

NE-EHDI and NE H&V – Program Partnership

Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (NE-EHDI) program and the Nebraska Hands & Voices (NE H&V) program has experienced a very successful collaboration. Heading into our third year, NE-EHDI contracted with NE H&V to provide educational outreach and follow-up with physicians and families. Educating physicians and nurses has been beneficial in meeting our 1-3-6 protocol in addition to creating a seamless experience, from a referred newborn hearing screen, to follow-up with families, and to offer support to families who have children diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). When a parent hears their child has been referred, they may experience a broad range of emotions. Sometimes parents are comfortable waiting for follow-up testing, other times they may experience intense anxiety. The Program Coordinator for the H&V GBYS program is also the person who does the follow up for EHDI. This person explains the importance of further testing from a parent and professional point of view. This model allows a parent to have access to a parent who has been through a similar experience while helping them better understand the need to complete timely audiological follow-up. It is very rewarding to talk with a parent who is in the process of having their child's hearing tested and to help them understand options/answer questions to ease their anxiety. At times, NE H&V can even offer a Parent Guide to attend a diagnostic evaluation with the family. Families are also assured if their child is diagnosed, that we will follow-up and provide them with support. Although the majority of the families are English speaking, NE H&V also has a Spanish speaking Parent Guide to contact families in their native language to ensure they have a better understanding of the process.

Once a child is diagnosed, they are contacted and provided more information about the Nebraska Hands & Voices Guide by Your Side Program. If they are interested in the program, they are assigned to a Parent Guide, a trained parent of a child who is DHH, who either lives in their geographical area or who has a child with a similar hearing difference. These Guides provide information and support to families in whatever manner they feel is helpful. This can be face to face, social event or having a discussion via phone conversations, emailing etc. If they are not interested in the program, the Guide offers to check in with the family a future date, to send educational brochures, and invites them to contact NE H&V at any time if they need anything. We also encourage them to "like" the Nebraska Hands & Voices Facebook page to learn about upcoming trainings and opportunities.

The NE-EHDI program provides funding for items that the Guide by Your Side grant is unable to cover. This collaboration has not only provided information and support to families in a timely manner but has also been able to provide more enjoyable and rewarding trainings/workshops.

NE-EHDI and NE H&V continue to meet on a regular basis to discuss the collaboration so we can continue to make it stronger and more beneficial to the families we serve. The amount of respect each person has for each other is what makes the partnership so strong.

Shelli Janning, Program Coordinator NE H&V GBYS