

REALTIME FILE

NCHAM

“You too? Me too!: The Impact of Deaf/Hard of Hearing Adults on the Parenting Journey”

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>> Okay, and then we want to ask the audience a couple polling questions before our presenters begin. So the first polling question is: In your primary role with EHDI are you a ...And then go ahead and click what you represent. Excellent. We'll give this just another minute. It looks like we have with us primarily today Hands & Voices parent leaders and then some groups of others and then other service providers. So welcome. We're happy to have you with us today.

Okay. Our second polling question is ..What state or territory are you from? Go ahead and type in your answers.

We got a good variety for our presentation from what I can see so far. Great! So let's look at the next polling question.

Okay. Here we have the third polling question for this webinar.

How does your EHDI system include adults who are deaf or hard of hearing?

Okay. This is interesting. We clearly have some room for improvement, but we definitely have some people reporting that they've got quite a bit of adult role model involvement. And then the majority of everyone else kind of seems to fall in the middle. And then certainly at the tail end of not present. So we're hoping that today's webinar can show you some additional ways that that is possible.

Okay. So let's go to next polling question here. The next question is would you agree or not agree that you've been connected to deaf or hard of hearing adults through a program in my state, territory, or province?

Great. So there's actually been quite a bit. We're happy to see that.

Okay, and then last question. And this will give us an idea of the audience on today's webinar. The last question is, oh, this will actually be one that we show at the end. But we can do it both now and at the end of the webinar.

So the information in the webinar increased my commitment to connecting families. So we'll certainly show that, this polling question at the end of today's webinar, as well.

Okay. Well it looks like we're right about the top of the hour. Again, we appreciate you joining the webinar. This is Alyson Ward from the National Center for Hearing Assistance and Management.

The webinar is brought to you by both Hands & Voices and the new family leadership on language and learning. We have some excellent speakers lined up today. Karen Putz, the co-director of the deaf and hard of hearing infusion and also Stephanie Olson who is also co-director of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Infusion.

I'll hand it over to Karen and Stephanie. Like most of our webinars we don't have any live questions. But we'll keep the question and answer box open there on the lower left of your screen and then we will answer questions at the end of the webinar. And so certainly keep track of your questions and then we'll hit those at the end of the webinar.

All right, Karen and Stephanie?

>> KAREN PUTZ: Hello everybody, this is Karen Putz here. It's really exciting for me and Stephanie to be doing this. It's actually out of our comfort zone as Deaf and Hard of Hearing adults to be doing a webinar like this, but we're excited to be here with you today.

I am a mom of three deaf and hard of hearing young adults who are now 24, 22, and 20. So my journey began 24 years ago with my oldest son. And then it continues with my daughter and my son. So I have been involved in parent support for a long time. I have also worked in early intervention for 15 years. In fact I was trained by the Sky High Program years ago and worked in early intervention for a long time. I am really excited to see the advances happening in every state and very excited to see that more and more deaf and hard of hearing adults are joining families on the journey.

I'll give you a little background on myself. I was born with normal hearing and grew up

hard of hearing and became deaf at 19. I then began my journey into learning American Sign Language. I met my husband and we had our kids. I love providing family support. I work as a co-director with Stephanie at Hands & Voices. I'm currently the chairperson of Deaf Woman of Chicago. And I'm the past president of Illinois Hands & Voices and a founding member.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: This is Stephanie here. And like Karen, we're both happy to be here today to increase the understanding and impact of deaf and hard of hearing involvement and the family's journey. I was identified at the age of three late because we did not have newborn hearing screening. And I am one of those people who continues to be very grateful for the work that has been done to bring newborn hearing screening to the states and territories. I'm also the only one in my family who is deaf and hard of hearing, which led to my growing desire for parents and family members to be connected to a diverse group of deaf and hard of hearing people.

It is because of that diversity and ongoing life experience for deaf and hard of hearing that I have developed a strong sense. My first experience was at a deaf and hard of hearing camp in Minnesota. And one of the most incredible things is there were so many of us. And I remember that first experience of "You too? Me too!" Which is the title of our webinar today. These are the opportunities. Meeting a diverse group of deaf and hard of hearing adults and having those real-life experiences that lead families to make the decisions and get comfortable with their child and the deaf and hard of hearing community.

These interactions will help create that new sense of normal for families. My roles in the field have been as a role model, a trainer for the deaf and hard of hearing guides program through Hands & Voices program, and through the CHIP program in Colorado. I served as a mentor and advisor to a rural school district in Colorado. I am currently working in a hospital and clinical setting. And one of the big parts of my career has been in preschool and public school education in terms of working as a special education teacher. So all of that has led to where we are today in increasing support for families.

This book is one that I have used in social skills groups for deaf and hard of hearing adolescents and pre-adolescents. It's a favorite of mine.

Yo! Yes? Me? You? And it's in our social skills group that kids are often the only one in their school that are deaf and hard of hearing and they needed to learn to connect with each other. They needed to get more comfortable in communicating with one another. And I realize that had they had more opportunities when they were little, and the opportunities for interacting with deaf and hard of hearing adults and other children began earlier, they would begin to become more comfortable.

The kids would ask the teachers or myself is she deaf? Is she hard of hearing? Does

she sign? And how old is she? And we would say "Ask them. Ask the other kids yourself! You can do this." So we started with this book as a way to open up and increase those connections. There was that moment when they connected sometimes with interpreters. Sometimes they figured it out with one another and then they would smile at each other. Me? You! Yes, me! And you! This is the connection that needs to begin early after identification. That connection needs to be offered frequently to the families in early intervention who will then begin to get more comfortable with the child.

A few comments that have come up in deaf and hard of hearing infusion and programs from professionals or parents. How can someone who is older than my child and doesn't know my child be of support? The goal is to have shared life experiences and to support the parents in their journey. Some things have changed and some experiences may not be relevant to today's children. But those of us that have been out there for a while and are working on supporting families understand the child who feels different, especially if they're the only one in their family who is deaf or hard of hearing of like I was. Exposing them to deaf and hard of hearing adults may help. Deaf and hard of hearing adults can provide that first experience and insight to give children early intervention and for the families.

One of the examples that I have used is a family that I had the opportunity to meet and a little girl and I were talking about dogs. And she kept signing that the name of her dog was "Brown dog." So I said to the brother to clarify the signing. Does your dog have a name or is your dog's name really "Brown dog" and the mom said oh no our dog has a name. She told me what the dog's name was. But she said we don't really finger spell yet, so we just sign "brown dog." And at that moment I realized that had this parent had the opportunity to connect more with deaf and hard of hearing adults that sign she would understand fully the impact of fingerspelling and that children can receive that information and understand it.

>> KAREN PUTZ: One of the points we want to make, especially for early intervention is that our expectation for deaf and hard of hearing children has to be the same as children with normal hearing levels. Deaf and hard of hearing children deserve that level of access.

Okay, so moving on. So we're going to talk about the expectations of today's webinar. We're going to examine the positive impacts that deaf and hard of hearing mentors, guides, and role models can have on families and their children. The journey begins and ends with the families, but there's so much that deaf and hard of hearing mentors, guides, and role models can do to support parents and support happy, healthy children.

Exposure to diverse deaf and hard of hearing professionals can help with parent stress. It also on the journey increases the hope and expectations that they have with their child when they interact with deaf and hard of hearing adults.

>> For the purposes of this webinar, deaf and hard of hearing is intended to be inclusive of all children with hearing loss, all degrees of hearing levels, sensory, auditory neuropathy, and mixed.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: We are very grateful for the project from the U.S. department of the department of health and human services. And hands & voices is grateful for them for the opportunity to do this work.

Today's webinar topics will talk about the hope, vision, tools, resources, and human connections. But we will highlight hope, vision, and human connections.

>> KAREN PUTZ: One of the things that I wanted to say is that for parents, meeting a diverse number of deaf and hard of hearing adults early on the journey has great impact for their child. They have a diverse number of adults that they can tap into with a variety of experiences and background. I wanted to share something that a parent sent to me who had deaf mentor services early on the journey. This parent adopted two children from Russia and at that point they had no language. And the mom said until we met our deaf mentor, our boys had no language. And the impact of having a deaf mentor was life altering. A deaf mentor helped us get language started. Our mentor gave us the best advice that anyone has ever given us: Try something. Do it for a while. If it doesn't work, change your course. I still live by those words.

>> KAREN PUTZ: Okay this is Karen Putz again. We are going to share the Hands & Voices Vision Statement. It's what drives us every day in working with families. We envision a world where children who are deaf and hard of hearing have every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: This is Stephanie. This will require the full continuum of services and programs from the time of identification throughout childhood and into their young adult years, with the critical time being throughout early intervention or early involvement.

>> KAREN PUTZ: Today we're going to talk about what is this FL3? The family leadership and language and learning program that we have started. The goal is to provide support, resources, and information to families with deaf and hard of hearing children who were identified through a newborn hearing screening. And it focuses on language, literacy, and social-emotional development.

Okay, we're going to advance the slides here.

>> KAREN PUTZ: Okay, we're going to talk about the objectives of the FL3 program. I want to highlight that we are not starting a deaf mentor, role model and guide program, instead we're providing resources to states so they can set up programs in their own states and work with existing programs to expand and improve them. So of these

objectives, we're going to design supports for inclusion of deaf and hard of hearing individuals within the national, state, and territory EHDI system.

When demonstrating collaboration with deaf-based organizations that operate deaf mentor programs and learn best practices and integrate new knowledge into resources and training curriculum. We've developed training resources for state and territory EHDI programs, too. We're supporting the establishment of deaf mentors, guides, and role model programs, providing that support and opening new doors for states to implement services. We're partnering with NCHAM and EHDI to train and educate professionals and increase those connections with deaf mentors, guides, role models in the EHDI system.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: Overseeing the work of the FL3, the DHH infusion are several objectives, and a board of 10 advisers, as well Karen and Candaice, and deaf and hearing loss adults and professionals. The makeup and diversity of this group is one that can give hope to any family or system that is curious about the possibilities of the future of deaf and hard of hearing children. We are grateful for the deaf advisers who are working with us as we create and meet the goals.

If we look at the slides, you will see that we have early intervention specialists. We have people that are involved in their own state EHDI systems. We have support and people that are representing the Clerc National Deaf Education Center. We have a person that's a state Commissioner for Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Director of Early Childhood. Many of us wear several hats and work as trainers, guides. We have a professor who is involved in the medical system, schools. And we continue to work on local, state, and national community involvement and boards. It's an incredible diverse group and very exciting to work with them.

We're also partnering and working with NCHAM deaf and hard of hearing adults learning community.

>> KAREN PUTZ: We're going to touch on some of the goals. The Early Intervention Supplement to the Joint Committee. Intervention service to teach American Sign Language will be provided. Families who want to increase their language skills in that area. One of the challenges of providing resources and support to families who have chosen different paths on the journey.

So the next goal is individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing are going to be active participants in the development and the implementation of EHDI systems. On the national level, the state level, and the local level. And the participation is expected and is an integral component of the EHDI system.

And goal 11 is that all children who are deaf and hard of hearing and their families will have access to support, mentoring, and guidance from individuals who are deaf and

hard of hearing. And this goal makes sure that families have access to meaningful interactions with adults who are deaf and hard of hearing, those who have the skills to mentor and support and guide families in culturally and linguistically sensitive ways. And they also serve as communication, language, and social support role models for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: And Karen and I are both grateful for the people who have laid the foundation and the parents that have continued to believe and support the involvement of deaf and hard of hearing people on their parenting journey. And there has been a lot of incredible progress, don't you think, Karen, since the time we were first identified and what we went through?

>> KAREN PUTZ: Yes. And we're both very excited about what the next three years holds for families and services.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: Where families find support. And this slide will always be one of my favorites. And you can see as one of the areas, one of the pieces here of the puzzle where families find support is adults who are deaf and hard of hearing. This visual guide is a great way to see how families can receive support. The delivery of services is complex and serves the diverse needs of families best when early intervention meets the families right where they're at. And when there is a collaboration of services. Families begin to thrive when their existing community, which is that yellow part is a part of that support. The child benefits when professionals remember to honor the family, their friends, the neighborhoods, and the community that they are involved with.

>> KAREN PUTZ: One of our challenges is to identify and figure out what is the best practices for families to receive services. We have identified deaf mentors, deaf guides, and deaf role models. Let me include hard of hearing as well in there. When we say "deaf" it also means "hard of hearing." Our goal is to serve all families regardless of background and their experiences. The goal is to meet the needs of all families and our families are very diverse.

One of the challenges that we're facing early on in the journey is actually defining what is a deaf and hard of hearing mentor? What is a deaf and hard of hearing guide? And deaf and hard of hearing role model? What does the job description look like? We are not doing this alone. We need to do this with the core team.

One of the things that's very important to understand is that those who are serving families in early intervention are more than the person that you meet at Target. We always laugh about this. Because some families that will meet somebody on their journey who doesn't have the qualification or the training or the background can they will receive advice or services from that person. And in some cases families are lost in this system. So we are hoping in the next three years to improve the ways that families

receive services from deaf and hard of hearing adults.

What's important is we all have different stories. We all have different journeys. There's so much diversity and so many different ways to be deaf and hard of hearing. The community is extremely diverse in their experiences and how they navigate life.

One of the things I have often said as a deaf mentor in early intervention, I have always said this to families is that my journey doesn't define your journey. I always tell parents take what you need from my journey, my expertise, and as you learn about your child and things evolve in your family, you can always change things so that your child gets what he or she needs on the journey.

The most important thing is to honor the family and their child. Take the journey with family, not for the family. And training is extremely critical for success.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: When we did the poll, we could see that there is a large number of you that are currently involved with mentors, guides, or role model programs. For those of you who have those programs, here are some questions to go ahead and ask and see how you're meeting the needs. And for those of you that are getting ready to look at how your state or system can begin to get deaf and hard of hearing infusion in and how to meet the needs of if families, take a look at who are these people? The mentors, the guides, the role models? Are they trained? Who do they serve? When is the service provided? What is their focus, target, area of expertise, and what topics will they cover? Does the program follow a curriculum? Is there a measure of effectiveness? What makes this role different from other adults who work with families? This can be part of your vision as you look at establishing programs and evaluating your programs.

Training is critical. The programs may or may not have a curriculum that is okay.

>> KAREN PUTZ: What is the outcome of the services? It's about connecting. Connecting deaf and hard of hearing adults from all parts of the journey, from identification to adulthood. And in many cases for families they may be the first person who is deaf and hard of hearing that they ever meet. The other desire is full access to communication and language for families and their children. Respect and honor for the decision-making process. And understand that when a family has a new baby it's a very vulnerable time in their lives. And how they receive the services is extremely critical to how the family in turn feels about their child. We want to increase family engagement for families. And a big one is the quest for independence. The goals that we very for children with normal hearing levels the same thing applies to deaf and hard of hearing children. And access to technology and communication access in everyday life. Today we have so many tools and so many resources. And in many cases, deaf and hard of hearing adults, they're the ones who are living this journey and they use that technology and access on a daily basis.

So again, it's also about providing opportunities and possibilities and hopes and dreams for families. And in the end we all want the same thing for deaf and hard of hearing kids. We want them to thrive! We want them to grow up with awesome self-esteem! And to be able to navigate the world in the way that they want.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: I want to highlight that there are so much that our professionals can do with the families that they work with. And professionals have done, for Karen and I as we have grown up, but one of the unique component of infusion and deaf and hard of hearing involvement is the ideas and creativity and the flexibility for our deaf and hard of hearing children to navigate their world that they're in. And that's part of what we look at how we can offer that to all of the kids, regardless of where they are cognitively, academically, and where they are emotionally, socially. We want to give them all the opportunities to do as well as they can and have independent lives.

Deaf and hard of hearing guides, mentors, role models infused into the entire system. What an incredible system this could be if we could start at the time of identification all the way through the adult years where we don't just pop up and show up for special social events. While that is important, it's important to also recognize that deaf and hard of hearing adults and professionals can be involved in the whole continuum of services that our children receive.

We would like to highlight that we are not here and involved in the work that we do only because we're deaf and hard of hearing, but because we do have skills and strengths and expertise that lend to the work in the field that we work in.

Parents who see the infusion and involvement in deaf and hard of hearing individuals in the system begin to see the possibilities for their child. We want to be involved in every aspect of the system. State, local, medical, boards, chapter. This should be a natural and seamless process for your state or territory. When is the right time for deaf and hard of hearing involvement, and who decides what the right time is? Karen and I are both quick to say we don't need to wait for the right time. We need to be there at the beginning and carry the work through the years and the developmental milestones that our children are going through.

We recognize that the expertise that deaf and hard of hearing adults have to offer should be paid positions. We've been doing this a long time as volunteers. But the expertise and skills and strengths need to be acknowledged and part of the system where they receive compensation for their work.

And of course we believe in partnering with parents. We are here and we are involved in the systems that we work with because of the parents and their children. We cannot do this alone without the families. And the parents.

>> KAREN PUTZ: So now, this is Karen here. Let's talk a little bit about communication, especially with families early in the journey. For professionals, we're providing services in the EHDI system. Here are a couple of things to consider. Let's talk about what is your comfort level in communicating with deaf and hard of hearing adults? Do you have a diverse experience with a variety of deaf and hard of hearing adults from all walks of life and all communication modes? Let me give you an example here.

When I was president of Illinois Hands & Voices, I was not familiar with cued speech. I knew almost nothing about it. So I had to challenge myself to learn more about cued speech and interact with people who were using cued speech on a daily basis. I went to the board meetings, I went to their social events, I went to their galas. And the more that I learned and interacted with people with cued speech, all of a sudden it became much more comfortable. So those of you providing services in the EHDI system, if there is an area where you have very little expertise in or want to learn more about, I encourage you to step out of that comfort zone and learn more.

Don't let discomfort prevent you from infusing deaf and hard of hearing role models in your system. Diversity is a wonderful thing. The other thing to keep in mind is technology is constantly emerging and deaf and hard of hearing adults are using that on a daily basis. Tap into that expertise.

If you're not sure how to have confident conversations with deaf and hard of hearing and hard of hearing mentors, guides, and role models in connecting with families, ask us. Seek out deaf and hard of hearing adults who are already in the system who have been working with families for years. Tap into that expertise. And finally, ask yourself are you operating with an assumed bias? Think about it for a minute. I mean people when they meet me and Stephanie, they often have an assumption based on whatever communication mode we're using at the time. Or they may make assumptions based on our history and experiences. And many times when you have an assumed bias, that often puts up a wall between services. So stay open with an opened mind. When you meet deaf and hard of hearing adults. And learn from them.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: So we've been talking about the vision and now we're going to go into the hope of having increased deaf and hard of hearing adults in your system. Here is a quote from a parent, a parent perspective. Exposing a child to deaf and hard of hearing and adults, young adults, and peers strips away from that feeling of isolation and otherness. We all long to feel community, belonging, shared experience. Parents of very young children can't talk to their child about how the child perceives the world, but a deaf and hard of hearing adult can provide that firsthand view and great insight. And I want to thank Candace for that quote.

One of the insights that I like to share that I learned the hard way is when I was a little girl and I went to camp and I didn't realize at night how much was taking place in terms

of conversations in the girl's cabin. And one night I happened to get up and realized that so many of the girls were sitting on their bunk beds having conversations and I had missed all that. And I wasn't sure how to access and step into that. So years later when I went to the camp for deaf and hard of hearing kids, that was incredible. Those conversations were taking place with the lights on and lots of flashlights. And people sitting closely to one another so we could see and hear and sign. And to me that was an incredible moment. Had I had a deaf adult the first time around to tell me that there were ways to access those evening or nighttime conversations, what a different experience that first camp experience would have been.

>> KAREN PUTZ: Parents, they get such a unique perspective from working with deaf and hard of hearing adults, just by tapping into their expertise and their experience on the journey.

And of course one of the things that comes up over and over again is the amazement that we can drive our own cars! When I worked with a family early in the journey, mom said to me "Wow, you really changed everything for me.." When they meet somebody who is highly educated, a highly articulate adult. They realize that deaf and hard of hearing adults can do anything that people with normal hearing levels can do. It changes the perspective for families when they realize that early on for their children.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: This quote in terms of parent perspective comes from the perspective of the deaf and hard of hearing coordinator for early intervention services in Colorado.

And one of my favorite lines in here was after a four-hour visit with parents who have a lot of questions and concerns. And that frequently happens. We think that we may be going in and working and visiting and supporting the family as needed. And it turns into a lengthy conversation. I also like this line. I can't even thank you enough. I now know and understand it will all be okay. Thanks to you.

Looking back on tough decisions, I made in order to make decisions for a child, we need sufficient information, sound research, unbiased guidance from professionals, tried and true strategies and advice from parents along with the life experiences from a variety of adults who are deaf and hard of hearing were all necessary. Only then was our homework complete. Only then could I envision what my child's future would look like. And the keyword in here is a variety of adults who are deaf and hard of hearing. And Karen, you always talk about how important it is for us to move beyond matching up mentors and roles and guides.

>> KAREN PUTZ: I'm going to use my own children as an example. When my children were young they had the fortune to meet a variety of deaf and hard of hearing children and adults through Illinois Hands & Voices. And my children said to me, this was not long ago, they were like "Wow, mom. Thank you for that." Because their own journeys had their own twists and turns as they were growing up.

For example, one of my children started out with a very different communication mode than the other two children. And along the way that changed. And because we had tapped into a variety of families from all walks of life and all communication modes, my children had exposure to peers and adults who were very different than them. And they benefited from that diversity in their own lives and their own journey.

>> KAREN PUTZ: One of my families that I worked with, this was one of the early families, early on in my deaf mentor journey.

And the mom had born twins, a girl and a boy. In the process of mentoring the family, they made a choice to proceed with a cochlear implant. I did not have experience with cochlear implants at that time. So I wondered and I asked myself how in the world could I continue to support this family on the journey when they made a choice that was very different from anything that I had experienced? And the one thing that we did is we made the decision to learn together so both of learned together on that journey. Years later, 13 years later to be exact, they asked the mom what was the benefit? And she said to me having a deaf mentor early on gave us the guidance, the knowledge, and the foundation that we needed to help our daughter and advocate for her throughout the years. Being a family that had no experience with the deaf and hard of hearing community, we were lost and we would not have learned about the resources and services available to her and our families without a deaf mentor.

13 years later the early relationship with that deaf mentor has allowed us to continue to grow as a family, strong and united and advocating for our daughter.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: My favorite words, Karen, in this quote is "united in advocating." That to me is just powerful. And that came from the work and the commitment that you gave to that family.

So today we talked a little bit about the hope and vision and connection by having deaf and hard of hearing infusion to the state systems and the territories. And at every level. Not just for social events, which we love to do and are very important. But we want this to be a seamless process from the beginning and all the way through.

Our next webinar will touch on the tools and resources that are available to states and territories to get more support and increase the services that some of the other states are offering.

We plan to share some of the programs and what the states are doing and tap into some of their resources. We have some programs out there that have been doing for a long time.

And Sky High is an example. And their curriculum and training program is one people all over look to for support.

The Clerc Center will continue to support and offer resources, as well. And to give you motivated and inspired for the next webinar, you may want to check out the Maine Early Intervention Model. Maine as in the state of Maine. There is a 30-minute presentation by Karen Hopkins which was presented online for their September 2017 national outreach conference hosted by the Clerc Center. And there is a place to go for that and a slide on resources. We just thought that would be something exciting and motivating.

We also discussed last month at our National Hands & Voices Leadership Conference topics and ways to start a program with plug and play ideas, no and low-cost opportunities, many that the state of Minnesota has done over the last few years and that they shared with us. And we will tap in and share some of those with you, as well.

>> KAREN PUTZ: We have developed some resources for you that you can begin with. If you check on Handsandvoices.org, we have a FL3 website that we have started. We are at the beginning of this journey. We plan to expand it and increase more resources as the years go on. We have the Hands & Voices E-news and the Hands & Voices FL3 newsletter. You can also sign up for that on the website: Handsandvoices.org.

We also have the Communicator that goes off three times a year.

The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center you can contact through Bridgetta Bourne. She is a wealth of knowledge. They have been collecting information resources for years.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: And there is a wonderful article that you can read when Kristi gave her 2015 presentation a new model for deaf infusion and leadership in early hearing detection and intervention services. That is a wealth of information for states and territories that are looking at increasing their program.

And best of all, for more information on the FL3, see this video. The link is right there. And that will tell you more about what we hope to see.

>> KAREN PUTZ: If you want to read that paper that she just talked about, it is available on our blog: Handsandvoices.org and click on "blog."

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: We also have some books. Aging children who are deaf and hard of hearing that was just released this year in 2017. And we will now open this up for questions that you may have.

Thank you for your attention today!

>> Thank you Karen and Stephanie. That was an excellent presentation! So there are several questions that have rolled in. The first one is will you partner up with the Sky High program that has been available and provide training with the Sky High program?

>> We had a meeting with them about a month or so ago looking at how to collaborate and work with them and of course we recognize the value of the Sky High program. And we'll be talking more with them to see how best to unfold and, you know, just to continue to collaborate and work together. But thank you for that question.

>> Yeah. Thank you. And my next question is will, okay, let me just double check. Okay. Just wondering why isn't this in ASL, too? I'm not sure if I'm missing something. I'm not sure if that was a reference to the presenters today having ASL available? So the submitter of that question, if you could add a little bit more detail, that would be helpful.

And then there is another question coming in having if the slides will be available for people to download and share from today's webinar?

>> KAREN PUTZ: That's a very good question about ASL. Due to the nature of this webinar, we assumed that those using ASL would call in through a relay system. One of the things we are exploring for future webinars is the use of the Zoom platform. When this webinar came up, we were working with the platform that was available.

And the second yes, yes, if the slides will be available to download. Yes, they will be. Watch for a link for this.

>> Thank you, Karen. The next question is this was a terrific presentation, but can you clarify what you mean when you say that "When we say deaf it also means hard of hearing."

>> KAREN PUTZ: Originally I planned to say deaf and hard of hearing. When I say "deaf" alone, it simply means deaf and hard of hearing together.

>> Okay, thank you Karen for that clarification. That takes care of all the questions that have rolled in so far. Are there any additional questions for Karen and Stephanie?

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: I just wanted to add onto the question that came up. I'm not sure if the person asking the question meant the slide where we described for the purpose of today's webinar we were using the term "deaf and hard of hearing." We did that because we believe in the diversity of all children from minimal hearing loss all the way through to moderate to profound deaf and hard of hearing. We wanted today's webinar and the webinars in the future to be inclusive.

>> Thank you. Thanks for that additional clarification. And I think that takes care of questions that came in. Another question came in is there a distinction between deaf and hard of hearing. I don't know if you have any information about any additional distinctions beyond what you already described.

>> KAREN PUTZ: The distinctions between deaf and hard of hearing, we have found that that distinction is often personal and depends on the person who is living the journey. We have encountered deaf and hard of hearing from all walks of life who perceive the label deaf and hard of hearing in very different ways. The community is extremely diverse. And what one person may use for a definition another person may not, or may have a different definition.

>> Thank you, Karen. I know there's been quite a few questions about the presentation availability. So the webinar recording today will be available on both the Hands & Voices website and NCHAM's website. We'll also include the PowerPoint and then the transcript that the captioner has put together. So all three of those things will be available.

There's a few more questions that have rolled in.

You had talked about fingerspelling with children. At what age do you start this and at what age do you expect them to be able to spell back?

>> KAREN PUTZ: I have used fingerspelling literally from the day my children were born and I have done that with families I have mentored, as well. The more communication access, the better. Children, if you think about, babies from day one are exposed to language that is way above them. And we expect no different for deaf and hard of hearing children.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: And signing and fingerspelling with our babies is the way that we can continue to have that high expectation, which also should be typical expectations that we have for label development in all of our children, so why not?

>> KAREN PUTZ: I also want to add that I have worked with families using cued speech who have cued from day one, as well.

>> Great. Thank you. The next question is should we be identifying children differently and only saying "hard of hearing" or "deaf"?

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: I think that's up to the family. They may use several different ways of identifying their children. But I think that's something that the families need to be driving that as they meet different deaf and hard of hearing adults.

>> Great.

Thank you, Stephanie.

And then the next question is can you explain more about the Sky High program. Is it a curriculum?

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: It is a training program and a curriculum and I would encourage you to contact some of the Sky High trainers or go to the Sky High website. And you can also get ahold of Paula Pittman who is the director and coordinator for Sky High.

>> Okay. Excellent. And then the next question is can you clarify more to attendees the differences between deaf mentors, guides, and role models?

>> KAREN PUTZ: That work is currently ongoing. We are working with a deaf and hard of hearing advisory team right now, and as well as people who are on the learning community. So in the next upcoming months we're going to be working together and tapping into the different expertise of services and professional who are out there. So watch for updates on our FL3 website.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: We're also using our deaf and hard of hearing advisory board to do more work and research into clarifying those terms. We wanted to be inclusive and use all of them for today's webinar.

>> Okay. Thank you. And kind of a follow-up to that, someone asked if the FL3 website is currently not active. With a basic Google search it doesn't pop up. I'm just wondering what the best way is to access the FL3 website.

>> KAREN PUTZ: We're currently undergoing upgrades to our website. You can locate the FL3 website by going to handsandvoices.org/FL3. We are continuing upgrading that and I believe upgrading to a new website system. So bear with us.

>> Okay, great. Thank you. The last question that I'm seeing is if our state has a deaf mentor program through early intervention how can we work together to implement a stronger inclusion between families and deaf mentors?

>> KAREN PUTZ: The first step would be to reach out and begin a collaboration process with the systems that currently exist with your state. Find common ground. And continue to evolve the process of developing and implementing and working together.

>> STEPHANIE OLSON: There is without a doubt some apprehension, nervousness, maybe fear for families in this early process and they need the support and guidance from the professionals and early interventionists to increase that connection. It is very difficult for a lot of our families to reach out independently and do this on their own. And

the way that we model this and that collaboration is professionals will help the families get more comfortable.

>> Great.

Thank you. There are another couple questions. I have put both the Hands & Voices link over there, right underneath Stephanie's name. You can see the link to the specific Hands & Voices web page that will connect you to the FL3. And then the Sky High is spelled like Ski Hi. And the website is Skihi.org.

And the next question is ...Sorry, I'm having just a little minute here with the question field. Is it true that all children need access to visual language in one form or another and the deaf mentor or guide help access that language?

>> KAREN PUTZ: I'm waiting for the captioning to come in.

>> I'll repeat the question.

>> KAREN PUTZ: We have had families from all different communication choices and modalities who have found success with their deaf and hard of hearing child. So to say that all children need one thing is just too general to apply to the diversity of families we have worked with. So again, it goes back to the individual family and the individual child and where they are on their journey and what their child needs at that moment in time. This is why it's so important to have a team around that family that is really sensitive to the family's needs and can meet them where they are on the journey.

>> Excellent. Thank you, Karen. And then the next question is, just moving it over right now.

In a mentorship program, how are families matched to mentors? How do you manage it with a deaf adult mentor with a child and the parents are -- it cut the question off. I apologize.

>> KAREN PUTZ: I'm waiting for the rest of the question please.

>> Okay. In a mentorship program, how are families matched to mentors? Where adults only are present, this is easier to handle. How do you manage it when the deaf adult mentor, when the child and parents are both present?

>> KAREN PUTZ: What I envision is when a family has a newly-identified baby that they have the opportunity to meet a variety of deaf and hard of hearing adults early on before they even get into this choice process of the journey. By doing that, it provides the family a very safe place to explore the choices and the resources for their child.

>> Thank you, Karen. I'm going to go ahead and wrap up today's webinar. There is a

final question here for you. It's the same one that we presented at the beginning. Just asking if the information in today's webinar increased your commitment to connecting families with deaf, hard of hearing mentors, guides, and role models. If you'll just take a second to fill in your answer. And other than that, we really appreciate Karen and Stephanie's insight.

And appreciate all of you taking out some time in your busy day to join us on this webinar. Thank you!