

Spotlight on Success

Assessing the EHDI System in WA

By Christine Griffin, Washington Hands & Voices

For nearly two years, Washington State stakeholders have been meeting biannually at our state's EHDDI Advisory Committee group meeting. Stakeholders include professionals, Deaf adults, and family members. Through an initial inquiry process, the group determined to focus on a variety of Deaf and Hard of Hearing topics in order to increase positive outcomes for families in our state.

During our fall 2018 EHDDI Advisory group meeting, the discussion landed on the challenges families face in transitioning from early intervention services. It was therefore decided that "transition from early intervention services" would be the focus for our June 2019 meeting. As a representative of Washington Hands & Voices and our state's family-based organization, my role has been to emphasize family perspectives at these meetings. For June's meeting, we chose to highlight the family perspective by providing a panel discussion and survey of parents to share their experiences of transitioning from early intervention.

The survey was sent out to audiologists, EI providers, families, and to Facebook users. Families who participated in the survey had children who were 3-6 years of age. A Spanish version of the survey was also sent out (hard copy and online) which received no responses. In total 11 families responded from 6 different counties, most of whom were families living in urban and high-density areas of the state.

Of the 11 families, 46% responded they were dissatisfied with their transition process. The main cause of their dissatisfaction was based on the final outcomes of their transition, which included decisions about placement and the amount of services provided. Other concerns came from unsolicited comments or opinions by Part B staff regarding the family's choice of communication for their child.

When asked what families wanted more of during the transition from early intervention services, families said they wanted:

- * Ways to help me be a stronger advocate for my child
- * More information about the different types of evaluations for eligibility for preschool services (meaning what the school district will allow, as well as other areas such as self-advocacy and social emotional)
- * How they can share concerns or input with my child's team
- * Knowing the different program and placements my child can attend. (One parent remarked that it would be helpful to know this a month before the transition meeting, to give families more time to learn about options.)

At the meeting, three families joined as panel members to share their perspectives on the transition process. The families resided in different parts of the state including very rural areas, and whose children have a variety of hearing levels and use different types and combinations of communication. Questions for the panel were created by input from the EHDDI Advisory members and the families had a

month to prepare their responses. A one-page infographic of the responses was created and handed out to EHDDI Advisory committee members and guests during the meeting.

What made this sharing impactful was having a balance of stakeholders in attendance. As a result, representatives from our state's early intervention program and public education agency learned firsthand the current challenges parents and caregivers face when advocating for their child. In the afternoon, panel members were invited to stay to help move the discussion forward to identify next steps needed to begin improving the transition process for families in our state.

By bringing our community of stakeholders together we have become much more collaborative and cohesive. We are able to form a shared language and as a result work in partnership to tackle difficult issues for our families and for those that serve and support them.