

South Carolina Adapts Family Services During COVID

Summer learning, having fun and making connections during a pandemic can be a challenge to say the least. In an effort to meet this challenge, Books with Beginnings Virtual Circle Time is making a splash each week with South Carolina families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children. Our virtual circle time meets each Tuesday morning at 9:30 via ZOOM. We sing and sign songs, speak and sign vocabulary related to our book of the week, engage in an extension activity and speak and sign a nursery rhyme each month with the help of an older child or adult who is DHH. This collaborative activity brings together a group of families with children who have hearing loss ranging in ages 2-5 for a fun filled time with role models who also have hearing loss and caring professionals. It also provides an opportunity for our older children who are DHH to give back as they participate in assisting with STEAM activities and leading the Nursery Rhyme of the month.

With person to person support group meetings suspended due to Covid 19, we quickly realized the parents desire to connect and began offering a time for parents to meet and chat following the "Goodbye Song" which marks the end of the children's portion of circle time. Each meeting we incorporate the principles of Fostering Joy as we talk and encourage our families to join the movement. Following Circle Time, a parent came up with an idea to have a virtual playgroup. As an FBO, we decided to provide the technical support for this and held the first Virtual Playgroup on August 12. The feedback has been wonderful. One parent stated, "Just wanted to let you know that the zoom meeting with Maizy's friends today was wonderful! It was such a great way for her to get some interaction with her peers, which is especially needed right now."

Recognizing the need to have parent to parent support, we are in partnership with SC Hands & Voices to expand Topic Tuesdays. This group has been meeting once a month since January via conference call to learn about services for DHH in SC. On August 18, we will begin holding Topic Tuesdays via ZOOM and are excited about the opportunity to partner with SC Hands & Voices in providing high quality programming for parents to engage in learning and network with one another. We could not provide Virtual Circle Time or support to SC Hands & Voices without the support of Tara Carroll, SC's First Sound Program Manager. SC's EHDI program, First Sound, is committed to increasing engagement with parents of children with hearing loss. We are grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with First Sound and creatively meet the needs of our parents and children during a challenging time.