

**Hearing Workgroup  
February 28, 2007  
Henrico Mental Health East**

**Attendance:**

Beth Tolley – Technical Assistance Consultant, Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia  
Ruth Frierson – Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Follow Up Coordinator  
Pat Wiley – Care Connection  
Rhonda Lusk – System Manager, Infant & Toddler Connection of the Highlands  
Cory Hall – Service Coordinator, Educator, Infant & Toddler Connection of Hanover  
Melinda Smyth – Educator of the Deaf, Hanover  
Pat Dewey – Director, Early Hearing Detection and Intervention; VDH  
Debbie Pfeiffer – DOE Technical Assistance  
Sarah Peters – Speech Language Pathologist, Infant & Toddler Connection of Henrico  
Ann Hughes – Consultant, Partnership for People with Disabilities  
Fredia Helbert – Audiologist, Wise County  
Claire Jacobson – Audiologist, James Madison University  
Debra Holloway – State Parent Representation, Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia  
Wanda Walker – System Manager, Southside  
Dana Yarbrough – Director of state Parent to Parent, Manager of Guide by Your Side  
Leslie Hutcheson-Prince – Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

New members were enthusiastically welcomed to the group!

In follow up to the December 2006 meeting, Pat contacted Arlene Stredler Brown, one of the top experts in provision of early intervention services for infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Arlene provided the following resources, which were distributed today:

- Standards for Early Intervention Service Providers: Infants/Toddlers Who Are Deaf/Hard of Hearing and Their Families
- Standards for Early Intervention Services for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- Family-Centered Developmental Assessment (by Jan Christian Hafer and Arlene Stredler Brown)
- Family-Centered Intervention: Proven Strategies to Assure Positive Outcomes (by Arlene Stredler Brown)

**Goals for 2007**

- Successful implementation of Guide By Your Side (monitor via workgroup)
- Appropriate early intervention services for all children birth to 3 with hearing impairments and their families throughout the entire state

**Update on Guide By Your Side (GBYS)**

GBYS, a product of Hands and Voices, is a parent-to-parent program designed to provide emotional support and unbiased information to parents of children newly diagnosed with hearing impairment. Virginia is the 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> state to implement GBYS. Fifteen parent guides were trained by national representatives from Hands and Voices and members of the Hearing Workgroup during a two-day training in October. Training included the content areas of presenting unbiased information, choice of communication options, and supporting families. A background check was done for each family guide prior to matching the family guide with a family with an infant or toddler newly diagnosed with hearing loss. Matching began in January; 11 matches have been made. While there has not been sufficient time to officially evaluate the process, the feedback from the family guides has been very positive.

The Family Notebook, a resource the Family Guides give to families, is being finalized. This notebook contains an array of informational resources. The information will be translated into Spanish.

Recruitment is in progress for family guides in specific areas, including the far southwest, south Virginia, Northern Neck, and the Shenandoah area. The current family guides are serving the areas that don't have guides. Recruitment brochures have been created and will be available at the Speech and Hearing Association Conference (this week in Richmond), the Annual Early Intervention Conference in Roanoke in March, the Resource Fair in Richmond, and the New Horizons conference in Southwest Virginia on May 16. They will also be mailed to early intervention systems, Health departments, and audiologists. Applications will be accepted until August. Training for the new group will likely be in September. The GBYS program will work toward recruiting and training a parent of a child who is deaf and vision impaired to serve as a guide for parents of children newly diagnosed with both hearing and vision impairments.

Referrals typically come from Ruth Frierson, the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EDHI) Follow Up Coordinator. Referrals can come from anyone, including parents or other professionals. Dana Yarbrough and Jennifer Hutson, Parent Lead for GBYS stay in close communication with each other and with Ruth.

While there is available funding for this year, ongoing funding has not been established.

The GBYS program has been featured in two newspapers (Williamsburg and Staunton).

Hands and Voices of Virginia will link existing parent support groups together.

### **Current Status: Early Intervention Services**

Ruth reported on a **survey that was sent to parents** of children with hearing loss who were born from 2001 to 2006. 362 surveys were sent and 79 were completed. Responses related to early intervention included:

- EI has room to improve
- EI hasn't met my needs
- We weren't given any help and were told that only general speech would be provided
- Speech and OT evaluated child and suggested that her case be closed. We asked about modes of communication and were told to borrow a videotape. We didn't know what to ask for and little info was given. Lots of excuses were given including the budget.
- Very disappointing. Lucky to have a speech therapist who doesn't work for EI
- Audiologist is a godsend

The survey was not able to break down the responses by year, so there is no way of knowing if this is feedback on services from current years or from several years back.

Beth reported on the **Hearing Capacity Survey** that was sent Spring 2006 to the 40 local systems with a request that it be completed by all providers in each system. ***(Additional information is being provided in these minutes).***

### ***Number of Responses***

- There were 97 responses representing all 5 regions.
- However, only 25 out of 40 local systems were represented.

- Of those 25, the number of responses ranged from 1 (from many of the local systems) to 12.
- Some of the large systems had no responses or disproportionately low responses.

**Disciplines represented include:**

1 Audiologist	17 Educators	8 PTs
5 Deaf educators	1 Manager	12 Service Coordinator/Educators
22 SLPs	7 OTs	2 Social Workers

**Degrees**

1 associates degree	37 bachelor's degrees	2 Doctorate degrees
2 RNs	50 Masters	5 didn't specify

**Responses**

- The **scale** for the survey was 1 = I am very competent; 2 = I am fairly competent; 3 = I have minimal knowledge/skills; 4 = I have no knowledge/skills
- 25 respondents had an average self rating of less than 2 (between “I am very competent” and “I am fairly competent”)
- 53 respondents had an average self rating of between 2 and 3 (between “I am fairly competent” and “I have minimal knowledge/skills”)
- 19 respondents had an average self-rating of between 3 and 4 (between “I have minimal knowledge/skills” and “I have no knowledge/skills”).
- “I have no knowledge or skills” was recorded by a number of Service Coordinators, OTs and Educators for the category “Understanding Communication Development”
- “I have no knowledge or skills” was recorded by a number of Service Coordinators and Educators for the category “Facilitating Communication Development”
- “I have no knowledge or skills” was recorded by a number of Service Coordinators, OTs, a PT and Educators for the category “Maximizing Hearing”

**Anecdotal Information**

The following issues have become known through parent communications with the EHDI Follow Up Coordinator, the Parent Lead for Guide-By-Your-Side and Parent-To-Parent Coordinator, and state TA staff, as well as from Infant & Toddler Connection Technical Assistance work with local systems.

- There have been instances where children have not been determined eligible for early intervention (these have been corrected)
- A local system has told parents that no services are needed because the child already has a hearing aid and/or is on target with development
- A local system has told a family that they do not offer services (or do not have the services available that are) necessary to help the child and family pursue their choice of mode of communication
- There is a lack of knowledge in some local systems about the outcome for children who do not have intervention to address cognition, communication and language.
- Controversy continues about who can provide auditory verbal therapy
- There are limited numbers of providers throughout Virginia who are confident and competent with provision of auditory verbal therapy. There are 7 certified auditory verbal therapists. Services for children who are using this mode do not need to be provided by a certified AVT provider, but the provider does need to have the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide appropriate, effective intervention for children using this mode of communication.

## **Discussion**

- EI will not pick up on delays if they are just looking at speech.
- There is a concern that some early interventionists don't realize they are not competent; that they don't know what they don't know. On the other hand, there may be a number of providers who have more competence than confidence for providing services for children who are using the auditory verbal mode of communication.
- Concern was expressed that families may be making communication choices based on what is available and what they can afford
- Staff turnover in early intervention programs is an issue; training needs to be ongoing as new providers come into the system
- A local system may not have any children with hearing impairments for years. Providers within such a system will not have the experience to develop and maintain their knowledge and skills
- Teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing are valuable and untapped resources
- Implementation of GBYS may drive improvement in the capacity of local systems to meet the needs of children who are hard of hearing and their families because parents will be more knowledgeable when they enter early intervention

## **Existing Resources and Upcoming Training**

Fredia reported that the materials that were purchased as resources for local systems and which are kept at the Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing are very good. These materials include books and/or DVD/videotapes on sign language instruction, home visits, cued speech, development of cognition, early language resources, Choices in Deafness, Time to Learn and the SKI-HI manuals. There is a Spanish version of the family sign language series on DVD/Videotape.

A conference will be held August 8,9 in Staunton for anyone involved with educating children with hearing impairments. The cost is \$40. Content includes 4 strands: literacy technology, transition, and communication. Sue Schwarz, editor of Choices in Deafness, is the keynote speaker. (A revised edition of Choices in Deafness is expected to be available in June.

Debbie is creating list of all the teachers of the deaf in the school system and where they are located. Once this list is created, it could possibly be used as a resource for local systems wishing to expand their capacity to serve children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Mark Campano is coordinating an INSITE training (for serving children with dual sensory impairments) that will be held July 23-25 and August

## **Issues/Barriers to Provision of Appropriate Services**

- Lack of knowledge and awareness about hearing loss and appropriate services
- Insufficient number of competent, experienced providers
- Attitude – There needs to be the expectation by local systems that they will provide services necessary to meet the outcome of the child communicating in the family's choice of communication mode.
- Budgetary issues

## **Possible Solutions**

- Put together guidance for local systems
- Local training
- Expand awareness and use of existing resources such as teachers of the deaf in school systems and VNOC (Virginia Network of Consultants)

- Find ways to get beyond budgetary constraints
- Establish/re-establish state consultant positions (such as the positions that were funded through the Department of Education and housed at the Schools for the Deaf)
- Establish a statewide network for persons serving infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing
- Explore available/create distance learning options. Consider pairing with onsite sessions at a community college (or other location)
- Facilitate mentorship opportunities
- Collaborate with Part B – develop relationships between Part B teachers of the deaf and early intervention providers/systems

The group decided to pursue two projects: development of a fact sheet for early intervention systems and training, including development of curriculum and mechanism for online training.

### **Fact Sheet:**

The vision for the fact sheet is that information will include information about:

- Responsibility of local systems in relation to serving children with hearing impairments and their families
- Evaluation and assessment of children with hearing impairments
- Scope of services and resources to be considered

The fact sheet will be brief, but will include links to resources including standards for providers, communication choices, etc.

The family guides can help with development and review of the materials. Workgroup members for this project include: Debbie, Sarah, Melinda, Wanda, Beth, Jennifer Hutson/GBYS, and Cory.

### **Training Project**

Considerations for the training project group include:

- Address orientation/awareness, competencies, curriculum, continuing education
- Build curriculum around competencies
- Draw from existing curriculums such as SKI-HI and resources such VNOC
- Tweak PREP training to be specific to early intervention
- Bring in experts
- Find and explore existing on-line training (perhaps the ECENTER Learning through UNC Greensborough)
- Determine what/how much training can be done on-line versus in person. Consider having a facilitator for online training (group meet at one location for online training with a facilitator present to guide discussion, answer questions, etc). TTAC Online could be used.
- Mentoring opportunities
- Consider adding a component of the training to Kaleidoscope
- Target audience – system managers, speech language pathologists, special instructors, service coordinators
- Consider future inclusion of mechanisms for certifications

Training group members include Fredia, Claire and Ann with Debbie serving as a resource to get materials online through TTAC online.

### **Plans:**

**Fact Sheet Group:** Members will read the articles disseminated today and will gather any additional resources that may be helpful in creating the Fact Sheet. The group will meet in person (by phone for those from a distance) on April 16 from 1:00 at Henrico Mental Health.

Sarah Peters will secure a meeting room, as well as a computer and LCD so that writing and editing can be done during the meeting.

**Training Group:** Members will see what is available online and review existing materials (on their own). The group will develop curriculum from existing materials, pull the presentation/training together, get the presentation/training ready to go on the DOE (TTAC online) website. They will consider presentation of some of the material by a parent, service coordinator and/or provider. The modules can include materials that are presented visually as well as material presented verbally.

**Next meeting** – June 8 from 9:30 – 2:00 PM. Sarah will secure a room at Henrico Mental Health and will also email a menu to members for lunch (to be ordered and delivered during the meeting).