



**HANDS &
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Hands & Voices Releases National Needs Assessment Report on Supports for Children Who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Hands & Voices recently completed a comprehensive national needs assessment to guide its work on meeting the objectives of the newly formed Family Leadership in Language and Learning (FL3) program, a cooperative agreement with the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) in 2017. The goal of this new program is to ensure that state/territory Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) systems incorporate certain elements that support the families, parents and caregivers of deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) infants and children identified through newborn hearing screening in optimizing language, literacy, and social and emotional development.

The needs assessment was designed to take an in-depth look at the needs of families with children who are D/HH, family-based support organizations, and state and U.S. jurisdiction EHDI Programs in their ability to work in partnership to improve the EHDI service system. Hands & Voices contracted with the National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management (NCHAM) at Utah State University to conduct the needs assessment.

Information learned from this needs assessment will be used by the FL3 to build a portfolio of trainings, educational materials, resources, etc., to support family partnership, engagement, and leadership within the EHDI system; and to inform and shape support, family education, and mentorship activities. The needs assessment results provide insight from three target populations; parents with children who are D/HH age 0-6, family-based support organizations, and EHDI Coordinators):

1. What types of support did families receive or wish they had when their child was diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing?
2. What do family-based support organizations need from the FL3 program to better serve families who have a child who is D/HH?
3. What are the supports EHDI programs need for effective family engagement in ensuring the EHDI programs meet the needs of all families of children who are or are at risk for being D/HH?

Janet DesGeorges, Executive Director of Hands & Voices, said *"We are pleased to present this report as a reflection of the voices of not only parents who are currently in the 'system' receiving supports, but also the parent leaders, parent support organizations, and EHDI system*



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



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stakeholders who contribute to the success of families navigating towards ensuring children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing are reaching their full potential."

Access the full report here: <https://handsandvoices.org/fl3/resources/needs-assessment.html>

About Hands & Voices:

Hands & Voices began more than twenty years ago as an idea to bring parents and professionals together not based upon communication modes or methodology, but as a group of individuals who are in so many ways connected to each other through deafness or hearing loss. Supporting families without bias is embodied in the motto, "What works for your child is what makes the choice right" and is implemented by ensuring families are given support and information based on their own needs and preferences.

Hands & Voices is dedicated to supporting families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology. It is a parent-driven, non-profit organization providing families with the resources, networks, and information they need to improve communication access and educational outcomes for their children. This effective model of parent and professional collaboration has been replicated around the United States and worldwide resulting in 47 chapters established or in process.

Hands & Voices operates several outreach activities, parent/professional collaborations, and advocacy efforts that are focused on supporting families in order to enable Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children to reach their highest potential. Several of the organization's main operating programs and projects include: Guide By Your Side (parent support), O.U.R. Project (children's safety), ASTra (educational advocacy), Deaf/Hard of Hearing Virtual Guide, Deafed.net, Annual H&V Leadership Conference, Chapter Support and Information Dissemination. Visit their website at www.handsandvoices.org and learn more about the FL3 project at <http://www.handsandvoices.org/fl3/index.html>.

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