

Meeting the Challenge: A Road Map to Success!

Submitted by Guam's Positive Parents Together and Guam EHDI Programs

Guam is no stranger to disasters. 2020 has proved to be a year of challenges for most states and territories due to the pandemic. Sometimes challenges offer opportunities to expose vulnerabilities and force us to find alternatives to providing services in ways we would never have imagined. 2020 was that year! Guam EHDI worked with its partners to fill the vulnerable gaps due to the government shutdowns and strict guidelines for social distancing.

Some solutions to meet the challenges included: tracking babies who did not pass the initial hearing screening and continued referral to early intervention by the public hospital; a formalized referral process for Guam Early Intervention System and Guam (GEIS) and Guam Hearing Doctors (GHD) to connect a parent of an infant newly identified with a hearing loss with Guam's Positive Parents Together (GPPT) our family partner; the development of training videos, locally produced American Sign Language (ASL) videos, EHDI PSA featuring the audiologist consultant, and a commercial providing awareness about GPPT; outdoor banners located strategically in highly populated villages and the Free COVID 19 Vaccination Clinic spearheaded by the Guam National Guard which served as the largest vaccine distribution center for the island; indoor banners located a private birthing center and the WIC Office; the production of a Shared Plan of Care Journal; a media outreach campaign through the local newspapers, text blasts, Facebook, You Tube, television airing of GPPT and Guam EHDI Public Service Announcements, and live radio interviews featuring Guam EHDI and its partners; resuming outpatient hearing screening for babies born at the public hospital; providing DAEs to infants; and providing telehealth services to families.

The program would like to highlight the EHDI Shared Plan of Care Journal. The purpose of the EHDI Shared Plan of Care (SPoC) Journal is to help families navigate through the hearing screening process with ease, to assist parent(s)/caregiver(s) track and monitor their child's growth and development, to provide families with the tools to become advocates for their child and to quickly find the appropriate services for the child identified with a hearing loss. In addition, the EHDI Journal provides families with contact information of agencies, service providers, nonprofit family support groups, activities to encourage language and speech development, and parent reflections on raising a child with hearing loss, as well as the DHH adult perspective.

It is meant to be used throughout the child's first three years in the EI system. When a child is diagnosed with hearing loss, the audiologist fills in the child's hearing information in the EHDI SPoC Journal. The family brings this journal to the pediatrician/primary care physician to fill out the child's medical history. This document is also brought to the IFSP meeting for the team to share and include intervention information. The journal has a perpetual calendar to keep track of appointments, meetings, and other events. The journal is utilized by GPPT for future training sessions with parents and paired with videos produced by EHDI that relate to information in the SPoC.

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