

REALTIME FILE

NCHAM

Supporting and Enhancing Earliest Interactions During COVID-19

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>> For those of you who have signed in early, you're in the right place for today's webinar. You're going to notice a change on your screen while I upload an edited version of today's PowerPoint presentation. So don't be concerned if things look a little funny there for a moment.

Thank you, Brook, your captioning is working perfectly.

We are always so thankful when our technology cooperates with us.

And for those of you who have signed in early, we are just getting a few details ironed out and we'll be starting this webinar at the top of the hour in about 20 minutes from now.

>> So you might want to jot that number down. I do have my cell phone beside me, so if something were to happen, and you can't reconnect, there is always that chance of getting connected that way.

Okay.

(Standing by.)

>> Just so you know, we are being broadcasted to an audience right now. So be aware of that. And we will be starting at the top of the hour.

For those of you who have signed on early, we welcome you to today's webinar that will be starting at the top of the hour, in about 15 minutes.

I am going to not speak here for a moment until we have more people signing on.

(Standing by.)

>> If you have just signed on, you are in the right place for today's webinar, Recognizing Better Hearing & Speech Month.

We will be starting at the top of the hour.

I just want to make sure that our two presenters are still connected by audio. Karen, can you say a few words?

>> KAREN HOPKINS: Hi, everybody. I am here.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Perfect. And Amy?

>> AMY SPENCER: And I am here, too.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Excellent. Good.

(Standing by.)

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Once again, for those of you who have signed on early, we welcome you to today's webinar brought to you by NCHAM and Hands & Voices. And the FL3, Family Leadership in Language and Learning Project. We'll be starting at the top of the hour.

So, that you have an opportunity to adjust your volume settings, I will speak for a bit more. I am William Eiserman from NCHAM. I am the associate director of NCHAM. And we are delighted to be offering this webinar as the last webinar in a series of webinars that have been offered over the last several weeks in recognition of Better Hearing and Speech Month.

We will be starting in just a few minutes.

I am putting a poll question up on the screen. And invite you to identify the role that best reflects what prompted your participation in today's webinar.

You may want to scroll down if you don't recognize a role that reflects your primary responsibilities.

It's always nice for our presenters to have an idea of who is in the audience, and the perspectives that you bring.

Thank you for your fast response to that invitation.

We have people signing in at a fairly rapid pace now, so I am going to continue

speaking now so that everybody has a chance to get their volume adjusted on their speakers or headsets.

You're in the right place for today's webinar as a part of our recognition of May as the Better Speech and Hearing Month, Better Hearing and Speech Month, designated by ASHA. You'll notice there's a poll question on your screen. If you haven't already, identify the role that is most primary for you that brings to today's webinar, so that our presenters have a chance to get a chance of the perspectives in our audience today.

As you get settled, recognize, please, that if you have any disruptions in your attendance to today's webinar this webinar will be recorded and posted on [Infanthearing.org](http://Infanthearing.org) so that you can view it as well as share it in just another day or so with those that may not be able to attend live.

Thank you, everybody, for responding to that poll question. I'm going to initiate recording of our meeting and then we will get started.

>> Audio recording for this meeting has begun.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Good day, everyone. My name is William Eiserman and I'm the associate director of NCHAM at Utah State University, which serves as a National Technical Resource Center on Early Hearing Detection and Intervention. NCHAM, along with Hands & Voices and the Family Leadership and Language and Learning or FL3 project are sponsoring this series of webinars in recognition of Better Hearing and Speech Months, Bright Spots and Innovations Related to COVID-19. Today's webinar is the last in a series of webinars that we have been hosting for the last couple of weeks. You'll see the various titles here on your screen right now. All of our webinars have been recorded and posted on [infanthearing.org](http://infanthearing.org). So, as is true with today as all of the previous webinars, if anything got in the way of your full attendance or attention to the webinar, we invite you to go to our website and to view these again. And also keep in mind anybody that you think might benefit from these webinars, as well, and share the link with them.

We are delighted today to be talking about supporting and enhancing earliest interactions during COVID-19. And we're especially pleased that we have both captioning services as well as interpreting services today to help make this webinar as accessible as possible. So, we always like to recognize the human beings behind these services that help us make our webinars accessible. So thank you to our captioner and thank you to our interpreter today.

Once our presenters today have wrapped up their comments, we will be revealing a text screen into which you'll be able to type a question or comment for our presenters to

respond to.

For now, I will turn the time over to our presenters who will be again addressing the topic of Supporting and Enhancing Earliest Interactions During COVID-19, Amy Spencer and Karen Hopkins.

>> KAREN HOPKINS: Hello, everyone, and welcome. My name is Karen Hopkins, and I am the director of statewide education and family services at the Maine Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. I'm here with Amy Spencer, who is one of our early education teachers and teachers of the Deaf in our program. One of the areas that our early intervention team has been focusing on in Maine is how do we support families when infants refer to follow-up screening, but are not wanting to expose their infant by going out to centers. Our focus has been on attachment, bonding and supporting families.

We know that time in between screening and follow up can sometimes lead to lost-to-followup. Families need information, but do not need to be overwhelmed in this volatile time of so many unknowns. The last thing we want to do is add more unknowns to these families. Some states are allowing access to part C services for children who do not pass newborn hearing screenings. And others are only allowing it when diagnosis has been confirmed. Encouraging your state's part C early intervention system to embrace this time for family support is critical. Finding what your state has in place for creative measures is something you can do on your own to support this process.

One thing we've been thinking about in Maine is how are we finding these families and how are we supporting them in this time? Ensuring that the community knows of the options that are available to families is key. Through your local hospitals, pediatricians, audiologists, and EHDI teams know of what's offered for family and services and early interventions, and other support services in your state.

Every state has an incredible community of support. And it's our job to find this support and make sure that all the providers and the families are aware of what's out there. If you look at your state, do you know the pediatricians? Are you involved with early intervention? Including the Deaf mentors and Deaf guides that are out there for families? Are you connected to the hospitals? Early hearing detection intervention teams? Audiologists and Hands & Voices. The Hands & Voices offer Guide By Your Side support to families. Parent support is critical at this time. Have you looked in your state to see what resources are available to families in each of these areas?

And looking specifically at what do families need to know in this time, they need to know that they're not alone. That there's resources on this previous slide that I showed you are there for them. And every one of those resources has thought about this

unprecedented time that we're in and has some sort of an idea of what they're offering families. Families need to know the critical importance of follow-up at this time, the impacts of hearing on language and their child's learning. They need to know post COVID-19 audiological – do you in your state know what your state practices are, which centers are open to testing? And if so, what precautions are they taking? Are you able and ready to share that information with families?

Families also need to know what can we do now. And that's going to be the focus of the rest of this webinar. We're going to share with you those earliest interactions that can happen with families. And the expected developmental milestones that every family should know.

We're going to share with you the importance of the follow-up of audiological testing that families should know about. We've listed some resources here on the screen. There's some videos, there's a website for you to share with families. I want to highlight for you the second link is a video that we've created in Maine for lost-to-followup for families. It was done in collaboration with Hands & Voices and our EHDI program. I encourage you to go back and watch the video and share it with families as you see fit. It is spoken by families who have children who are Deaf and hard of hearing and specifically speaks about this time we're living through today.

And I'm going to turn it over to Amy Spencer who is going to share some specific strategies for you today.

>> AMY SPENCER: Hi, everybody. I'm Amy Spencer. And the next thing we really want to make sure and to communicate with families is what they can do right now.

Which is that the earliest interactions with their babies that really sets the foundation for language development, knowing what to look for from their baby and way to respond and foster the development of skills that most parents are really seeking for their baby.

So, what we have done is we kind of compiled some of our information that we typically share as part of our initial process with families who have had their follow-up and are already in our Part C services. Maine is a state that really only accepts families after they have an established condition, which is something that we're working on.

And we really like to share this information and really support families around this to foster that attachment and bonding early, as well as set that foundation for language development. So, we thought if we could compile some of this information in a short resource for parents we could share that with families who come up who are in limbo and awaiting audiological follow-ups for their children.

So the following slides will basically just go through some of this information.

Because I know you can't see it. (Chuckling)

So, really we want to ensure families know that these interactions will be very similar

regardless of their child's hearing levels. They'll experience all types of interactions from their baby, and they really should interpret these as early communication and a desire to interact and connect.

So, they might see verbally at the earliest some cooing and crying and babbling vocally, physically doing some reaching out and touching, snuggling in, visually smiling, looking, using different facial expressions, grimaces are my favorite early on, and potentially some babbling with the hands.

And response to these interactions, we really can encourage these connection to continue. So these interactions will become the foundation for their child's communication and language development and we want to really make sure that they have this information. And some strategies to really respond in meaningful ways to these early interactions.

So, those simple strategies could be having more face-to-face time, really engaging in those face-to-face connections during their routines of their day, so diaper changing, breast-feeding, play time. Really kind of see those as times to connect with their babies. Narrating through their routines, regardless of their language, talking about their day, using actions and facial expressions, and words and signs while they're participating in their day. Showing the diaper as an action of "Oh, we're going to go change our diaper" and really looking at what their child is responding to and following their leads by noticing gazes, smiles, any sort of reaching or pointing, and then commenting on those things of interest and kind of sharing that experience with their baby.

And then ultimately, the goal is to empower families to feel that they are able to create this foundation for development of knowledge, thinking skills, social skills, literacy, and communication regardless of their hearing status.

And these resources we have included at the bottom of the one-page handout to support some of the previous strategies and provide a place for further exploration of what back-and-forth interactions can look like and that sort of thing. And also just to, in this day and age of internet resources, sometimes I feel like it can be pretty overwhelming to explore resources on your own, just to find some things that are, you know, good information that can really foster this development.

And then lastly, overall, we felt like families, particularly those that maybe their baby didn't pass their first test can feel overwhelmed by the unknown. We're in a time of so many unknowns, this is just another added unknown, and not knowing when you're going to have an answer to that unknown, as well, when the audiological services will be available to you can be very overwhelming. I think sharing these resources that look at early developmental milestones really provide a small sense of control by knowing

what to look for in their child's development.

Zero to Three does a nice job of not only giving examples of what those milestones are, but ways that families can facilitate that. And then the apps, there's a variety of them that can be shared with pictures with families, and Wonder Weeks is a way to know whether things are sunny or stormy, and just a way to get a sense of control that you might not be feeling at that time.

And then these are just the resources we wanted to provide that we've kind of used in developing our process and talking about earliest interactions. They're great to explore a little bit. They've really kind of helped us in fostering this program. And then really in the end, we would love to hear your feedback. We would love to hear your thoughts, your ideas for this situation, what's worked in your states, if there's anything that's really worked for you, finding families. And providing information to them. And if you're a parent, if you feel this information would be helpful, do you think it would be too much, too little? And we're really actively seeking that feedback from our state and when we get responses from parents, we're really grateful to get that information. And we're really hopeful that diagnostic follow-up and early intervention will be more timely again and start meeting those 1-3-6 guidelines, but in the event of more unknowns, it's extremely important for us to come together and put together a plan and approach in the event that there's another stall in services.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: This is Will Eiserman from NCHAM. I've gone ahead and opened up the questions field on the lower left-hand corner of your screen. If you have any comments or questions you'd like to engage our presenters on, right now is a great opportunity to do that. You do see their e-mail addresses on the screen, as well. So if something occurs to you later or if you think it would be more appropriate to just communicate with them directly, that's a great way to do that.

So, let's see if we have any questions. There's a question about finding the handout that you mentioned. Can you let us know how folks can get a hold of that?

>> Yeah, I can certainly send it to you, Will, if there is a place that you can post it. I don't really know how this works, but I'm happy to share it.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: That would be great. And Amy, is that something that you could share with me right now? I could post it for immediate download from this screen if you have it ready.

>> AMY SPENCER: Sure thing.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Okay, we'll do that in just a moment. Our next question is if a newborn fails the hearing screening, at what age would you recommend the follow-up hearing test?

>> KAREN HOPKINS: We recommend ASAP, as soon as possible. That's what's concerning about the COVID-19 time with so many centers being closed. It's hard for



families to get in for this follow-up testing. That's why we came up with these ideas and resources for families in the interim.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Thank you. The next question is when providing speech services, is a plexi-glass screen enough protection as a mask covers the mouth?

>> AMY SPENCER: I don't know the answer to that question. We're going to have to find that out, though, aren't we?

>> KAREN HOPKINS: I think that's something that every state is looking at right now and every provider. I know that we have been in lots of discussions in our state and national forums trying to figure this out, getting a lot of research from deaf and hard of hearing adults and teenagers. They're giving us a lot of great information. We're doing a lot of trials and tests. I do think the face shields are easier to see than the clear-face masks. And we're looking at more resources every single day.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: The next question is how are your early intervention teachers connecting with parents to provide this information and then get the families response?

>> KAREN HOPKINS: So in Maine, we have a very connected system. So, our system holds the states HRSA grant, which is connected to Part C. So we're all connected. So when those babies are referred at the hospital, our parent consultant calls the parents, and she's able to connect them to our Guide By Your Side Program, Hands & Voices, instantly. And then they're offering early intervention support throughout services.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: The next question is could meeting with parents through Zoom or any other platform be used for follow-up?

>> KAREN HOPKINS: Amy, will you answer that and can I send the e-mail to Will with the handouts?

>> AMY SPENCER: Sounds good. I think that meeting through Zoom could be good for sharing this information and sharing other information to support families. I think that they're trying to figure out different avenues for actual diagnostic follow-up that can happen in less evasive environments and that sort of thing. Maybe having it happen at the well-child visits, because a lot of those are happening, and trying to find different ways that we can get it done as soon as possible. In the state of Maine, we do have our audiological services starting to open up, but they're not opening up to children and infants, which is a challenge. We really want to get follow-up as soon as possible to provide that information to families and get some services started as soon as possible.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Great. We have a number of questions about what Maine is doing about telehealth and home visits right now. Can either of you speak to that?

>> AMY SPENCER: I can speak to what we're doing right now.

>> KAREN HOPKINS: Go ahead, Amy.

>> AMY SPENCER: I can speak to what we're doing right now. Right now we are providing telehealth services. We really didn't skip a beat. I feel really good about the fact that we're able to continue Part C services through teleservice. And Maine is a parent coaching model. So it has been effective for me as a speech language pathologist and teacher of the deaf that works with families. I do feel like it has been a really effective way of coaching and really having to foster that coaching within myself over Zoom. And I feel like it's sort of made availability better for some families. I know that sounds strange, but some families are more available to kind of take the time to have some parent coaching. Karen, do you have anything to add to that?

>> KAREN HOPKINS: I would just add that Hands & Voices' Guide By Your Side Program is also offering a lot of support through teleintervention, through Zoom meetings, through Google Meets and a lot through our Hands & Voices' Facebook page.

>> AMY SPENCER: Yeah, I've had a lot of we could have co-Zoom meetings with the Deaf parent guides, as well.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Great. I just posted. One of our participants shared the link about face shields that may be an option. And I just posted the link there for whatever that is worth. Of course, we don't endorse any resources one way or the other that are shared here, but we love to share them and make things available. For just be aware of that. And I'm also posting right now a downloadable document that Karen and Amy shared that is the handout that they mentioned earlier. So, feel free to click on that at any point and download that for yourself.

The next question is I need to, let's see. This is a clarification of a previous question.

What means does an individual teacher use to personally work with parents in the absence of visiting in-person, other than just providing written materials?

>> AMY SPENCER: I can speak to that.

I think that really depends on the family themselves. So often when I get connected with a family right now, it's typically through e-mail or some sort of technology or a phone call. I usually just ask like what's the best, how do you want to approach this? Do you feel I could send you some information in written form? But would you like to follow up and we can talk about how that's going and I'm happy to do that right now our

options are by Google Meets, Zoom, some sort of option like that or Facetime. And I really kind of put it in their court of how they want to connect with me, reconnect with me. And sometimes they don't want to reconnect with me until they get information on follow-up or they feel fine with what they have, and then some families do want to reconnect. I kind of put it in their court where I'm there for them, I'm a support for them, but they can choose how they want to use me as their resource.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Karen also added that the last part of that document has additional information about mask and shield info.

>> KAREN HOPKINS: I posted another link in the chat box. This was a document that was created with another group they was working with. And the beginning of it is hearing assistive technology. But at the end of that document, there are links and pictures of masks and shields that have been recommended.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Excellent. And I just put that on the screen, as well. You'll see it there in purple. The All Together Now file there, you see.

Another couple of questions.

Has the transition to Part D during the virus been hard in Maine?

>> KAREN HOPKINS: In Maine, we have a Birth to Five system. It's pretty seamless that transition from C to B. And our agency oversees all of the services for Deaf and hard of hearing children from birth to age five. So that helps. What has been tricky is the evaluation process for children transitioning from early education to Deaf education services. In Maine, a lot of those families have opted to continue Part C services, and that's been supported in Maine.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Excellent. And I think our final question for today is what do you say to families whose baby's ABR shows profound hearing loss and may be struggling with – oh, I'm sorry. May be struggling with grief and the idea why speak, my baby can't hear me.

>> KAREN HOPKINS: Amy, do you want to share and then I can add?

>> AMY SPENCER: Sure, that sounds good. I think that is why we try to have the information regardless of hearing status, these are things that are going to really kind of support foundations of development of interacting and talking about interacting, connecting, that sort of thing. And I think letting families know, you know, they're getting a lot more information than just the verbal information. They're really getting those facial expressions, they're seeing you looking at them, eye contact, smiling, all of those

types of information that they can see, feel, hear, maybe not hear, but see, feel, touch, kind of experience and kind of which will be the foundation for that attachment and bonding and connecting.

>> KAREN HOPKINS: The other thing that we add in at this time, especially with families who are grieving and struggling is making sure they have access to parent-to-parent support with other parents that have been there. And we also are offering visits for Deaf and Hard of hearing adults so they can see what their baby will grow up to be someday.

And we offer lots of support and connection to the community and just options for families to consider at that time. It does seem to help.

>> AMY SPENCER: Yeah, I think it can be hard in this time of not having the follow-up ABR, it can be challenging. But if they had the follow-up, then reaching out for some of those services.

And I also think the Hands & Voices video that Karen shared can be really helpful for that, as well.

>> WILLIAM EISERMAN: Well, I'd like to thank both of you for your time today. Again, this is Will Eiserman from NCHAM. And for all of you who attended today's coffee break webinar for your questions, your attention, and your insights. As a reminder, today's webinar, along with all of the other webinars that we've offered as a part of Better Hearing and Speech Month has been recorded and will be posted on [infanthearing.org](http://infanthearing.org) in the next couple of days. So, if anything disrupted your attention today or if you can think of others who might benefit from today's webinar, please go to [infanthearing.org](http://infanthearing.org) and share this with them. This webinar has been sponsored by NCHAM and Hands & Voices, and the FL3 project there. Another shoutout to our interpreter today and to our captioner today. And to everybody for all that you're doing to support children and families and one another during these unique times that we're in. Thank you, everybody!

Oh, and before you go away!

I almost forgot.

Could you click in the middle of your screen there and give us some feedback on today's webinar? And when you do that, you'll also get a certificate of attendance, if that's helpful to have on file.

Thank you, everyone!

