

**Louisiana EHDI/Hands & Voices Partnership**  
**Submitted by**  
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**Collaboration is key to a successful EHDI partnership.** The Louisiana Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program ([LA EHDI](#)) team partners with Louisiana Hands & Voices ([LA H&V](#)) to ensure early, quality family engagement. At the heart of LA EHDI's work is the understanding of the value of family-to-family support so that families of newborns, infants, and young children identified as deaf or hard of hearing receive the support that they need as early as possible. The LA EHDI team respects the value of support to families, as well as the value of the parent perspective in the EHDI Program. They also share the H&V vision for a world where children who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) have every opportunity to achieve their full potential.

**First, the processes in place are important.** When a child is identified, the audiologist submits a Follow-up Services Report in the LA EHDI - Information System (LA EHDI-IS). The LA EHDI-IS includes newborn hearing screening, follow-up, early intervention, family-to-family support, and deaf/hard of hearing guide data for all children born or transferred into Louisiana. When a child is diagnosed as D/HH, the LA EHDI Early Intervention Coordinator contacts the family to explain all available support and services, including early intervention and family-to-family support in an "opt-in" system. With parental permission, referrals are facilitated to EarlySteps (Part C early intervention), and the Parent-Pupil Education Program through LA School for the Deaf (Non-Part C early intervention), and LA Hands and Voices Guide by Your Side (GBYS) for family-to-family support. Additionally, each family is mailed two informational brochures: 1) "[Your Baby Has Been Diagnosed as Deaf or Hard of Hearing - What Families Need to Know](#)" which provides information about the importance of timely early intervention and family-to-family support, and 2) "[Communication is Key - An Introduction to Communication Options](#)". This timely coordinated referral system provides families with an understanding of timelines, who will be contacting them, and a general idea of how these pieces fit together to support their family. Documentation of all referrals to GBYS is recorded in the LA EHDI-IS, as well as reasons for no referral, such as family declined, moved out of state, child medically fragile, or unable to contact. Additionally, each Parent Guide updates an Excel spreadsheet of family referrals with the date of initial contact or reason for no contact, which is likewise entered into LA EHDI-IS by the GBYS Coordinator each month. The LA EHDI-IS can generate a report of all families referred to GBYS, along with the date of initial contact, or reason for no contact. Data reports are regularly generated and reviewed to ensure continual growth and improvement in family-to-family support. Incremental progress toward timely enrollment in family-to-family support is evident with each birth cohort. In 2018, 43/73, (59%) of children diagnosed as D/HH before 6 months were enrolled in family-to-family support by 6 months of age. In 2019, 52/75, (69%), and in 2020, 44/50 (88%) of children diagnosed as D/HH before 6 months were enrolled in family-to-family support by 6 months of age. A system to reach back out to families who

originally declined began in 2021. If a child is medically fragile, follow up occurs with the audiologist to get an updated status. In addition, data for Deaf/Hard of Hearing guide support is beginning to be collected and tracked in LA EHDI-IS. The LA GBYS works collaboratively with EI through LSD PPEP (an outreach program provided by the Louisiana School for the Deaf) to ensure that families get connected for additional help in EI or the transition period to Part B.

**Ongoing communication is essential for processes to work.** The LA EHDI Coordinator, Terri Ibieta, the LA H&V Director, Jill Guidry, and the LA H&V GBYS Coordinator, Nicole DeLeon, meet every two weeks via zoom to review goals and provide updates on activities. This ongoing frequent communication enables us to clearly delineate each of our roles, responsibilities, and expectations to ensure that we are connected and understand each other's perspectives. Additionally, we can identify barriers and brainstorm solutions together. We continually strive for quality improvement and often utilize Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles to test changes. Our longstanding collaborative working relationship has led to the development of mutual trust and respect, which is a benefit to both H&V and EHDI. In addition to all of our regularly scheduled calls and meetings, each of us feels free to reach out to each other at any time for support. Essentially, it's a win-win for us and the families we serve.