



## Hands & Voices Regional Coordinator Annual Report 2022

### **Project in Review:**

Each Regional Coordinator is a Hands & Voices Chapter or program parent leader who lives in the region in which they are assigned, Each Regional Coordinator may focus on different aspects and activities based on the needs in their respective region(s), including Canada. We continue to grow this organizational leadership as a forum to support:

- Families of children who are deaf, hard of hearing or DHH Plus
- H&V Chapters and Start-up efforts
- Regionalized activities with partner agencies and organizations such as DeafBlind Projects, state National Association of the Deaf (NAD) affiliates, as well as state/provincial Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs, etc.

Our goal is to enhance and expand the leadership roles of recognized Parent Leaders in the Hands & Voices organization who model strong and diverse skill sets within their respective Chapters/programs, as well as throughout the overall organization. The Regional Coordinator provides and facilitates opportunities for Chapter leaders to come together in a smaller group setting on a quarterly basis within their geographic region(s) for peer-to-peer support, to share knowledge and build relationships. The value of the organic interchange of experiences, knowledge, creativity, and skills between leaders is exponential. Having access to timely, relevant information; connectivity to peers, and strong leaders; and peer-to-peer mentors, leads to the sustainable continuity and health of our Chapters/programs, as well as the organization.

### **Activities include:**

- Providing ongoing guidance and support to Chapters within designated regions
- Creating network amongst states/provinces within the region for interaction and collaborative events/trainings
- Representing the H&V HQ organization at regional and national events
- Providing a platform for Chapters/programs, within their regions, to engage (ex. Facebook closed groups; Zoom virtual meetings, etc.)

This project meets a need within our organization and systems to continue to develop and enhance collaborative partnerships which will lead to better outcomes for children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing. Learn more about how to connect and engage with the Chapters and Programs that you share borders with, and how to receive support and resources from **YOUR** Regional Coordinator!

## Areas of Focus:

### What needs are being/have been addressed in your region(s)?

- BOD recruitment, engagement, and retention
- Burnout
- Events
- Building community among Chapter leaders. This past year was about developing relationships and supporting each other with mind, body, and spirit vs. support with logistics, resources, and information. *“My goal for the region was to help leaders feel as if [this region] is their “home” and connected with other states as HV leaders and as friends.”*
- It always seems like funding and filling leadership positions seem to be common needs for most states. We discuss what has and hasn't worked in this area for us. I feel like we can be open and honest with each other.
- Leadership Conference – What topics would we like to collaborate on together for families in the region
- Sharing about state advocacy training for Latino Families- Region 9/10
- Chapter start-up support
- Providing quarterly opportunity for leader-to-leader mentoring

### What has changed about your region(s) since July 2020?

- We are seeing an increase in in-person events. Chapters are planning small and large events in each of their states. Family turn-out is starting to increase.
- New Region 4 Coordinator, Kodi Ogle (TN). Anita Dowd resigned to focus her efforts on her work with Hands & Voices HQ as well as within her state.
- Florida Hands & Voices is working to strengthen as a Chapter.
- Georgia Hands & Voices funding has shifted. They are still working diligently to provide adequate and timely support to families in their state.
- North Carolina has been deauthorized due to Alicia Spencer's resignation and not ongoing parent leadership.
- Tennessee Hands & Voices and Kentucky Hands & Voices partnered to host the 2021 Hands & Voices Leadership Conference in Franklin, TN.
- Michigan, Minnesota, Illinois, and Wisconsin (Wisconsin has since deauthorized due to no ongoing parent leadership) have all welcomed new leaders, either as directors, GBYS coordinators, or board presidents. Many of the leaders were promoted from within the chapter and were ready for their roles, however, we had a couple of less experienced promotions and the focus on relationship building across our region helped new leaders feel welcome and become part of the team.
- Region 6 was inactive due to recruitment activities.
- Missouri has lost its provisional status.

- Idaho is no longer providing parent to parent support through the GBYS Program and has been deauthorized.
- Nevada's new grant cycle L
- launched- DHH Guides, expanded Parent Guides and is maintaining ASTra program. 13 Employees now (no longer contractors).
- California shifted focus from legislation advocacy to offering face-to-face events.
- Some new Chapter leadership in Nevada
- New leaders in both Ontario and Alberta

**What challenges have you come across? How are you addressing those challenges/barriers?**

- To address BOD engagement, we have discussed board revitalization, reviewing by-laws, and strategic planning to get members more involved.
- It has been a challenge to get everyone together for a Zoom call. We are beginning to meet again more regularly. This is still a relatively new support system for our region. It will take time for the Chapter leaders to see the benefit of the meetings.
- Chapters are all feeling the long-term effects of COVID on families and children, thus putting Chapters/leaders in positions of increased support, which is leading to feelings of being overworked and burnout in some cases. However, folks consistently showed up to meetings to get connected and see others who are experiencing the same shared stress (and success).
- We find that funding is usually a challenge for each state. Some states have paid staff and others don't. We have tried to address them by sharing ideas for simple fundraisers and ideas of what other states do to find funding.
- One of the biggest challenges has been moral and stress on our Chapter leaders. We all get what the other is going through, and we are actively supporting one another and sharing resources.
- Establishing continuity among Regional Meetings has been a challenge. Some time several Chapter leaders from multiple states participate and sometimes it's just one state represented. *"How I've addressed this challenge has been to reach out to Terri for guidance on occasion and have learned to not let this worry me; I am pleased with how ever wants to join in on our meetings. They are not required anyone attend, but I'm here if they want to attend."*
- Information has been shared and mentoring for recurring challenges of board member & leader sustainability.

**Is anything going more smoothly or better than anticipated?**

- *"Even though we don't have participation from every Chapter, we have had a great turnout for our calls so far!"* Everyone attending shared their strengths and

concerns. The group shows a strong desire for the connection between Chapter leaders. They also have been open to asking for resources, support, or trainings in their areas of need.

- *“As a region, we have many great friendships and can talk about things that we feel others might not understand. I also feel that I have a great connection with Terri and other H&V HQ Staff. I am not afraid to take my questions, comments, or concerns to them.”*
- *“As a region we held out Annual Staff Training again virtually. The states that participated and shared resources to put on the training we AZ, CA, WA, NV and OR. We invited DHH Guides, Parent Guides, Astra Advocates to the full day (9:30 AM -1:15 PM). For 2 of the sessions, we extended a welcome to any Chapter leader as well.”*
- New leadership sees changes they would like to make and have confidence and know how to make the necessary changes.
- *“Ontario now seems to have a strong leader in place who seems to have the capacity and determination to develop the skills to move the provisional Chapter forward.”*

## Sustainability

### **What other ways are you working towards sustainability and support to the Chapter leaders in your region(s)?**

- Establishing a monthly check-in/email schedule. Scheduling quarterly meetings in advance to increase participation.
- I am working with the H&V chapter participants in our region to assess the current needs. We will also implement self-care into each meeting to ensure these meetings are beneficial professionally and personally. I'm also working to create a safe environment where Hands & Voices Chapter leaders feel comfortable enough to discuss their strengths and weaknesses, as well as build a strong support system within the region so we can all feel comfortable reaching out to each other.
- Working towards sustainability and personal leader growth, I have looked for opportunities for others to lead meetings and/or present at a regional level.
- I am trying to gain more knowledge to share with them and find ways to help them when needed. This year I want to try to reach out individually to each state during the quarter to see how things are going and if they need anything from me.
- I'd like to be in more contact with the newer Chapter leaders who are starting new.

## Equity & Access

### **What populations and communities with unmet needs have improved access to care or services because of the collaboration of Chapters/Programs in your region(s)?**

- This is still a work in progress as I assess the needs in our region. Once we know the needs, we will begin work to address them.
- As a region we are just beginning to discuss DEI as it relates to each Chapter. Recently our own chapter wrote a grant application that had a strong DEI lens that I shared with our region's Chapter leadership.
- Some of our Chapters in this region have very strong Latinx Chapter leaders/staff. They have been supporting this community for some time. It has been great to see this community be supported across our region more and more.

### **How did you identify these populations and needs?**

- This would be a good topic to address at upcoming meetings, so we can brainstorm how to best identify these populations and what sort of data we would like to see our Chapters collect.
- Through open discussions during our quarterly meetings.

### **How are these communities engaged in the Chapters/Programs in your region(s)?**

- Zoom trainings, virtual Parent Café's, virtual Q&A sessions, in-person events, etc. Discussion has taken place about how there are some populations that do not have access.
- In the next year it's my plan to go through elements of the H&V DEIA guide.
- Our regional conversations have not yet covered these topics but will be a goal for the upcoming year as AB & ONT become more established.

## Activities:

### **Have you done any regional or cross-Chapter training, events, activities? If so, what?**

- Maine and New Hampshire have had shared events (or attended each other's events in the past). In Southern New England, Connecticut will reach out to Rhode Island to try and create training or event.
- Tennessee and Kentucky partnered to host the 2021 Hands & Voices Leadership Conference.
- Within the region we have had states offer support to other states. MI and IL specifically opened their Mom's Night Inn event to families in other states.
- We didn't hold any regional events. There were many events that border states were invited to, such as various virtual ASTra trainings, Wyoming Parent Training,

etc. Wyoming was invited by Nebraska to their Scottsbluff Mom's Night Inn in October. It was amazing. A few individuals from Wyoming attended the Zoo Day held in Denver.

- We offered our Annual Staff Training virtually.
- BC has extended some Zoom events to the other Chapters.

**Do you have any plans to carryover any activities, training, events, etc. into the next year? If so, what?**

- Ohio's family conference reached out to regional leaders to present at their virtual conference.
- It's likely we will be providing combined GBYS training next year (Region 9/10). We find it nice to share the responsibilities of training our teams.
- BC offered for other Chapters to extend our summer get-together event to those in their provinces who may be travelling to BC during the summer.

## **Partnerships & Collaboration**

**How have the opportunities to come together as a region created or strengthened partnerships in your respective states/provinces?**

- This is the first time in 2 years that we have been able to come together since Covid-19. We have not planned any regional activities, but if the universe allows, I think another training within one of the 3 regions would be great.
- Chapter leaders have enjoyed the opportunity to come together, meet the leaders in their region, and receive support from each other. They are aware of who the leaders are and what the other Chapters are doing. It has provided inspiration and support.
- Our regional leaders have really come together and learned to support and grow together. We work together to share ideas, experiences, and resources to improve the work that we all do together and individually. We have shared experiences, such as how to plan and implement a virtual signing Santa event for families or virtual family conferences and funding sources/ideas.
- I feel like we have been strengthened as a region. I feel that for the most part they know they can come to me and if I don't know the answer, I can help them find it.
- We are very comfortable working with one another. Some of us do this very naturally. Though whenever I am working with a group or one on one with a Chapter leader from this region, I try to stretch them in doing something that wouldn't choose for themselves.

### **What partnerships have been established or strengthened through this project?**

- I continue to be surprised at how thoughtful and supportive Chapter leadership really is. During our meetings, everyone is willing to listen, share and support. We have encouraged Chapter leadership to visit other Chapters trainings/family events.
- Chapter leaders are leaning on each other for ideas and support.
- We help each other with templates of documents for grant writing or marketing materials, so others do not have to start over.
- As a Region I feel like we have a great connection and are able to truly talk about the good and bad that may be going on in our Chapter. Oftentimes it may look like things are going so great for one state, and we may feel inferior to them. But when we truly get to know each other, we realize that we all have our struggles and can learn from each other.
- During our collaborations and meetings, we freely share resources using a shared file in Google workspace. The outcomes from our chapters' partnerships have provided us the competence to take the next right step as Chapter leaders.
- We have had more in-depth conversations about differences and similarities about early intervention services for families in our provinces.

### **Stories**

**Please share stories or narrative examples of impacts, lessons learned, “aha moments,” etc.**

- *“South Carolina Hands & Voices shared their events in their area. They are an All-Volunteer Chapter. They discussed their self-care workshops held for parents and board members. This sparked a new hope amongst the Chapter leaders in attendance. They also shared ways they collaborate and fundraise. It opened the conversation for Chapters who are funded to ask about how they could improve their funding through donations. Every Chapter attending had an opportunity to share their perceived strengths as a result of the information shared by South Carolina. It was empowering.”*
- *“My AHA moment was when I realized that I could be better about reaching out to them [Chapters] to see how things are going and asking what kind of support/help they need instead of waiting for them to contact me.”* Reading the Triannual Chapter reports was eye-opening and gave a good review of Chapters’ activities.
- *As a result of states combining training, “I was so enriched by the diverse discussion and could see how wonderfully collaborative it would be to team a Parent Guide with a DHH Guide to support a family, or families.”*

- *“It has been wonderful to learn how Ontario is moving forward and current leader is motivated and enjoying the process. Also, on our spring call, when tone of the group was so positive and excited for all of the activities ahead for all the Chapters, we all felt really inspired and that we were making a difference for families in our provinces.”*