What Parents Should Know About Being Deaf or Hard of Hearing

by Teresa Nold, SDPC Rural Health Outreach Specialist

Let me introduce myself. I work at South Dakota Parent Connection, am passionate about working with people, and love music and chocolate. English is my second language and I consider myself “Deaf.” I have moderate to severe hearing loss. I use hearing aids and cannot live without them in the hearing world. When I am in the car, by myself in the store, or at home, the hearing aids are off. I work in an environment with hearing people. I have a cell phone and can use it, but the environment has to be QUIET. Texting is probably the best thing ever invented. I also have a video phone in my office and at home. I can make calls to people who are Deaf or use a video relay service and have interpreters facilitate the call. I use an interpreter for meetings and events.

I LOVE being a mom and my family is amazing. My husband, Tim, is Deaf. We have two children, Isaac, who is Deaf with multiple disabilities, and Caleb who is hearing. My parents and siblings are also Deaf. My parents attended the South Dakota School for the Deaf. We lived the Deaf culture, using ASL as our first language. Our life was very normal and it was no big deal that we were not a “hearing” family. I attended public school. My parents encouraged options (interpreters, FM systems, public school and School for the Deaf). Because of those options, I can now float between the Deaf and hearing worlds pretty seamlessly.

My son, Isaac is another story. Isaac was in a public school system for several years, utilizing an interpreter. Although he made some progress, it was clear to us that he wasn’t happy, he felt isolated, and needed more. With him being an ASL user, he needed extra supports to bridge English and ASL. It has been a huge challenge for my husband and I to advocate for his needs.

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“Reach Yes!”
Resource Available for Parents

“Let’s just wait and see if we need to address this.”

Often, a statement like this will frustrate parents of a child with an IEP, but they don’t know how to react or respond. SD Parent Connection and South Dakota Advocacy Services have collaborated on a resource to help parents effectively respond to such statements and Reach YES when they encounter a roadblock. Dare to Dialogue….Reach Yes is a collection of responses and tools parents can use to ensure that their students receive appropriate special education services. It includes statements about IEPs, ESY (Extended School Year) and Assistive Technology, and Tools such as an Evaluation Checklist and sample letters.

The Dare to Dialogue..Reach Yes resource is currently available online at www.sdparent.org. SDPC plans to have a printed version available in the next several months.

New Board Members
SDPC welcomes three new members to the Board of Directors.
Deb Docken is a parent of a daughter with special needs and is a Relationship Manager at US Bank in Sioux Falls.

Dr. Wendy Parent-Johnson is Executive Director of the University of South Dakota Sanford School of Medicine Center for Disabilities.

Dr. Darlene Zangara is Vice President of Community Development for Communication Service for the Deaf.

SDPC also thanks Kerry Larson who retired from the Board after two terms, including serving as Board President.

SDPC is seeking parents to serve on the Board. If interested contact Elaine Roberts at eroberts@sdparent.org or call 1-800-640-4553.

Services and Support Overview

Families with children who are Deaf or hard of hearing have several resources within the state that provide services and support. Here are some of the most often used.

South Dakota School for the Deaf

Approximately four hundred children in South Dakota benefit annually from the services of the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD). From first diagnosis through high school, SDSD exists to ensure children with hearing loss, as well as their families and schools have access to information about communication, assistive technology, and appropriate educational strategies.

SDSD provides educational evaluations and audiological testing on the Sioux Falls campus and hearing screenings statewide through the mobile unit. Consultants located in Aberdeen, Pierre, Rapid City, and Sioux Falls provide in-service training, observation and consultation services, activities for families, and social groups for children of all ages. All consultants are certified educators and receive on-going training in listening technologies, language development, and American Sign Language (ASL).

SDSD partners with the Harrisburg School District to provide a bilingual program (using American Sign Language) and the Brandon Valley School District to provide an auditory oral classroom option. This gives parents and schools the option of educational services specially designed for children who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

SDSD works with a variety of public and private programs to better serve children and families. All services provided by SDSD personnel are offered at no cost to families and schools. SDSD is under the governance of the South Dakota Board of Regents.

SDSD recently adopted a new logo expressing confidence in the future of education for children with hearing loss in South Dakota. In addition, a redesigned web site serves as a resource to parents, educators and alumni.

For more information, contact SDSD at 605.367.5200, VP: 605.496.9058, or www.sdsd.sdbor.edu.

Communication Service for the Deaf

South Dakotans with hearing loss don’t have to look far to find resources and support. Founded by Benjamin Soukup in Sioux Falls, Communication Service for the Deaf, Inc. (CSD) has served Deaf and hard of hearing people across the state for over 35 years.

It began with sign language interpreting referral. Today, interpreting remains a key fixture, but technology has made the request process easier with several options. During regular business hours, consumers can go to the CSD Interpreting webpage (http://csdinterpreting.com/pages/request) and simply start a live chat with a representative. For requests after hours, there are three options: complete and submit an online form (http://csdinterpreting.com/interpreter_requests/new), send an email to interpreting@c-s-d.org, or call (888) 540-6543.

Technology has also impacted how interpreting is provided. In addition to traditional on-site interpreting (when a community interpreter...
is physically present at the assignment location), consumers now have the option to use video relay interpreting (VRI). VRI is a great option for unexpected situations including legal and medical emergencies, spontaneous meetings or in remote areas where interpreters are not readily available. VRI allows for access to an interpreter through the internet, using a computer or wireless communication device. To learn more about this service, go to http://csdinterpreting.com/freevri.

Of course, CSD has been at the forefront of telecommunications for the Deaf and hard of hearing since its early days. Today, many prefer the ease of video relay service (VRS), which involves the use of a sign language interpreter through a videophone or webcam. Others continue to prefer traditional telecommunications relay service with a TTY, especially if they have lost their hearing later in life. In those situations, Sprint’s CapTel® service is beneficial. Every spoken word is transcribed and captioned into text on the captioned telephone screen. Depending on your needs, CSD’s staff can help you determine the right solution for you.

The Community Support Services Program offers a variety of activities and resources, from community education to moral and social support. CSD advocates for consumer rights and access, as well as offers American Sign Language classes. If CSD cannot directly provide the service, it can assist in finding the right organization or resource that can.

For more information about CSD’s services and programs, contact Tom Kober, Director of Operations, by calling (605) 496-0024 or through email at tkober@c-s-d.org. And you can keep up with the latest CSD news via Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Instagram.

South Dakota Association for the Deaf
The South Dakota Association for the Deaf, Inc., (SDAD) is a statewide nonprofit organization serving Deaf and hard of hearing citizens and their families. Established in 1900, SDAD has advocated for the rights of Deaf and hard of hearing persons so that they can more fully participate in all aspects of society and life – without barriers. SDAD also promotes activities where Deaf and hearing people can come together to learn about, understand, and value each other. SDAD is a state association affiliated with the National Association of the Deaf (NAD). The NAD (www.nad.org) represents Deaf and hard of hearing Americans as part of the World Federation of the Deaf (WFD).

SDAD advocates for, and promotes, equal rights to accessibility and quality of education, social, early intervention, employment, mental health, health, independent living, technology, telecommunications, youth development and leadership, and senior living and support. Standing committees help with advocacy and promotions.

The SDAD is managed by a volunteer board, consisting of nine members. The SDAD Board meets on a quarterly basis, typically in Sioux Falls and Rapid City where there is a large base of Deaf and hard of hearing community members. Every two years, SDAD hosts a conference for their members to gather and review bylaws, as well as propose priorities for the Board to work on for the next two years.

To learn more about SDAD and events, visit the website at: www.sdad.org. For information, contact president@sdad.org or mail 102 N. Krohn Place, Sioux Falls, SD 57103.

Survey of Parents of DHH Students

Last year the South Dakota Department of Human Services partnered with the South Dakota Department of Education and the South Dakota School for the Deaf to gather insight on the needs of children with hearing loss.

A survey was sent to parents of children with hearing loss. “We needed to better understand what services and educational interventions were available in various parts of the state,” said Dr. Marjorie Kaiser, superintendent of the School for the Deaf. “We had an excellent return rate on the survey for which we are very grateful. We inquired about what types of information parents wanted to receive and what sources parents felt comfortable turning to for information. We also wanted to know what parents felt was working or not working in their child’s educational program to determine any systemic gaps.”

The information will be used as part of the state’s strategic planning for educating the Deaf and hard of hearing. Results of the survey will be shared with the public when tabulated.

“SDSD sees its role as supplementing what can be offered in public schools and providing information and supports for families,” concludes Superintendent Kaiser.

Finance Director Joins SDPC
Mary Pat Jones has joined South Dakota Parent Connection (SDPC) as Finance Director. A native of Sioux Falls and graduate of the University of South Dakota, Mary Pat worked for the State of South Dakota managing grants and has worked at several nonprofit organizations in Wisconsin. We welcome Mary Pat to the SDPC team.
Hearing Assistive Technology Devices

By Perry Hanavan
Assistant Professor and Audiologist, Augustana College

Hearing assistive technologies (HAT), often referred to as assistive listening devices (ALDs), serve as tools to provide acoustic access to environmental sounds and spoken language for a child with hearing loss to 1) learn speech and language, 2) acquire literacy (reading) skills and 3) develop social skills that will allow them to participate with their peers.

The various HAT typically connect or attach directly to the child’s hearing aids or implant devices such as a cochlear implant or bone anchored implant (BAHA) device. There is a wide array of HAT devices including FM systems, loop induction systems, alerting devices, telephone devices, classroom amplification systems, etc. Increasingly, audiologists recommend the addition of a HAT with hearing aids or implant devices for children with hearing loss as early as two or three years of age to provide acoustic access to spoken language.

HAT (such as an FM system or classroom amplification system) are vital for hearing the teacher or speaker in the classroom, in noisy listening conditions, reverberant (i.e., rooms that echo) rooms, or when the person speaking is more than six to eight feet from the child wearing a hearing aid or implant device.

There is a critical distinction between speech being AUDIBLE versus speech being heard as INTELLIGIBLE.

• AUDIBILITY means that the speech is “heard” – but does not indicate how clearly speech sounds (consonants, vowels, words, etc.) are heard.
• INTELLIGIBILITY indicates how clearly word/sound distinctions are heard.

There are three factors that reduce audibility and intelligibility...distance, reverberation and background noise.

1. DISTANCE is the amount of space between the teacher/parent or talker and the student/listener. For children wearing hearing aids or implant devices, the ideal distance from the speaker is no more than six feet. However, this ideal distance is not always maintained as the “talker” moves around the room.

2. REVERBERATION or “poor room acoustics” is what we think of as an echo or sound reflecting off the smooth surfaces of a room. The longer it takes sound to reverberate, the harder it is to hear speech clearly.

3. SIGNAL-TO-NOISE RATIO (SNR) is how much louder the teacher’s voice is above the background noises in the room. For example, if the teacher’s voice is at 65 decibels and the background noise (students making noise, heaters, computers, etc.) is 55 decibels, the SNR is 10 decibels. Unfortunately, many classrooms have a poor signal-to-noise ratio of +4 to +9 dB. Children need at least a +15 decibel SNR.

These three factors create difficult listening conditions for hearing aids and implant devices. HAT such as personal FM systems and classroom amplification can greatly increase acoustic access to spoken language in these difficult listening conditions.

Radio Frequency, Infrared and Inductive Loop Systems

Radio frequency (FM system or 2.4 GHz system), infrared and induction loop are three traditional HAT used in classrooms, homes, auditoriums, theaters, etc. All three systems consist of a wireless transmitter that picks up the acoustic signal via a microphone placed near the talker’s mouth or by plugging the transmitter into a media device, such as a TV or mp3 player, cell phone, or public address (PA) system. Infrared and inductive loop systems are used less frequently with children.

Personal FM System

A personal FM system consists of a transmitter and microphone worn by the teacher or parent which transmits wirelessly to a receiver directly behind the ear hearing aid, implant device and/or to a classroom amplification system. A personal FM system is used to provide additional help listening in noisy environments where it is difficult to hear and listen such as in noisy classrooms; reverberant rooms (a room that echoes) such as gymnasiums, cathedrals, concert halls; or when distance separates the speaker from the listener.

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Without the full inclusion of ASL in his day, nothing was going to work for Isaac. After the closure of the School for the Deaf (SDSD), Harrisburg School District entered into an agreement to provide an ASL environment. When Isaac was accepted into that program, there was a big jump in his progress. It has been such an amazing experience. As parents, we needed to “listen” to Isaac, and make sure he got what he was communicating to us that he needed.

Within my family, all of us need different learning experiences. My husband needed to be in an ASL only environment that offered social and sports activities. Me—I made it work either way. Isaac needs an ASL environment. We’re all Deaf, but all needed INDIVIDUALIZED Education Plans.

My advice for parents who have children with hearing issues, is to encourage exposure to BOTH worlds. Learn some signs—encourage them to learn the English language as well. Above all, support your child with appropriate strategies and actions that support their future. Lack of understanding is the worst thing you can do for your child. Follow the individualized system that works for your child.

Hearing Assistive Technology Devices

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Classroom and Desktop Amplification Systems

A classroom amplification system is similar to a public address (PA) system. The teacher wears a microphone that transmits sound wirelessly to speakers in the classroom. The teacher’s voice is amplified above the noise level of the classroom, throughout the room. This system will improve the listening environment for all students in the classroom. With a desktop amplification system, the teacher wears a microphone that transmits sound wirelessly to a speaker placed on the desktop of a student in the classroom. The teacher’s voice is able to be amplified above the noise level of the classroom for a student seated at the desk with the speaker.

Personal 2.4 GHz and 900 MHz Digital Systems

Personal 2.4 GHz and 900 MHz digital systems are relatively new HAT. These systems function similar to personal FM systems. These systems transmit wirelessly to receivers in different frequency bands than FM systems. Receivers for these systems connect to virtually any implant device or behind the ear hearing aid with a universal direct audio input (DAI). Several studies show that these systems may offer better speech-in-noise performance over personal FM systems in the classroom.

Several studies also show that a personal FM system or personal 2.4 GHz digital system provides the best option for listening in difficult listening conditions, and that classroom amplification systems provide little or no benefit for children utilizing cochlear implants in the classroom. Nonetheless, personal FM or 2.4 GHz digital systems used with the child’s implant device significantly increase acoustic access in the classroom. Evidence is emerging that children with hearing aids gain greater access to acoustic information when both a personal FM system AND a classroom amplification system are implemented in the classroom. Acoustic access in classrooms with poor room acoustics and distances from the teacher greater than six to eight feet are difficult for a child wearing hearing aids or implant devices. A personal FM or 2.4 GHz digital system gives the child with a hearing loss increased access to hear more clearly what is being spoken and to more fully participate in conversations with family members, teachers and peers.

June, July, August 2013
Online Resources

The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University provides information, training, and technical assistance for parents and professionals to meet the needs of children who are Deaf or hard of hearing. For information on the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, ADA for Deaf Children or other issues visit http://www.gallaudet.edu/Clerc_Center/Information_and_Resources.html.

Hands & Voices is an organization supporting families with children who are Deaf or hard of hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology. For articles on Early Intervention, Education issues, Advocacy, Technology and Deaf People and Perspectives on Deafness visit www.handsandvoices.org/topics.

SDPC has a video phone that those who are Deaf or hard of hearing can use to reach us. The video phone number is 605-370-5152.

Inclusion in the School using ASL

With the closure of the South Dakota School for the Deaf (SDSD) in 2009, the Harrisburg School District became home to the SDSD Bilingual Program using ASL. The Auditory/Oral Program moved to the Brandon Valley School District. With no physical SDSD many schools rely on SDSD Outreach Consultants who work with a team of teachers at the public school. Some schools have their own itinerant teachers that travel to schools throughout their district. A few schools have hired their own Deaf educator that serves students at a single school in the district.

The Bridgewater-Emery (B-E) School district tried a different approach, teaching sign language to teachers, support staff and students. The teaching method was embarked upon to assist a Deaf child with bilateral cochlear implants.

Several teachers at B-E School have been learning sign language. The entire class also received sign instruction from a professional sign language teacher to improve communication between the Deaf child and the rest of the class.

After receiving training in sign language, teachers have continued to teach sign in the classroom. It may be incorporated with spelling words, calendar, word wall words, patterns, colors, and so on.

“I have really enjoyed learning sign language. I think it’s very important for kids to learn sign language and I hope to continue teaching my future students signs in the classroom,” said Stephanie Marquardt, one of the teachers using sign language in her classroom.

Carpet and a classroom amplification system have also been put into the classroom to accommodate the Deaf student. “I also get a lot of use out of the audio system because it helps all kids to hear me better, said another teacher, Dayna Jones. “The kids like to use it to for show and tell, as well.”

Do You Want to Learn ASL?

For information about ASL classes contact Communication Service for the Deaf at Toll Free Voice: (800) 642-6410 • Toll Free TTY: (866) 273-3323 • Videophone: (605) 496-0738 email: inquiry@c-s-d.org • www.c-s-d.org

ASL Facts:

- ASL uses space, direction, and speed movements, along with facial expressions, to convey meaning.
- ASL is not English and you can not perfectly translate ASL.
- ASL is not written language; it is a visual language.
- ASL is the third most common language in the U.S.
The Deaf Child’s Bill of Rights & IEPs

In 1993 the South Dakota Legislature passed a bill recognized as the Deaf Child’s Bill of Rights (DCBR). The bill became law on July 1, 1993 (http://legis.state.sd.us/statutes/DisplayStatute.aspx?Type=Statute&Statute=13-33B-1). Introduction of the law, which is permissive, was part of a national campaign with the National Association of the Deaf.

The law stresses the basic human need for a child to be able to communicate freely with others, promotes understanding of communication needs, and does not favor any one particular communication mode or language over another. Complete information can be found at www.nad.org/issues/education/K-12/bill-of-rights.

Requirements under the IDEA are not always Deaf-friendly, but the unique language and communication needs of Deaf and hard of hearing children must be formal parts of the IEP process, according to Lawrence Siegel, a contributor to Communications Considerations A-Z for Hands and Voices.

“The spirit of the DCBR is validated by the IDEA’s special consideration for students who are Deaf or hard of hearing and other federal laws, including No Child Left Behind. This doesn’t make it a redundant law, but a way for its conceptual values to be made actionable at the local level,” concludes Siegel. “Parents should read the law in detail and know that a DCBR is designed to represent formal recognition in state statute of the important needs that are unique to their child. They should expect to see those needs discussed and accommodations implemented at school to assure the child’s right to receive communication and express him/herself in the mode of communication and language she/he uses. Parents should not be naive in thinking that the DCBR can simply be referred to in order to secure everything they want for their children. It can be a powerful tool for advocacy, but it doesn’t replace the need for effective advocacy.”

For more information on the Deaf Child’s Bill of Rights and IEPs visit www.handsandvoices.org.

Augustana Program Prepares Students to Support Deaf Community

The Sign Language Interpreting Program at Augustana College in Sioux Falls prepares students to interpret in a variety of settings. The program has been developed in accordance with the Conference of Interpreter Trainers (CIT) recommended course of study and is based on a broad foundation of liberal arts, sciences, professional education, research, and practicum. Students observe practicing interpreters while they are working in various settings to become familiar with situations encountered by professional interpreters. Development of critical thinking skills in order to prepare students to make ethical decisions after graduation is also part of the training.

Augustana College has a state-of-the-art computer lab that is used by all ASL students and Sign Language Interpreting majors. The interactive technology suite, designed specifically for ASL and Interpreter Training applications, includes high quality video cameras providing clear visual communication between the instructor and all of the students, a selected student, or several students working together.

Upon completion of the interpreting course, students may work as community interpreters at doctors’ offices, courthouses, hospitals, office buildings, factories, banks, colleges, etc. Educational interpreters work in elementary, middle, and high schools, and have the opportunity to work with students, parents, and teachers in a team environment. They are typically assigned to one or two students and interpret the message between the teacher or classmates to the Deaf student.

Video Relay Service (VRS) is a phone service that provides sign language interpreting between Deaf individuals and people who can hear. This is a very challenging type of interpreting in that these interpreters never know what’s next. Callers connect to an interpreter and make phone calls ranging from job interviews, to making doctor’s appointments, to legal consultations.

Until recently, Augustana also offered an Education of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program. However due to funding constraints and in line with a nationwide trend that has seen a decline in Deaf Education programs, the Augustana program is being phased out. The 13 students currently in the program will be allowed to complete their degree, however no new students are being accepted. Augustana continues to host the Midwest Deaf Education Conference to provide professional development opportunities to individuals who work with Deaf and hard-of-hearing youth.
Summer Enrichment Program is Signing, Language-Rich Environment for Children

The Summer Enrichment Program is a FREE program for Deaf and hard of hearing students from age three through sixth grade. This year the program will be offered July 1-2, July 8-12, July 17-19, July 22-26 and July 29-31 in Sioux Falls from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.

Children will acquire language skills, socialize with peers, participate in community activities and interact with adult Deaf role models. Each week a thematic unit will be delivered and a field trip will reinforce language, socialization skills and culture. Parents will receive the concepts and vocabulary that will be taught each week to help them reinforce the experience. The program is taught by certified Deaf education teachers.

Please register for this year’s program by Monday, June 17 by calling Carmen Steen at 605-201-5702 or email lefse4me2@sio.midco.net.

The program is a collaborative effort of SD Parent Connection, South Dakota Department of Education, Communication Service for the Deaf, and South Dakota School for the Deaf.