
"I love the opportunities that we have to work together. We are all working on the same goal of the best ways to support families and to make our organizations stronger. I believe that we have created bonds and friendships by working together. Also, by sharing what has worked and what hasn't worked for us we are learning from each other." -Wendy Hewitt, Regions 7 & 8 Coordinator

"I think the biggest lesson learned in Region 6 is the importance of a 'safe space' to discuss sensitive issues or frustrations. That has been a huge benefit to each leader, which is what led to the decision to have monthly meetings."
-Liana Robbins, Region 6 Coordinator



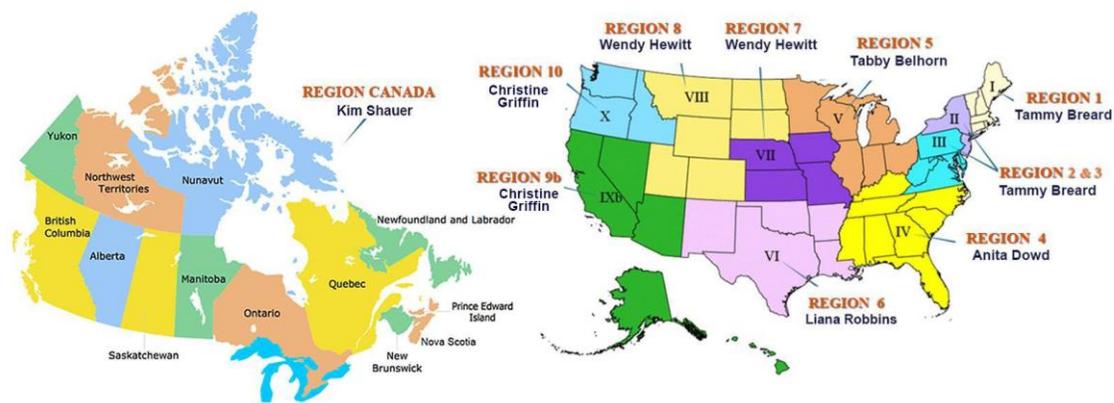
REGIONAL COORDINATOR PROJECT

Hands & Voices

2020-21 Annual Report

This project meets a need within our organization and in the EHDI system to continue to develop collaborative partnerships which will produce better outcomes for children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing.

Terri Patterson
H&V HQ Director of Chapter Support
Terri@handsandvoices.org



Project in Review

The Hands & Voices Regional Coordinator project is now beginning its twelfth year. Each Regional Coordinator lives in the region in which they are assigned, (Coordinators may temporarily support neighboring regions when a position is open), holds a leadership role (or roles) within their respective Chapter, and have shown strong leadership within the organization. Each Regional Coordinator works on different aspects and activities based on the needs in each of their respective regions, including a Canadian region that was added in 2013. We continue to incorporate leadership from the 26 H&V Guide By Your Side (GBYS) Programs to maintain cohesion between Chapters and GBYS programming. We also have 12 approved Advocacy Support and Training (ASTra) programs in our network which we also include.

The purpose of this Hands & Voices Project 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 and the overall organization. The goal is for a Regional Coordinator to provide and facilitate 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 guidance, 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, the connectivity to peers, and strong leaders to model and mentor, will lead to the sustainable continuity and health of our Chapters/programs and the organization.

Terri Patterson, H&V HQ Director of Chapter Support provides oversight of this project. Find more details on the dedicated page of the Hands & Voices website here, <http://www.handsandvoices.org/Chapters/regionalCoordinators.html>.

Activities include:

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

This project meets a need within our organization and in our systems to continue to develop and enhance collaborative partnerships which will produce better outcomes for children who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing. We host H&V HQ staff-led webinars and interactive flipped classroom sessions on Zoom for individuals and/or all Regions on a regular basis, built on need-to-know topics around Chapter leadership, family engagement and nonprofit management.

Current Hands & Voices Regional Coordinator Assignments 2020 – 2021

Region 1,2,3: ME, VT, NY, RI, CT, MA, NH, NJ, DE, DC, MD, PA, VA, WV – Tammy Breard (CT H&V President/GBYS Coordinator)

Region 4: FL, AL, NC, SC, TN, KY, MS, GA – Anita Dowd (KY H&V President)

Region 5: MI, IN, IL, OH, MN, WI – Tabby Belhorn (OH H&V Director)

Region 6: TX, LA, AR, OK, NM – Liana Robbins (AK H&V Director)

Region 7, 8: KS, IA, MO, MT, UT, ND, SD, WY, CO, NE – Wendy Hewitt (WY H&V Director)

Region 9a: HI, CNMI, Guam, Pacific Islands – Combined with Regions 9b, 10

Region 9b, 10: ID, OR, WA, AK, AZ, CA, NV – Christine Griffin (WA State H&V President/GBYS Coordinator)

Region Canada – Kim Shauer (BC H&V GBYS Coordinator)

Areas of Focus

Regions 1, 2 and 3: New/renewed start-up efforts are in process, including New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Massachusetts. There have been leadership transitions and/or board recruitment needs in New Hampshire, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. Regional Coordinator is working in conjunction with the Director of Chapter Support to provide guidance, training, and ongoing support.

Region 4: Discussions have focused on board diversity and engagement of Chapter leadership.

Region 5: This past year leaders continued to come together to support each other during COVID, sharing current events in their state and their Chapter's response, specifically around educational concerns, early intervention services, and identification. Ohio, Michigan and Wisconsin have/are experiencing some turnover in leadership. Illinois named Andrea Marwah as Executive Director. Minnesota is experiencing a merger as their "home" non-profit is merging with a larger non-profit.

Region 6: There have been many needs/issues this past year due to COVID, as the pandemic canceled in-person events and trainings. The states in Region 6 have worked together and shared the many ways they have tried to reach families during this stressful time, and how they have added and/or changed events to virtual events. New Mexico is struggling with getting working board members, and there is a potential start-up happening in Oklahoma. Those states are both working with HQ, and, as a region, we are helping with those issues, as well. Each state has had some impressive and creative ways they have reached families virtually: Tuesday's Topics, Tuesdays Together, Lunch and Learn, virtual "fun" activities for kids of all ages, and even a virtual Mom's Night Out.

Regions 7 and 8: Funding and filling leadership positions seem to be common needs for most states. We discussed what has and hasn't worked in those areas for us. We also continue to offer suggestions. Iowa is bringing in new leaders and working to get things going strong again. Missouri also working on getting Authorized status. As a region we find that funding is usually a challenge for each state. Some states have lost their funding from the MCHB grant that was to go to a parent support organization. While others are facing challenges of getting the payments sent to them. Other states lost out on some strong fundraisers because of the pandemic. We have addressed them by sharing ideas for simple fundraisers and ideas of what other statewide organizations that states have received funding from.

Regions 9 and 10: This year the focus was on data collection and tracking; and on family events, especially in context of the COVID 19 pandemic. The group all noted decreased attendance at both in-person and virtual opportunities, however there was minimal attendance at most events. California chose to take the summer off, since most of their events are camp-related. Recruitment of staff and Board members is high priority for all the Chapters.

Canada: The Regional Coordinator Project provides Canadian Chapters (and potential start-ups) a formal opportunity to interact & learn from each other as leaders to develop our Chapters and support families. In the last six months, on-going support has been provided to Ontario re-start up efforts. Challenges continue to reflect board sustainability and leaders' time dedication. Despite personal time constraints of leaders through 2020-21, leaders continue to carve out time to attend these meetings and remain open and trusting in what they share in what they feel is a safe space for honest discussions to happen, even as new leaders join.

"A highlight for me was when BC, AB & ONT all learned from each other this spring as we shared how each province is running their EHDI programs, stakeholders' involvement, and processes." -Kim Shauer

Equity and Access

Regions 1, 2 and 3: Within Reg 1,2,3 more rural communities have had access to events because of "Chapters Without Borders", Maine and New Hampshire had shared events and I would love for us to expand on this in 2021/2022. In the past families in multiple states have complained that they have not been able to attend events because the events were located in more centralized areas. By offering programs in communities near state lines that provides an opportunity for participation as well as a greater understanding of what Hands & Voices can provide.

Other groups to better support are our Spanish speaking families. In Connecticut we are working on making sure that all of our materials are also available in Spanish. And providing a Spanish interpreter at events when requested. We are also attempting to partner with a local organization that focuses on supporting Spanish speaking families.

This is a data point that we will collect in 2021/2022. Aside from just attending an event, it will be important to verify that these families are receiving the resources and support that they need.

Region 6: Each state has certain populations and communities with unmet needs. In New Mexico and Texas there are some tribal communities that are hard to reach. In Arkansas and Texas there are some Hispanic communities that are also hard to reach. Arkansas has a Marshallese population with very limited access to care/services. Each state also has many rural areas that have unmet needs, as well. I wish I could say that we have improved access for these communities, but it is still very much a work in progress.

Regions 7 and 8: This is not something that has been discussed on meetings or has been a part of our Facebook group conversation. Typically, our conversations about how the Chapter is doing, but there has not really been any discussion about how to help a specific populations. Although, we know that we need to reach everyone that we can. Zoom meetings, virtual Parent Café's, virtual Q&A sessions, etc. were a huge part of 2020. Discussion did take place about how there are some populations didn't have the availability of computers etc.

Region 9 and 10: In a recent training event, we heard how AZ had reached out to a Latino family through their GBYS Parent Guide. It was a unique situation. Another Chapter has a policy that all flyers will be sent out in English and Spanish.

Activities, Partnerships and Collaboration

Regions 1, 2 and 3: Virginia and Maryland/DC hosted the last Hands & Voices Annual Leadership Conference. Leadership in both Chapters are interested in partnering again. Maine and New Hampshire have also shared events in the past which have supported families along the state's border. CT is reaching out to Rhode Island to help support the successful restart of that Chapter.

Region 4: Co-hosting the 2021 Annual Hands & Voices Leadership Conference with TN H&V in Franklin, TN on September 17-19, 2021. Ongoing planning meetings and site visits have taken place throughout the year. Also, potential attendance/participation for Alabama H&V was presented during a board meeting regarding how to create more diversity within a nonprofit Board of Directors.

Region 5: Michigan and Ohio conducted a Level 1 ASTra training and Indiana had participants (advocates) attend. Monthly regional ASTra Q&A and Illinois H&V Virtual Mom's Night Inn was opened to Region 5 moms.

Region 6: I feel like the regional meetings have gone really well. It is a great place to connect and learn different ways to get to the same end goal of supporting families with children who are deaf/hard of hearing...without bias. Each meeting has allowed the leaders to speak freely regarding issues they were experiencing in their Chapter, and also to ask questions about how they can do things better. There is so much knowledge within each Chapter, and it has been great to share and learn. It also has been a relief, especially in the beginning of this past fiscal year, to actually be able to see the face of someone who is experiencing the same problems reaching families in the midst of a pandemic, and the same isolation as you...even if it was just via Zoom.

Region 7 and 8: I am trying to gain more knowledge to share. I try to reach out to each state during the quarter to see how things are going and if they need anything from me. Colorado invited our Region to

be a part of their virtual Mom's Night Inn. Wyoming joined them and loved it. Wyoming is hoping to do something similar in their state. We keep working on inviting border states to events in person and virtually. We share ideas, activities, fundraisers, etc. with each other. This helps build bonds and creates contact between states at other times than just meetings. Wyoming had an aha moment when they attended the virtual CO Mom's Night Inn. We realized how motivating it was and how much it meant to the moms, and that it wouldn't be that hard for us to do one too.

Regions 9 and 10: In December 2020 we had a Fostering Joy event, we have also strengthened the relationship with ID H&V and the rebuilding of their Chapter. In June 2021 we had a virtual Regional Program Staff Training.

Canada: Only BC attended the H&V Leadership Virtual Conference on Zoom, with a Regional group breakout with our Area Technical Assistance Advisor, plus attended an additional meeting on Data Collection in October that combined with Region 7, 8 & Canada. The Regional Coordinator provided a "What about Canada" segment on the November 4 Chapter Leaders' Teleconference/Zoom Meeting. I invited Alberta Chapter leader to join two BC H&V events (AGM & Ask Me Anything night in March and the OUR Project Workshop/Webinar in April), a stakeholder in Ontario also joined. Our collaborative partnerships with BC stakeholders remain generally strong and this has remained a topic of discussion at Regional meetings since Alberta and Ontario have interest in improving relationships with other deaf/hard of hearing organizations in their areas.

Next Steps and Recommendations

Regions 1, 2 and 3: Recommendations to survey Chapters to identify their understanding of the scope of support from this program and then identify individual Chapter leadership needs, to then address and include training and discussion during quarterly meetings.

We would like to encourage "Chapters without Borders" events for families so we can broaden our areas of support. And I would like to propose Chapters plan a training with their neighboring states. This increases knowledge of resources available as well as can help provide insight into how to overcome some of the challenges that occur within Chapters.

Region 4: Explore how to create more diversity in our Chapter Boards and leadership.

Region 5: Scheduling regular meetings is challenge for me. Typically, I schedule them in that quarter. This year, I will plan meetings ahead of time and allow leaders plenty of time to block off the meetings on their calendar. I often struggle to identify what the chapters in my region need, four of the six are well established and have sustainable funding. They are self-sufficient and I want to support them, not burden them. Leaders are always willing to meet as a region. I often anticipate hearing "not another meeting" and so far, nobody has ever expressed concern about meeting. In fact, the GBYS Coordinators started meeting on their own!

This upcoming year, I plan to ask other leaders to facilitate parts of the meeting instead of me doing all of it. I am working to develop a personal relationship with each chapter's leaders, in order to make our region feel like "home". Our HV network is so large now, that sometimes we lose the sense of togetherness, I am working to bring that to the region.

Region 7 and 8: I enjoy and learn so much from the coordinators meetings that we have. I really enjoyed being a part of the June HQ staff meeting. I feel as though that should also continue. Wyoming is hoping to attend the Nebraska Mom's Night In that will be held in October. There is discussion among other borders states to join each other at upcoming events. States have also offered other states to join virtual ASTra Trainings.

Regions 9 and 10: For HQ/FL3: Having a training session of ways to apply data to support Chapter could be helpful. Perhaps have a group of states present based on the size of their Chapter.

Most regions shared that they continue to have challenges around Chapter leader attendance at Regional Meetings. A goal for this upcoming year is to focus on better articulation of the value and reasoning around regional gatherings and engagement. Coordinators feel that this will be much more effective since the update of the scope of work.

Over this year the job description and explanation of activities has helped me tailor my focus as Regional Coordinator. I appreciated the conversation about the different hats we all wear and use this often now in my role as R.C. It helps with boundary setting and knowing what HQ work is and what is Chapter work.

Sustainability

COVID pandemic created challenges for individual Chapters, resulting in coming together as a region to develop strategies to more effectively support families of DHH children in each geographical area.

This year time was spent, as a project, dedicated time in reviewing, articulating, and updating the Regional Coordinator Scope of Work, resulting in a more articulated message and description of the Regional Coordinator role to our Chapter/program leaders, as well as how Regional Coordinators can support Chapters' collective and individual needs during more opportunities to come together.

It was expressed that there is a need more information from HQ, for example, what projects are HQ working on, in order to not duplicate efforts and to create more collaborative work and resources together. The Regional Coordinators are excited about attending HQ Staff meetings, I think that will help bridge the gaps.

Some of the Regional Coordinators still consider themselves fairly new to this role, especially since 2020 was quite the hardship due to COVID. However, they feel like 2021 has been productive and they have felt supported. The regions work well together and are working on developing a system in which they can share material and information to help with sustainability. There are several platforms for this...and they are trying to decide which one works best for this region. Working on a meeting schedule for the

next fiscal year that has meeting times for just Chapter leaders, and times that also include GBYS and ASTra leaders, is a goal.

With respect to sustainability, providing support, encouragement and validation to the Chapter Leaders at these meetings and individually has been really important through the pandemic when at times it has felt difficult to continue in these leadership roles.

"I feel as though communication between states and myself has improved and they know that they can reach out to me if they have questions or concerns. Although I may not always have an answer, I can hopefully lead them to someone that does!" -Wendy Hewitt