocating for our child in school. It provided us with a connection to individuals in our state who are also experiencing similar struggles of hearing loss with their children. We also experienced many connections to individuals in the deaf community and this left an imprint for my husband and I to remember as we do our best to find ways to support our son through hearing loss. The parent institute was a great opportunity to get to know more people in our community that also have a child with hearing loss and learn from one another to support our children.

After parent institute we were connect with our Parent Guide, Alicia, from Illinois Hands & Voices Guide by Your Side. She was very understanding, friendly and easy to talk to and right from the start I felt a connection to her and her family. She checked in frequently, provided us with information about possible support for families with a child with hearing loss, fun local events to support deaf individuals, and much more. She also helped us with school papers in preparation for our child's IEP meeting. This opportunity to have a Guide by our side was the first of many stepping stones to be able to advocate and find more resources to support our son and we are forever grateful for her support. Since then, we also talked with her about sign language as an option for our son. This is something we decided to do and my husband and I are taking free classes through the Chicago Hearing Society, learning American Sign Language. Our teacher is deaf, but we have learned so much from her so far and try to reciprocate our new knowledge at home with Christian to help him as we model and build his language skills. We are not sure fully if he will be able to speak, but we know his hearing loss will not stop him. We will continue to learn new skills to help our son with hearing loss and for us to communicate with each other.



Christian has made so many great strides over the past three years, being able to walk was a big one for us, but even now we will pray and find more resources to help our child through the next challenge and watch him overcome it. Our music loving, high energy, happy and fun Christian can do it! We are eternally grateful for the people and experiences throughout Christian's journey, we owe everyone a huge thank you and appreciation for all those who supported our family. "Some people come into our lives and touch our heart so deeply that we will never be the same again" (unknown author). Our hope and joy comes from knowing that there is a positive outcome from all this and for now it's our son's smile. In the midst of all his struggle, he has been positive and we want to have the same positive energy to help support our son.

# EMBRACING DIVERSITY

## SUPPORTING FAMILIES WITHOUT BIAS

Written by Lace Mandrell

Normally, I spend the first days of October planning my youngest son's birthday party. But this past year, I spent those days soaking up all the information I could for him and our Illinois Hands and Voices family at the Hands and Voices Annual Leadership Conference held in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Specifically, a presentation that goes a little behind the scenes was entitled, "Supporting Families Without Bias II: Living It Organizationally" and featured speakers Terri Patterson and Janet DesGeorges, both from Hands and Voices headquarters, and Christine Griffin from Washington State Hands and Voices. The topic struck a chord with me initially as our chapter had just completed mandatory training regarding bias on an individual level and how our own bias can impact families in ways we may have not planned or expected. I learned just how ingrained and deep one's bias, albeit unknown and seemingly harmless, can run.

Here are a few synonyms for the term, bias:

**Partial.**

**Favoritism.**

**Preference.**

**One-sided.**

**Influenced.**

All of us come equipped with biases due to where we grow up, who we are surrounded by, and so much more. Parent Guides and Deaf or Hard of Hearing (D/HH) Guides strive to acknowledge personal biases when we engage with parents of children with hearing loss. Devices or communication modes that work for a previous family, or even our children, may not work or be the choice for the next family.

How might biases impact our organization overall?

The presentation forced me to dig deeper than just my own biases. To consider how and where we host events. To consider how we receive funding. To consider what modalities will be used for said event. Even legislation can represent a bias if not all D/HH families and children are considered. I also took away that remaining unbiased individually is needed to remain unbiased as a whole organization. Both involve acknowledging personal biases, offering a diverse and inclusive board as well as D/HH Guides and Parent Guides, separating emotions when needed and discussing multiple viewpoints and modalities with families. We seek to avoid stereotypes and to continuously receive feedback from families with each guide they meet. The goal is to approach situations with an open mind, treat each situation or family as unique, and make decisions based on objective assessment rather than influenced by preconceived notions or emotions.

And as the presentation PowerPoint stated, "We accept and embrace the journey and decisions of other families that are different than ours."

For more information, please visit: <https://handsandvoices.org/fl3/fl3-docs/NewUnbiased-CHECKLIST.pdf>



# Fall Fest Fun

IL HANDS & VOICES EVENT IN BLOOMINGTON



What an enchanting gathering it was! Families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) assembled in Bloomington, IL, delighting in the opportunity to select their own pumpkins for painting and taking home. Thanks to the efforts of two parent guides from Guide By Your Side, who secured donations of pumpkins and gourds from local farms, this event was made possible at no expense to families. The children relished in painting, frolicking in the playground, and bonding with two Deaf Clowns. One clown crafted balloon creations while the other distributed goodie bags filled with treats—much to the children's delight! Witnessing the joyful interactions between parents and children, witnessing new friendships blossom, and hearing the infectious laughter was truly heartwarming. A heartfelt thank you extends to the three volunteers and the ASL interpreter whose presence ensured the smooth running of the event and catered to the diverse needs of all attendees.







# The Intersection of Fatherhood & Culture

*By Reyna Garcia*

A

According to Dr. Rashaun Davis, the affection of a father helps promote social and developmental skills.

However, some fathers feel left out from events and activities where the focus is mostly on the mother.

This article discusses the findings of Dr. Rashaun Davis on the impact that fathers have on their children. He presented his findings at the 2023 Hands & Voices (H&V) leadership conference as a board member. He obtained an undergraduate degree at the University of Delaware and postgraduate degrees from New Brunswick Theological Seminary and United Theological Seminary. Dr. Rashaun strives to be an advocate and educator who helps others achieve their potential drawing on his 20 years of experience in training, development, and leadership roles. He is also a father of a daughter who was diagnosed with hearing loss which ignited his passion for advocacy in his many other roles.

## **Some of the Fatherhood stereotypes discussed by Dr. Rashaun are:**

Incompetent, indifferent, absent, apathetic, and unloving.

## **An accurate depiction of a fatherhood stereotype is:**

Engaged, competent, involved, present, and interested.

## **Questions that Dr. Rashaun suggested we should be asking ourselves to learn how to include fathers in the lives of their children.**

- What is being done to get fathers engaged in events?
- What has been successful in the past?
- How are the events being promoted?
- What colors and pictures are you using?
- Are they traditional or modern?
- What is the location, place, and setting?
- What are their strengths and challenges?
- Are you giving too much information?

## **Suggestions made by Dr. Rashaun to promote the role of a father in an event.**

- Give them a role, they often like to take action.
- Make them feel like they have a mission or task.
- Include them in the email address.
- Create a group for dads only.
- Eliminate who can attend the event.
- Be intentional!
- Use themes that interest fathers like sports and food.
- Ask Mom to pass the info to Dad.

## **So, before sending the event ...**

- Did you give them a role?
- Did you give them a mission?
- Did you include them in the email address?
- Did you create a group for dads only?
- Did you eliminate who can attend?
- Are you being intentional?
- Did you use a theme that interest fathers like sports and food?
- Did you ask Mom to pass the info to Dad?

## **Be intentional!**

# THE POWER OF DEAF MENTORSHIP

WRITTEN BY AMY KESLINKE

## Connect with our DHH Guides

**The IL Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side team now includes a team of DHH Guides. See page 16 for more information about the DHH Guides and how to connect!**



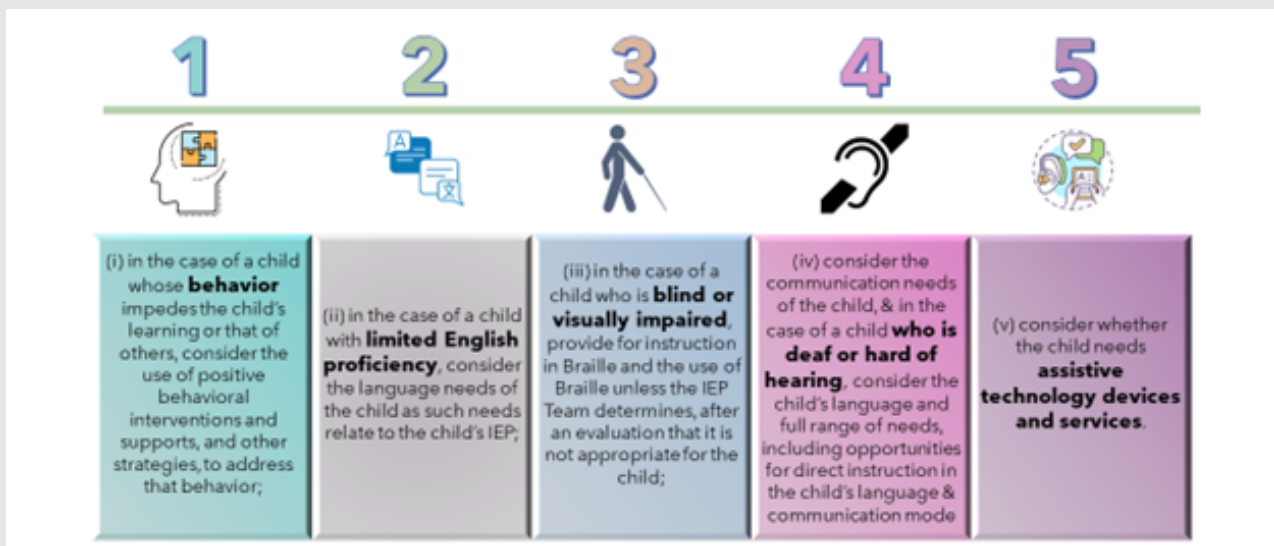
This past October, many members of the Illinois Hands and Voices Guide by Your Side team had the opportunity to attend the Hands and Voices Leadership conference in Grand Rapids, Michigan. We attended a variety of fabulous sessions, and one of the most impactful for me was entitled "From Legos to Letting Go: How a Deaf Mentor Changed Our Hearing Family".

This presentation was co-authored by Leeanne Seaver, co-founder of Hands and Voices, along with her son, Dane Seaver, and their long-time friend Henri Medinilla Grau. Dane was late-identified as profoundly deaf and, like many families with a deaf child, was the only deaf person in a hearing family. Not long after, Henri, a trilingual (ASL-English-Spanish) Deaf man, came into their lives through a chance encounter and has been an integral part of their family ever since. Using the analogy of Legos throughout, the family shared their story beautifully, and it was abundantly clear as an observer that their relationship has been incredibly formative not only to Dane as a Deaf person but to the family as a whole.

Henri and the Seavers had some very impactful takeaways:

- A deaf child is not a hearing child who simply can't hear. Being deaf is a very unique experience.
- DHH mentors can help families recognize what is "falling through the cracks" in communication.
- DHH mentors also help the family better understand how DHH people experience the world around them.
- Decision-making for deaf children is very individualized. It's so important to give them input and not make assumptions about their wants/needs.

One of the biggest questions the audience had after this presentation was how to find a deaf mentor. While Henri and the Seavers met and formed their relationship organically, there are many programs that connect families to DHH individuals. Their biggest advice was to connect with the D/deaf community as much as possible and form relationships. Eventually, whether by exposing yourself to a variety of different perspectives or finding that relationship that "clicks" with one person, your family will make valuable DHH connections that will benefit your child and family.



## IDEA, PART B SECTION 1414 (D) (3) (B)

# What's so Special about Special Factors?

By Andrea Marwah, Executive Director

As someone who attends IEP meetings to support families with children who are deaf/hard of hearing, I use Special Factors all the time. IDEA, Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, has a section that is oftentimes not well-known called Special Factors. It stipulates that IEP teams must consider these factors when the child's disability warrants it. There are five Special Factors and six components that support IEPs with "deafness" or "hearing impairment" chosen as a primary or secondary disability. (NOTE, the term hearing impairment is not my vocabulary, it is what the IDEA law dictates).

For our population of students, we must consider both special factors 4 and 5 and sometimes even 1 and 2. For this write up I will stick with 4 and 5.

Special Factor 4: "Consider the communication needs of the child, & in the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, consider the child's language and full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child's language & communication mode." Let's break them down. There are five specific areas under Special Factor 5 that we must discuss during IEP planning. This should be a large portion of your meeting; however, from my experience, we often zip through this section in about 2-5 minutes. This component of IDEA law is required under State of IL law to be included, in our documents it's called the "Linguistic and Cultural Accommodations" Section. It helps the team consider the following:

1. Language and Communication needs
2. Opportunities for direct communication with peers and professionals
3. Academic Level
4. Full range of needs
5. Opportunities for direct instruction
6. Also, Special Factor 5 (Assistive Technology)

Within **language and communication** needs, teams should be considering the child's language across all settings and differentiating when necessary their receptive and expressive language, as we know they aren't always the same. Teams must also consider the modes that the child utilizes. This could be cued American English, AAC devices, gestures, and lipreading to name a few. Each child is unique, we must fully know their language and communication needs in order to really provide them with FAPE (Free Appropriate Public Education).



Opportunities for **direct communication with peers and professionals** in the child's language and mode. Do we have individuals working with your child who can do this? Much of this special consideration is about understanding their culture and having the ability to interact with others who are like them, and who share their language, after all, it's not easy making friends if all your communication must be translated.

When we are dealing with language deficits we must consider the **academic level** of the student, it may not be the grade they are "supposed" to be in. Our students are expected to fulfill one year of growth in one year's time, but history tells us that our kids often have to close gaps in their language and therefore must obtain more than one year of growth in one year's time. How can we ensure that they close the gap? There are many ways: home school learning continuum, specially designed instruction can include explicitly taught curriculum or pre-teaching for example.

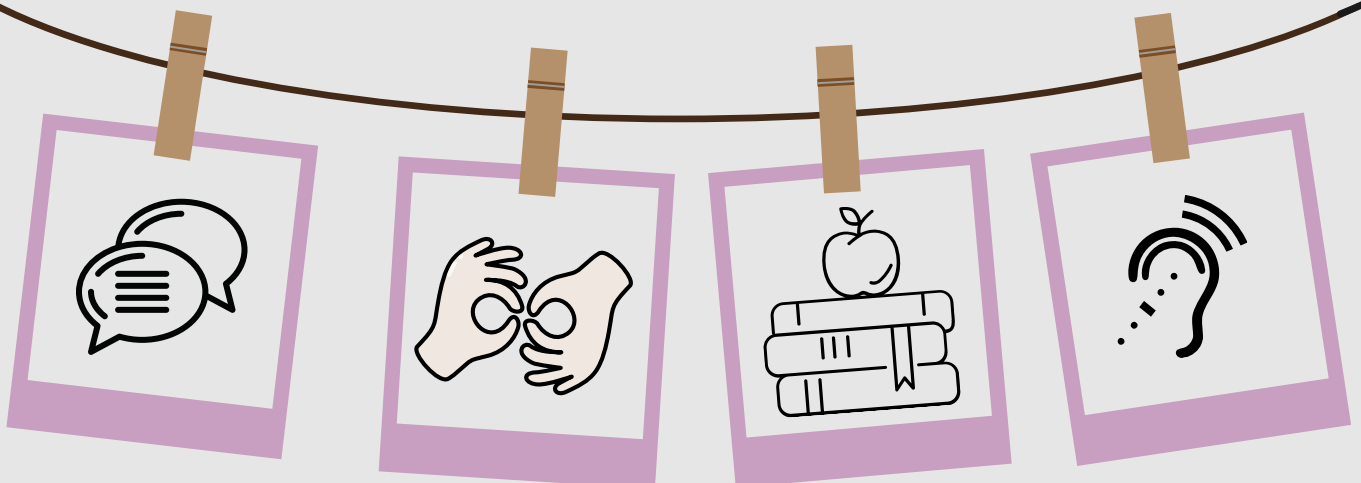
We must look at the child individually and determine their **FULL range of needs**. This requires IEP teams to think outside the box. What is meant by a full range of needs? Are we ensuring that our students have access outside of their classroom? Hallways, specials, assemblies, field trips and extra-curricular activities are a few areas where our kids likely need some support.

The 5th consideration, **Opportunities for Direct Instruction** protects our students who use languages other than or including English. Do they have opportunities where the teacher is directly teaching content, not having it interpreted? Even the best interpreters are only 80% accurate and that is only if the interpreter is familiar with the content. So having direct instruction must be considered for our ASL-using students for sure but could also be considered when a child is so delayed in language, that we must question if they can understand the language level of their same-age peers.

Last, but not least, is Special Factor #6 **Assistive Technology**. In my experience, most teams get this one right when it comes to dispensing Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT). Just be sure there is enough consultation time on your child's IEP for an audiologist to train staff on how to optimally utilize this equipment. Did you know that IDEA specifically states: "On a case-by-case basis, the use of school-purchased assistive technology devices in a child's home or other settings is required if the child's IEP team determines that the child needs access to those devices in order to receive FAPE." Keep this handy in the event your IEP team tells you your child cannot use the HAT system outside of the school building.

This information is barely touching the surface of Special Factors, but I hope it encourages you to learn more and ask your team to walk through them slowly and with purpose, not just rushing through them to get that page finalized. Your child deserves what the law entitles them to!

If you are having difficulty with your school district, IL School for the Deaf provides free advocacy support. You can contact [andrea.marwah@illinois.gov](mailto:andrea.marwah@illinois.gov) for assistance.



# CLASSROOM ACOUSTICS

*Written by Ramona Martin*



Many builders and school personnel are not aware of code that was adopted in 2017 by the International Code Council for Accessible Facilities to address classroom acoustics for students who are deaf or hard-of-hearing. It is often up to the student and their parents to advocate for what works in a classroom, as far as sound quality. On any given day, thousands of students are unable to understand a quarter of the spoken words in classroom due to poor acoustics.

Providing proper acoustics can lead to increased attention, effective communication, improved productivity, an accessible learning environment and reduced background noise. These positive effects will benefit all students, as well as the teacher.

Recommendations for improving classroom acoustics include:

- Reduce noise - place tennis balls on chair legs, modify seating locations away from loud sounds, close windows and doors, turn off fans/air/heat
- Reduce reverberation time (the time required for the sound to “fade away” in a closed space)
- Reduce speaker distance from students, increase materials that absorb sound around the room (fabric, carpet, etc)
- Institute accommodations - speak slowly, face students when speaking, repeat student questions and answers

Providing better acoustics will benefit all students in the classroom. We, as parents of children who are DHH, need to ensure that our children have clear hearing, not just access to hearing, it has to be intelligible speech.





# 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!**

## AVAILABLE!

224.343.1873 Voice/Text

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



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?





# Mr. & Mrs. Deaf Clowns



**Fun entertainment  
including ASL  
Performance for the Deaf  
and Hard of Hearing  
Children!**

- **Birthday parties**
- **Camping Events**
- **Public Library**
- **Children's Programs**
- **Fundraising Events**
- **...and more!**

**Call us at  
(309) 319-7700  
(Through Video Relay  
Service)**

**or**

**Email us at  
mr\_n\_mrscdclowns  
@outlook.com**







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



Check It Out!!

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





# Get paid for your input!



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

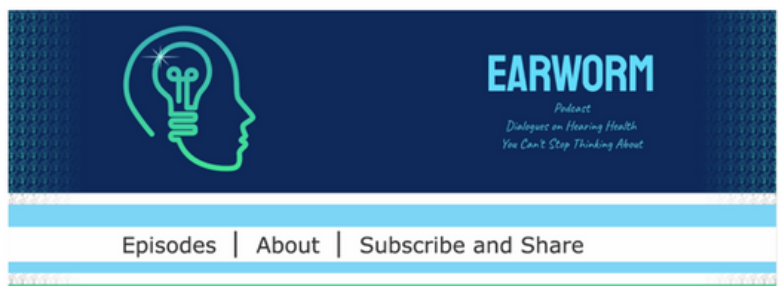
Review meetings will be held in the evening and some work will be done on your own beforehand.

Only 6 participants needed per session, 3 hours a month, 3 consecutive month commitment.

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.



EarWorm: Dialogues on hearing health you can't stop thinking about is a podcast produced by the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM - pronounced "en-cham") at Utah State University in Logan, Utah.

The EarWorm podcast features conversations with a wide array of professionals, parents and other family members whose experiences, ideas, curiosities and activities are committed to ensuring that all children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing can thrive. Whether highlighting scientific advances that can help in early identification or in the treatment of hearing loss, emerging techniques for the prevention of hearing loss or innovative practices for ensuring families and children have access to the most effective intervention and support strategies, EarWorm is intended to get us all thinking and acting in new and more generative ways.

To access the complete series of episodes go to: <http://www.earwormpodcast.org/index.html> or scan the QR code with the camera app of your smart device.





HANDS &  
VOICES™  
ILLINOIS

MARCH 16TH

2:00-4:00



GUIDE BY  
YOUR SIDE™  
ILLINOIS

# St. Patrick's Eggstravaganza

MARYKNOLL PARK  
845 PERSHING AVE.  
GLEN ELLYN, IL 60137

Please join us at our free spring event for an egg hunt,  
crafts, activities, and playing together at the park!

REGISTER  
NOW!



<http://tinyurl.com/StPatEgg>



ILLINOIS HANDS & VOICES

# SuperHEARo Dash

## 5K RUN/WALK

**Saturday, April 20 2024**

Phillips Park—Aurora, IL

Packet Pick-Up 7:00 AM

Race Time 8:30 AM

- Vendors
- Kids Activities
- Medals
- 50/50 Raffle
- Lots MORE!!

**Kids in costume  
entered in costume  
contest!**



**Register at: [Raceroster.com](http://Raceroster.com)**

**<http://tinyurl.com/RegisterILHV5k>**

Race Registration \$35—Kids under 13 FREE

- Chipped Race Bibs
- FREE Gift for each runner/walker



IL Hands & Voices is a 501c3 Non-Profit  
EIN # 06-1724201

[ilhandsandvoices.org/superhearo5k](http://ilhandsandvoices.org/superhearo5k)  
[executivedirector@ilhandsandvoices.com](mailto:executivedirector@ilhandsandvoices.com)  
630-697-3544

All proceeds will help fund ASTra Advocate Program to support families in IL who have children who are deaf/hard of hearing.



HANDS &  
VOICES™  
ILLINOIS



Illinois Hands & Voices Invites You to

# Mom's Night Inn 2024

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



An overnight retreat for moms and female caregivers who are raising children of all ages who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

<b>Starts</b> May 4th at 3:00pm <b>Ends</b> May 5th at 12:00pm	 <b>May 4-5</b>	<b>Hyatt Place Warrenville</b> 27576 Maecliff Dr, Warrenville, IL
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- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Private Room \$175</b><br/><i>Includes: private sleeping room, snacks, dinner, Sunday Breakfast and activities.</i></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Shared Room \$125</b><br/><i>Includes: shared sleeping room, snacks, dinner, Sunday Breakfast, and activities.</i></li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Day Only \$65</b><br/><i>Includes: snacks, dinner and activities. (May 4th)</i></li></ul> |
|--|---|--|

### Mom's Night Inn Includes:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Meet and share experiences with other caregivers who are on a similar journey.</li><li>• Enjoy activities, games, crafts, socialization, and more!</li><li>• Enjoy a hot dinner</li><li>• Have time just for you!</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Eat sweet treats!</li><li>• Listen and learn from our Key-Note speaker</li><li>• Breakfast (for overnight registrants)</li><li>• Sunday- Panel &amp; Closing Circle</li></ul> |
|---|---|

<http://tinyurl.com/MNInn2024>

**JOIN US!**  
**SCAN HERE TO REGISTER**



#### Financial Assistance:

There are stipend and financial assistance opportunities we encourage you to request through one of the following organizations:

- Starnet Financial Assistance: <https://www.starnet.org/map-of-regions/>
- The Arc of IL Consumer Stipend: <https://www.thearcofil.org/about-us/programs/financial-assistance-for-trainings/>
- UIC Specialized Care for Children (DSCC): <https://dsc.uic.edu/>



# Únete a nuestro encuentro en animar la alegría a través de zoom

Regístrese para recibir un diario gratuito  
y obtener mas informacion!

**14 de marzo - 8 pm  
por Zoom**



Regístrese aqui: <http://tinyurl.com/ILHVSsignup2024>

*"LO QUE FUNCIONE PARA SU HIJO ES LO QUE HACE QUE LA DECISIÓN SEA CORRECTA."*©

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

**Celebrando a nuestros niños  
centrarse en la alegría**

# Live Q&A

MONDAY, APRIL 8TH

THURSDAY, MAY 9TH

8:00 PM

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 <http://tinyurl.com/DHHteammeet> to receive the zoom link.



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







7:00 - 8:00 PM CST  
1/17, 2/21, 3/20, 4/17, 5/15

# 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  
[HTTP://TINYURL.COM/GETTINGTOKNOWYOUIL](http://tinyurl.com/gettingtoknowyouil)

OR USE THE CAMERA OF YOUR SMART PHONE TO SCAN THE QR  
CODE TO TAKE YOU DIRECTLY TO THE REGISTRATION LINK.  
A ZOOM LINK WILL BE SENT TO YOU 24 HOURS 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.

**"WHAT WORKS FOR YOUR CHILD IS WHAT MAKES THE CHOICE RIGHT."**

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

Illinois Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side

# **DADS MEETING OTHER DADS**



**On the  
following  
Wednesdays**

**8:00PM — 9:00PM**

**October 25  
November 22  
January 24  
February 28  
March 27  
April 24  
May 22**

Join us for an informal Zoom meeting to get to meet other dads of children who are deaf/hard of hearing across Illinois.

All dad's or father figures of children who are deaf/hard of hearing are welcome to join this safe space to talk about you and your kids.

**REGISTER  
TODAY:**



<https://fs4.formsite.com/rh1RZR/q2oivmj8ux/index.html>

You must register to receive a zoom link to attend the event.  
ADA requests must be made within 1 week of the event,  
**don't delay — register today!**



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

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







# NAPTIVE CONFESSIONALS

We're here for it.



**Register for  
Zoom Meeting  
Here:**

<http://tinyurl.com/NaptiveConfessional>

*A zoom link will be sent out 24 hours before the event.*

**Wednesday,  
April 10th,  
2024  
at  
11:30am  
CST**



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

# Statewide Virtual Sessions 2024

IL School for the Deaf Outreach Annual Parent Conference

Saturday, April 13, 2024 **AND** Saturday, April 27, 2024

9:00AM to 12:00PM



## This year's topics:

Zones of Regulation  
Growing Up Deaf  
"Sibshops" - Sibling Mental Health  
Parent Self Care

NOTE: Each session date will have different topics.

We will be hosting in person family gathering events following this conference, if you register you will be informed as to when and where this in person opportunity will be.

There will be several different locations for you to choose from.

**Thank you to our Planning Committee Members:**

Celesta Bowers | Corie Fulton | Andrea Marwah | Maira Nava | Cheri Sinnott Springer

## Registration NOW OPEN

<https://forms.office.com/g/Ap8TJxmM6g>

Questions?? [Andrea.Marwah@illinois.gov](mailto:Andrea.Marwah@illinois.gov)



**stay up to date with what ISD Outreach offers**

Search Facebook: "Illinois School for the Deaf"



# DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE A HEARING LOSS?



*"It's changed my world...(the Institute) opened my eyes to the diversity of 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!

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

**JUNE 13-16, 2024**



## What is the Institute?

The Institute is a free program for parents of children (through age 6) who have a significant 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. The Institute was summarized by one parent as "life-changing. There are people that value you for who you are, and they are only here to help..."



"I felt like I was all alone.  
And now I feel like I have a  
community of families that I  
can call when I need to  
talk to them about  
anything."

## Who Sponsors the Institute?

### The Institute receives support from:

- Department of Human Services (DHS)
  - Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS)
- Illinois School for the Deaf (ISD)
- University of Illinois Chicago's Division of Specialized Care for Children (DSCC)
- Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE)
- Department of Public Health (DPH)
- Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

"Finding  
community  
here and  
having my  
son find  
community  
and people  
who share  
part of his  
identity is  
priceless."



## How Do I Get More Information About the Institute?

Contact **Division of Specialized Care for Children**  
at (800) 322-3722 or [dsccinstitute@uic.edu](mailto:dsccinstitute@uic.edu).

Visit our website: [dscc.uic.edu](http://dscc.uic.edu)

## More About the Institute

**What do children do?** Each morning the children go to classrooms overseen by experienced teachers of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Children receive hearing, vision, psychological, speech, language and educational evaluations. Children will also have the chance to play with other children who have a hearing loss.

**What do parents do?** Parents attend daily lectures by experts in the field to learn about raising a child with hearing loss. They also meet in small groups to discuss specific concerns and connect with other caregivers. Parents meet with professional staff to review the evaluations for their child. They also have the opportunity to learn about various communication modes used with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.

### Lecture topics include:

- Child Development
- Language Development
- Types of Hearing Loss
- Parent Rights
- Communication Choices
- School Programming
- Hearing Aids, Cochlear Implants
- Deaf Culture

**Where is the Institute?** The Institute is at the Illinois School for the Deaf in Jacksonville, Illinois. Jacksonville is 30 miles west of Springfield on Interstate 72.

**What about siblings?** Brothers and sisters can come to the Institute. They participate in activities for their age group. Siblings also stay with their families in the dorms and go to recreational activities.

**What does it cost?** There is no cost for families who come to the Institute. Meals and housing are provided at no charge on the campus of the Illinois School for the Deaf. This week is free!

**Who works at the Institute?** Professionals from all over Illinois come to the Institute. They come from hospitals, schools, colleges, private centers, ISD, DSCC and DPH.



State of Illinois

J. B. Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Department of Human Services  
Dulce Quintero, Secretary

DSCC, DPH and DHS/DRS do not discriminate on the basis of disability in admission or access to, or treatment or employment in, their programs and activities in compliance with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The Directors are responsible for compliance. DSCC (217) 558-2350 and DHS/ISD (217) 479-4200 (voice/TTY) or <http://illinoisdeaf.org>.



# Q&A

## DROP-IN SESSIONS

Advocating for your DHH Child/Students

Meets on the  
following Mondays  
7:00pm–8:00pm

Sept 11	Oct 9
Nov 6	Dec 12
Jan 8	Feb 5
Mar 4	Apr 1
May 6	June 3

**Hands & Voices ASTra™ Advocates**  
will answer your special education questions.

Advocates from these states will be present:



Register today:



<https://forms.office.com/r/JPRZRb097M>



# Red – A Crayon's ASL Story

**March 10, 2024 @ 2-4 p.m.**

Chicago History Museum  
1601 N Clark St, Chicago, IL 60614

**FREE with RSVP at**  
[bit.ly/Red-ASL-Film](https://bit.ly/Red-ASL-Film)



## A family fun film with story & games

A crayon who is mistakenly labeled "r-e-d" could never draw anything right until a friend changed everything and helped him be true to himself!

The film includes the story, an interactive quiz and ASL lesson, all presented with ASL performance, enhanced text, voice over, animation & original music.

## Presented by



**CHS**

**CHICAGO HISTORY MUSEUM**  
SHARING CHICAGO STORIES





# 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

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

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