

# EVENT SUPPORT PROGRAM HANDBOOK



Produced in partnership with the Educational Resource Center on Deafness (ERCOD)  
and partial funding from HLAA Walk 4 Hearing alliance

# HANDS & VOICES™ Mission Statement

Hands & Voices is dedicated to supporting families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology. We're a parent-driven, non-profit organization providing families with the resources, networks, and information they need to improve communication access and educational outcomes for their children. Our outreach activities, parent/professional collaboration, and advocacy efforts are focused on enabling Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children to reach their highest potential.

***“What works for your child is what makes the choice right!”***

**NON-BIASED SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN WHO ARE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

Hands & Voices: Supporting Families without Bias [http://handsandvoices.org/articles/docs/wo\\_bias.pdf](http://handsandvoices.org/articles/docs/wo_bias.pdf) article can also be found in the addendum to this handbook.

## Event Support Program...

Texas Hands & Voices is growing by leaps and bounds and endeavors to create a strong network of families and professionals all across Texas. This program was created to support social events and educational trainings for families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing monetary and planning support. Parents, family members and professionals are eligible for this fantastic opportunity to receive up to \$150 in reimbursement monies to help host a social or educational training event in their community.

If you agree with our mission statement and would be willing to uphold it as you plan and host an event, please take some time to read our history. The following pages will give you an idea of the people who make up Hands & Voices and the reasons our organization exists. The remainder of this handbook will help you in planning your event and in sharing our story and yours with others.

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# The HANDS & VOICES™ Story

In the early-1990s, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., was preparing an exhibit called "Silent America." It was intended to raise positive awareness of the Deaf Community, highlighting cultural and linguistic (American Sign Language) aspects of the Deaf experience. Meanwhile, a number of people who were deaf or hard of hearing, but who were not living with those aspects of the Deaf experience, had a problem with the exhibit. From their perspective, it did not represent who they were-specifically, listening/oral communicators. They resented what they perceived to be the exclusionary nature of Silent America's point of view. Controversy roiled across the land. Both camps fired off angry letters towards each other, and at the Smithsonian exhibit planners. In the end, the Smithsonian scrapped the whole project.

Regardless of what side any one was on, we all lost that battle.

## We Are Hands & Voices

As individuals who are in so many ways connected to each other through deafness or hearing loss - professionally, parentally, or otherwise-we'd had an opportunity to rally around the things that unite us and really show the whole world, but instead we burned ourselves out in the same old heated arguments over communication methodology. Those events were the coming of age for Hands & Voices. Twelve years ago, we were just a fledgling Colorado parent support group (who would become Hands & Voices) watching the whole Silent America debacle take flame. It was incredible, as in 'not believable'. Why didn't they just ask us how to do this? Perhaps through natural selection or just by serendipity, our group was increasingly comprised of diversely communicating parents, professionals, and deaf and hard of hearing adults fully united by our cause. As we grew, we became galvanized by the need to create strength and unity in our community. Certainly, we're not the first or only who have ever wanted to accomplish that, but in many ways, joining all camps together towards a common goal continues to be the unique selling point of Hands & Voices.

## Hands & Voices Goes National

At national conferences, through word of mouth referrals, and via our website, Colorado Families for Hands & Voices, our first and flagship chapter got a lot of press. Here was a successful family support effort with a parent-driven agenda modeling true parent/professional collaboration-plus an unbiased approach to communication. Wow! Could this be replicated elsewhere?

In the beginning, we expanded our Colorado membership to anyone who wanted to join individually from other states. As people signed on, the next challenge was responding to the demand to start a "chapter" where they lived. Hands & Voices started growing so quickly that we were still developing a plan for 'How to Start a Chapter in Your State' after several "chapters" were already up and running!

As a national presence, Hands & Voices has been able to build a strong network of families, professionals in all related fields, state/federal tech support resources, modality-based groups, institutions of higher education, service providers, and consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. We help each other by sharing ideas and advice, collaborating on projects, and passing on information of interest to each other. As our identity has grown, we've been able to leverage greater exposure and opportunity for new Hands & Voices chapters. Our efforts are as "grassroots" as they are "snowcap." From the bottom up and the top down, we are working on the issues at the local and national level towards achievement of our goal: improved educational and social outcomes for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Today, our membership continues to grow individually and collectively with new chapters emerging not only across the U.S., but in other countries across the world.

- British Columbia, CA
- Kenya
- Ontario H&V, CA
- Kamay at Boces/Philippines
- Pacific Hands & Voices
- Australia H&V
- Hands & Voices Italia
- Nigeria H&V



# TEXAS HANDS & VOICES™



(Lisa Crawford - 9/30/2011)

In 2006 the state of Texas (through the Texas Education Agency) funded a Parent Liaison position at the Educational Resource Center on Deafness. The focus of this position was to promote parent involvement in the state for families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Parent input was collected and various parent groups were researched and considered. There was parent interest expressed for starting a state chapter of Hands & Voices.

In April 2007 Janet DesGeorges from the National Hands & Voices organization spoke at an ECI sponsored conference and Laura Davis and Lisa Crawford met with her to discuss starting a Texas chapter. Janet approved the start-up efforts and provisional chapter status was granted! Laura Davis, Lisa Crawford and Amy Bosworth (all parents of d/hh children) had the first official “board meeting” to discuss the start-up of a chapter in June 2007.

The board slowly grew and the chapter had 8 board members by November 2008. The chapter also developed relationships with various agencies in Texas and entered into a number of contracts to provide services to families. Partnerships with the Educational Resource Center on Deafness (ERCOD), DARS-ECI, the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) and Region 10 Education Service Center were key factors in the continued growth of the chapter.

The Texas chapter received official chapter status on January 13, 2009 and received their 501c3 status in September 2010.

The chapter partnered with the Educational Resource Center on Deafness and applied to National Hands & Voices to bring the Guide By Your Side program to Texas. Approval was granted in the fall of 2010 and the parent support program rolled out in March of 2011. Funding for the GBYS program is secured through the 2011/2012 fiscal year and additional grants and funding opportunities are being investigated.

The chapter has chapter website [www.txhandsandvoices.org](http://www.txhandsandvoices.org) and a website for the Guide By Your Side (GBYS) program [www.txgbys.org](http://www.txgbys.org). There are also Facebook pages for the chapter <http://www.facebook.com/TXHandV> and the GBYS program <http://www.facebook.com/TXGBYS>



*Texas Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side (GBYS) is a family support program that embodies the mission of Hands & Voices, which is to provide unbiased support to families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Guide By Your Side does this through specially trained “Guides” who work directly with families in need of the unique support that comes from someone else who has walked the path him/herself and can share from direct experience and wisdom.*

*Enrolling in the Guide By Your Side program is easy, confidential and free of charge. To find out more or to request services go to [www.txgbys.org](http://www.txgbys.org) or call the GBYS Coordinator at 512-462-5738.*

Guide services to families include:

- Direct parent-to-parent emotional support
- Sharing information and resources in an unbiased manner
- Workshops, trainings, and events for parents and children
- Networking opportunities with other families
- Referrals to other programs that serve deaf or hard of hearing children

Parent Guide and Deaf/Hard of Hearing Guide services to professionals can include:

- Program information and outreach materials
- Partnership opportunities for family/parent events

“Parent Guides” are specially trained parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. They work directly with families in need of the unique support that comes from someone else who has walked the path him/herself and can share from direct experience and wisdom. Parent Guides can provide emotional support at the time of screening and/or confirmation of a hearing loss, as well as provide a continuity of support to families throughout the child’s life, especially at times of transition. Guides offer resources, information, encouragement, and an opportunity to network with other families.

“Deaf/Hard of Hearing (DHH) Guides” are specially trained to provide families and children with invaluable perspectives that come from personal experience. Their role is not the provision of service (i.e., to teach families sign language or to share oral training techniques), but to provide helpful examples drawn from direct experience of life as an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing. Like Parent Guides, DHH Guides are often an important link for extended family members who do not have direct contact with service providers, but do need to increase their understanding of the unique needs of a family member who is deaf or hard of hearing.

## Can Anyone Really Do This?

We have been asked:

“So... Do I have to be an expert in \_\_\_\_\_ to host an event?”

**NO!** It is definitely not necessary to “be an expert” to run a successful event or even to start a support network. A genuine desire and commitment to reach out to fellow parents, colleagues, and your community is more important than expertise. It is helpful to be familiar with deafness/hearing loss and the challenges that our children may face, but if you're not, that's where Texas Hands & Voices hopes to step in and support you so you can in turn educate and support others.

“Do I need to already have a list of people who might come to an event?”

**Again, NO!** It would be great if you have a network of people who want to come to an event, but we can also promote the event to our members and distribution list contacts who might be interested. Just ask!

“I don't know how to sign/cue/speak Spanish/etc.” “I only sign/cue/speak Spanish/etc.” “How will I be able to include or support another language or communication choice?” “Does every event have to have a representative of each modality?”

There is no way to ensure that every event has every communication choice represented. You do want to make sure that everyone is welcome! We can help you find translators if you find you need one for a training event - be sure to budget for this! For a social event, you might consider inviting a local Interpreting club, or a professional/parent who is bilingual. We have several GBYS guides who may be able to attend and help answer questions as well. Please be considerate of Let us know if you would like help in contacting someone.

## Why Host an Event?

### **For a Parent/Family Member:**

- Meet other parents and families who have children with deafness/hearing loss in a social setting.
- Provide social opportunities outside of school for our deaf and hard of hearing children to meet other children like themselves.
- Provide social opportunities for siblings to meet children who have similar situations.
- Meet Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adults.
- Create opportunities for older Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to interact with younger children and give them an opportunity to be a mentor.
- Create opportunities to network so families can learn about local and state resources, such as local service providers, therapy centers, organizations, training opportunities, family activities, etc.
- Learn from each other how to maneuver the world of deafness/hearing loss, different techniques for daily life, school, homework, etc.

### **For Professionals:**

- Encourage networking of families and their children.
- Pass on resources that can benefit families and their children.
- Inform families by hosting guest speakers on topics of interest to parents, such as behavior support, homework, reading with their children, etc.
- Invite Deaf and Hard of Hearing adult community members to events to provide an opportunity for families to meet and socialize with them.

## After the Event, Stay In Touch!

- **Create a support network. Use this first event as a way to encourage ongoing events!**
- Kick-start your own local Parent/Family group.
- Continue to evaluate the needs of your local area families.
- Provide additional trainings, events and state and local resources.
- Continue to grow your local network of parents and professionals.
- Ask for help from other parents and professionals to help your group grow.

## Quotes from Parents and Professionals

"I never knew how hard families struggle to make these decisions for their kids."

"I finally felt like I had someone who understood our day to day life."

"It warms my heart when the professionals work so hard to be a part of our families' success by helping us keep our group going."

"We opened up our house hoping to give my daughter a chance to make friends at our family Valentine's Day party. Now my husband and I have new friends too."

"Meeting our first Deaf and Hard of Hearing adult gave me comfort in knowing my son was going to be fine someday."

"I can't believe how much we have learned from other families!"

"Meeting other parents has given me the confidence to ask for what my daughter deserves. We are not settling for what is being offered."

"I don't feel like I have to defend the choices we have made for my child or our family. I know we are doing what is right because it is what is working."

"Her siblings were as excited to go to the picnic as she was. We all met great new friends who "get it" and we don't even have to explain."

"Now I know I am not the only parent dealing with these tough decisions."

"My son looks forward to our playgroup every month. He asks me every week, is it this week mommy? I wish we met more often."

"Meeting other families was the first time I felt like our family wasn't different"

Our family felt so isolated until we met other families. Now I look forward to every chance we have to get together with our group."

## Event Requirements and Procedures:

- Agree with and be willing to uphold the Hands & Voices mission statement.
- Create rough draft of event with type, location, date and proposed budget.
- Fill out the pre-event application online at
  - [\[form\]](#) [www.txhandsandvoices.org/office/esrform](http://www.txhandsandvoices.org/office/esrform)
- Applications should be submitted at least 4 weeks prior to the requested event date and no later than July 11, 2012. All events must be completed by August 8, 2012. \* GBYS Guides must send TXHV Executive Director a copy of the GBYS Coordinator's event approval with the application.
- Receive written approval for Texas Hands & Voices support of the event and a confirmed scholarship amount to fund the event. We will contact you within 3 to 5 days of receiving your application to discuss the event and your needs.
- Create the flyer for the event with support from Texas Hands & Voices. Submit it to TXHV Executive Director for approval 3-4 weeks prior to the event. All flyers must be distributed in Spanish and English and must contain the Texas Hands & Voices logo. Texas Hands & Voices can translate the flyer for you. Include a contact person and date for attendees to RSVP to/by and a deadline for people to request childcare, Spanish translators and/or sign language interpreters if those services will be provided.
- After your flyer is approved, promote event with assistance from Texas Hands & Voices (through Texas Hands & Voices database, local programs and contacts).
- During event, collect contacts on form provided in handbook.
- Completed post-event form, receipts, event questionnaire and contacts from event MUST be submitted no later than five (5) business days after the event or final funds will not be issued. In case of a delay due to special circumstances, contact TXHV Executive Director at [txhvoffice@txhandsandvoices.org](mailto:txhvoffice@txhandsandvoices.org)
- Once all final paperwork is received, you will receive the approved event funds.

**Contact list, event questionnaire and examples of event flyers are included at the end of this handbook. Additional examples of event flyers are available upon request.**

Questions? Please contact TXHV Executive Director [txhvoffice@txhandsandvoices.org](mailto:txhvoffice@txhandsandvoices.org) or 936-463-TXHV (8948)

## Social Event Suggestions

Remember that your event can be as big or as small as you want. The measure of success for these events is starting new relationships and giving our children the chance to be kids. **Hints for success - Food, Fun and more Fun!** If you are ambitious and you know you are going to want to host more than one event, survey the families that come and ask what they want to do next time. This will help you build your local network and hopefully guarantee that families will return for future events. Build on your success by keeping in touch with people who have attended, either through email or phone, and contact them directly when you plan another event. Ask for help! Many families may offer to help, if you ask and give them a specific task. Some examples you might want to build on...

- **Movie/Theater night** - find a local theater showing a family friendly movie or play that is captioned (try [www.captionfish.com](http://www.captionfish.com)) or interpreted. Or find someone with a computer/projector, all you need is a blank wall and a DVD with captioning included. Offer popcorn and drinks!
- **Holiday party** - Valentine's Day, Halloween, 4<sup>th</sup> of July, winter breaks, end of the school year, back to school. These are great excuses to get together.... Think themed crafts and games.
- **Picnics/Park Days** - find a local park with a playground and shade. Offer hot dogs, hamburgers or pizza and ask everyone to bring a side dish or desert to share. Or just offer drinks and ice pops and everyone brings their own lunches. Kids can eat and have fun while the parents share and learn.
- **Spring Fling or Fall Feast** -In the past we held a turkey dinner potluck in the Fall and a spaghetti dinner potluck in the Spring. We invited teachers, staff, community members and high school ASL clubs to come and volunteer or help with food.
- **Easter Egg Hunt** - Provide eggs and candy. In addition to the eggs and candy, you may choose to provide lemonade, water and sugar cookies for the kids to decorate with colored icing.
- **Pizza Night** - Many pizza places are family friendly and may have some games for the kids to play. While the kids are eating and having fun, the parents can chat and get to know each other.
- **Summer Playgroup** - Before school is out pick a date every 2 to 4 weeks. Choose inexpensive places that you and your family enjoy to go to, for example: the park, Chic-Fil-A, Burger King, Gattitown, Children's Museum (sometimes free on certain days during the week), Zoo, etc. Ask the school to send home the flyer and advertise it locally. To reach the most families, host at least one or two of the events somewhere with free admission.
- **Ice Cream Social** - What a great way to cool off during the hot days of summer in Texas. Offer a variety of flavors and have fun toppings for the kids and let them be creative!
- **Father/Child Activity Time** - Get kids active and get dads involved! Recruit dads (and young men?) to run some games or activities for the kids. Play "Minute to Win It", football, baseball, basketball, foosball, have relay races, putt-putt, host a mini-triathlon, battle robots, launch model rockets, go hiking, canoeing - whatever the dads and kids might enjoy together. Moms and other family members can be the timekeepers, cheer section, judges, man the drink station, take videos, etc...

- **Bowling Night** - What kid, young or old, doesn't love to bowl? Many bowling alleys have specials during the day on the weekend or all day on Sunday. If you call ahead sometimes they will give you a deal for 2 hours of play, shoes, a drink and hot dog.
- **Story Time** - This is a great chance to invite Deaf and Hard of Hearing Adult community members or a wonderful teacher in your child's school program to read to the kids. It is also a great way for our kids to be exposed to books and it helps us as parents with ideas on how to make reading fun at home. (Make sure you have an interpreter for kids who sign if the reader is speaking or voice if the reader is signing). Ask the local library or bookstore to offer space to meet.
- **Museum Visit** - Explore a local museum. What a wonderful way to increase vocabulary and expose the kids to new experiences! Most museums have group discounts, discount days/evenings and some even have free admission! Invite teachers, staff, community members and college or high school ASL clubs to come and volunteer.
- **Etc...Etc...Etc...** Don't stop here! We look forward to the creative ideas that you will come up with too and might include them in the next edition.

## Training Event Suggestions

These events tend to be more work and are more successful after you have a network established. They can be very informative for parents and are still a social opportunity for the families and kids if you provide childcare. Keep in mind that topics covered should be of interest to all families as much as possible. You may want to find a neutral location for your event or balance your topic, speakers and location.

Be prepared to have a smaller turnout for a training event as opposed to what you may have for a social event. Know that if only 3 or 4 parents come, they were the ones who needed it the most and it is still worth all your efforts!

### Hints for a Successful Training Event:

- Partner with a local school program, organization, church, and/or professionals. These places may be able to offer a meeting space and may have space for childcare and/or volunteers that will provide the childcare.
- Survey your families for what they are most interested in: behavior strategies, literacy at home, homework strategies, summer programs/camps, IEP goal setting, planning an effective IEP team meeting, sex education, STAP and Deaf Tuition Waiver Programs, technology outside of school, understanding ADA and IDEA, Transition/getting ready for graduation, self-advocacy, etc.
- Utilize staff within your school program such as the Deaf Ed Teacher, English teacher, Deaf Ed Interpreters, Librarian, Behavior Specialist, School Audiologist, Speech Therapist, etc. These professionals have a vested interest in seeing our children succeed. In our experience, they are typically very agreeable to presenting to parents.
- Find your local resources such as the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Resource Specialists; they cover the whole state of Texas. These individuals are contracted with DARS (Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services) and typically work in various regional offices that provide outreach and services in the community. Many times they are willing to come and present for parent/family trainings. Two DARS programs that parents are typically very interested in include the STAP (Specialized Telecommunication Assistive Program) and the College Tuition Waiver program for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students in Texas.

### Trainings Requested by Parents in the Past

- |  |   |                               |
|--|---|-------------------------------|
| • Ask the Audiologist  | • Early Childhood Intervention (ECI)              | • Local/State/Nat'l Resources |
| • Ask a Deaf Ed Teacher  | • ERCOD (Educational Resource Center on Deafness) | • O.U.R. Children (abuse)     |
| • Ask the Interpreter  | • Hearing Dog Organization                        | • Self-Advocacy               |
| • Communication Options  | • IEPs and 504s                                   | • Sibling Workshop            |
| • DARS Representative<br>(Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services) | • Lawyers/Advocates                               | • Technology Night            |
| • Deaf/HH Adult Panels   |   | • Teenage Issues              |

## Checklist

- Date chosen
- Location secured
- Budget set
- Flyer created
- Support Request submitted
- Event & Flyer approved (GBYS Guides do this before submission please)
- Invitation list created
- Flyer Distributed
- Sign in sheets printed
- Photo release printed
- Host event
- Remit forms, receipts and Event Report
- Receive reimbursement

**Sample Budget worksheet** – not all items will be needed and you might think of something different you need to add!  
Reimbursement form, Event report & receipts must be submitted for reimbursement. Sales tax is NOT reimbursable.

<b>Items needed</b>	<b>Cost estimate</b>	<b>Actual cost / donated</b>
Childcare		
Drinks		
Food		
Interpreter		
Items for games/activities		
Location (rental or admission)		
Nametags/pens		
Paper goods (napkins, plates, cups...)		
Printing (flyers, sign-in, photo release)		

[Event Scholarship Application](#) can be found online at <http://www.txhandsandvoices.org/office/esrform/>

Have you read the Texas Hands & Voices Event Support Handbook? \*

Do you agree to abide by the Hands & Voices mission and promise to not promote resources or information about a specific communication method, such as sign language, speech, etc.. in a biased way?? \*

Name \*

Address \*

City \*

State \*

Zip Code \*

Local School District \*

Email \*

Phone or VP \*

Affiliation - I am a... \*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent                | <input type="checkbox"/> Student       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional          | <input type="checkbox"/> Family Member |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Parent & Professional | <input type="checkbox"/> D/HH Adult    |

If you are a professional, in what capacity do you serve families with children who are d/hh?

In 50 words or less please describe the event you wish to host. \*

Date I would like to host the event \*

Alternate date for the event

I understand I must submit the event flyer 3-4 weeks before the event to get approval from Texas Hands & Voices and to have it translated into Spanish. \*

Please provide a proposed budget for your event. \*

The total amount of funding support I am requesting (amount not to exceed \$150.00) \*

I understand to receive the funds I must submit receipts, contact lists and post-event forms within 5 business days after the event. \*

Questions/Comments?



## **Hands & Voices: Supporting Families Without Bias**

*by Leanne Seaver*

In the early-1990s, the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C., was preparing an exhibit called “Silent America.” It was intended to raise positive awareness of the Deaf Community, highlighting cultural and linguistic (American Sign Language) aspects of the Deaf experience. Meanwhile, a number of people who were deaf or hard of hearing, but who were not living with those aspects of the Deaf experience, had a problem with the exhibit. From their perspective, it did not represent who they were—specifically, listening/oral communicators. They resented what they perceived to be the exclusionary nature of Silent America’s point of view. Controversy roiled across the land. Both camps fired off angry letters towards each other, and at the Smithsonian exhibit planners. In the end, the Smithsonian scrapped the whole project.

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### **We Are Hands & Voices**

As individuals who are in so many ways connected to each other through deafness or hearing loss — professionally, parentally, or otherwise—we’d had an opportunity to rally around the things that unite us and show the whole world, but instead we burned ourselves out in the same old heated arguments over communication methodology. Those events were the coming of age for Hands & Voices. Twelve years ago, we were just a fledgling Colorado parent support group (who would become Hands & Voices) watching the whole Silent America debacle take flame. It was incredible, as in ‘not believable’. Why didn’t they just ask us how to do this? Perhaps through natural selection or just by serendipity, our group was increasingly comprised of diversely communicating parents, professionals, and deaf and hard of hearing adults fully united by our cause. As we grew, we became galvanized by the need to create strength and unity in our community. Certainly, we’re not the first or only who have ever wanted to accomplish that, but in many ways, joining all camps together towards a common goal continues to be the unique selling point of Hands & Voices.

### **On a Mission**

Our mission is to improve the social and academic experience of our children, students, and mentees who are deaf or hard of hearing (d/hh). Whether we’re talking, cueing, signing, or combining, we all believe passionately in what we’re doing, and we’ve become strong advocates for our own kids and for each others. This approach has exposed us to many families using a wide variety of communication choices—all that have resulted in really successful kids. Conversely, we’ve seen many other kids and their families not reaching their goals via a particular mode or method. In every situation, the many variables are entirely unique to the child, the etiology, his or her family, their goals, the available resources, and a host of other considerations. As such, it is simply inappropriate and unproductive to impose a notion of methodological superiority over

each other. We've come to understand that it is not the child who "fails" with a method, but the method that can fail the child and family. This perspective keeps us child- and family-focused—an essential value for a parent-driven organization.

## **Not Broadcasting Our PBS**

Hands & Voices developed this slogan to articulate our philosophy that "what makes the choice work for your child and family is what makes the choice right." So at Hands & Voices, we would advocate for the child with a cochlear implant as surely as we would for the child using American Sign Language. And we train diligently to prepare ourselves to support families without "broadcasting" our own personal belief system (PBS) or predisposing their outcome through our own biases.

## **PBS vs Bias**

Among the first questions anyone asks us at Hands & Voices are "So, you're trying to tell me it isn't ok to have a personal opinions on d/hh topics? Hey, I know what I know!" or "I don't think anyone is truly unbiased when it comes to communication methodology." These are very legitimate concerns, and we spend hours interactively workshopping the answers with our new state chapter leaders, parents, early interventionists, deaf educators, audiologists, doctors, general educators, school and hospital administrators, health department staffers, and more.

## **What do we say? At the risk of oversimplifying this, it all comes down to intention.**

Let's start with semantics. Our Personal Belief Systems (PBS) form our opinions, which must be distinguished from objective fact. Our opinions are a set of propositions held to be true based on our own experiences, assumptions, and education. Personal belief systems are unique and inherently applicable only to their author. They may not be accurately extrapolated onto anyone else. Still, we know what we know, right? It's human nature to seek validation of our choices, and to find a true peer group—a set of people who share our opinions and experiences. Many families with newly diagnosed babies want to hear from our own direct, personal experience, and we need to respond at that level as parent mentors and professionals working with families.

However, when sharing from our own PBS, it's important to question our intentions. What's motivating them? Do we have an outcome in mind for this family? What are our preconceived notions, and how are we predisposing this family to our 'truth'? Indeed, what is informing our 'truth'? Has our experience been broad enough to have seen successful kids using a variety of modes or methods of communication, or are we coming from a one-method perspective? Are we couching our statements in a way that represents them as facts, and generalizing them for this new family? Are we sharing information in a way that's skewing the family's decision-making process? Are we relaying misconceptions, (i.e., 'he'll never talk if you sign to him' or 'she'll never sign well coming from hearing parents') to this family? What is our body language and vocabulary telling them about our point of view? Do we truly know what's best for them? When we have shifted from appropriately sharing the benefit of our experience and knowledge into intentionally manipulating a family, we've crossed the line into bias.

## From Theory to Practice

There's never been a time when we've presented our Hands & Voices Non-Biased Workshop that we don't become deeply engaged in an introspective question & answer dialogue with the audience. Practically speaking, most of us want to know if it's ok to say 'this' or was it right to suggest 'that'. Some professionals share well-documented examples of a family whom they believed was making terribly wrong choices for a communication-starved child, while others share success stories about kids who rose like a phoenix out of the ashes of such bad choices. We are constantly reminded that sometimes a 'wrong' choice leads to the 'right' decision, and sometimes the 'right' decision leads to the 'wrong' outcome. A common theme for all of this reflection is the confirmation of our belief at Hands & Voices that there is no one right way to do this.

As mentors, guides, interventionists, advocates, teachers, role models, audiologists, et al, we must filter all our input to a family through our sense of respect for their own unique experience. What has been true for any of us, may not be true for them. So we encourage a vocabulary that promotes this value:

- ❖ “Well, I can tell you what happened with our baby, but remember, everybody's situation is different.”
- ❖ “This was true for us, but it might be different for you.”
- ❖ “I think the person with the answers is lying right there in your arms...let's keep looking at what your baby is telling us.”

There are many more effective 'disclaimers' and techniques to use that acknowledge that we simply aren't all going to make the same choices or have the same outcomes. But make no mistake, this is not about being non-committal. Remaining unbiased doesn't mean you can't feel passionately about the communication choice you've made, or righteous about the philosophy you've built your career around, but it does mean you're not going to take your truth and evangelize a new recruit. It means you're sensitive and capable of distinguishing between your experience and someone else's, and that you're above manipulating them with your foregone conclusion. At the very least, even professionals who are practicing with condoned bias (ex: private practitioners or schools with a published communication philosophy) should do their clients the favor of acknowledging their limitations. “I am biased, so you need to take that into consideration here. There may be other viable options for you to explore, and I strongly encourage you to do so,” demonstrates very evolved thinking indeed. It honors the unique experience that family will have, whereas biased manipulation can compromise or destroy the authenticity of the process for the family. Many parents describe those interactions as the point when they divested of all the “help” they were getting from the therapist / audiologist / teacher / mentor or system.

If we release our need or inclination to have someone validate our own choices or PBS, we're providing them with a much more effective means of support. We're empowering

that family's personal investment in their choices, and their ownership of choice is integral to the child's success.

## **The Benefits of UnBiased Support**

Not slanting our input means we avoid having to defend our choices or 'bias' to the family later. Too often arguments of methodological superiority are based on subjectively pointing out the perceived flaws or "inferiorities" of the other methods or modes.

Winning an argument on a platform of such "negative campaigning" is really missing the point. (Think about it: does negative political campaigning make you feel great about either candidate—the one slinging the mud or the one with it on his face?) This tactic dismisses and dishonors the integrity and efficacy of all the communication approaches, and it can derail a family's exploration of which mode or method will be a good match to their child's inclinations, abilities, and all the other considerations that play into this dynamic. Whatever the strengths or weaknesses of a given mode or method, they will be realized differently for each child. This is an unavoidable fact. Being unbiased means we aren't committing to an outcome we can't control.

Ultimately, we'll experience greater trust in the relationship with the family when we approach them with an open mind. Encouraging their independent thought serves the greater good: increased sensitivity and awareness of this child-driven process, deeper investment and ownership of their choices, and more effective advocacy for their child.

## **The Need for an Unbiased Support Organization**

At Hands & Voices, we figured out how to co-exist with our different communication approaches in a non-judgmental way that makes families and professionals feel respected when attending our events, reading our newsletter, participating in a training, or contacting us via our website or toll free number (voice or TTY). If we missed the mark for somebody, we tried harder the next time. We haven't been perfect, but over time, we have gotten better at this. Our mission led us to become a driving force in the passage of d/hh legislation in Colorado including The Deaf Child's Bill of Rights, the Educational Interpreter Standards Act, and the bill that created the Colorado Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Do we personally agree on the many controversial d/hh issues that confront us all? Absolutely not, but we discovered that we're all on the same page when it comes to wanting the best for these kids. At Hands & Voices, our membership includes many who are also members of AG Bell, American Society for Deaf Children, Auditory-Verbal International, the National Association of the Deaf, and more. We do not supplant these other fine organizations, and in fact, routinely refer inquiries to them and promote their participation on our Advisory Boards. But there is a need for an organization like Hands & Voices that brings us all together. We're stronger united for our children than divided by communication controversy, so respectful collaboration is our mantra.

## **On a Mission**

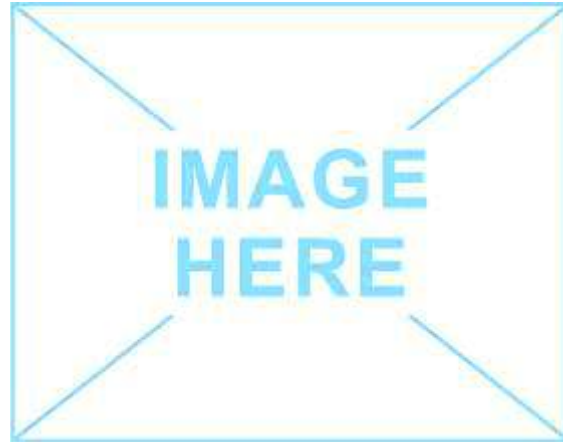
Would we tell other states how to do this? YES! The only thing better than one state organization that's united on behalf of our d/hh kids is a whole nation working together towards this cause, so that process is already underway. Presently there are Hands &

Voices chapters in Colorado, Michigan, Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa, New Mexico, Idaho, and start-ups in Indiana, Louisiana, Kentucky, and California. We also have hundreds of individual members all over the country (even internationally). Our Hands & Voices National endeavors are now benefiting from the financial support of the Marion Downs National Center (MDHC) in partnership with the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in Atlanta, Georgia. This funding will enable Hands & Voices to provide outreach and support to our state chapters, and to start-up efforts. If you're interested in becoming a new Hands & Voices member, or in starting a chapter in your state, you'll find everything you need to know on our website, [www.handsandvoices.org](http://www.handsandvoices.org). Contact us there at [parentadvocate@handsandvoices.org](mailto:parentadvocate@handsandvoices.org), or you can call us at 1-866-422-0422 (V/TTY).

It's going to take all of us uniting our efforts to change the world for the better for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. If we commit to this, the next time the Smithsonian calls, we'll be ready to say "yes, let's celebrate how many ways there are to live life as a person who is deaf or hard of hearing."

*by Leanne Seaver, Copyright 2004 to Hands & Voices.*

# YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO ATTEND...



[Insert name of event here.]  
[Insert location here.]

[Insert brief description of event here.]

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

**For more information:**  
[Insert URL/phone/contact information here.]



**TEXAS HANDS & VOICES™**

[www.txhandsandvoices.org](http://www.txhandsandvoices.org)

*What Works for your Child is What  
Makes the Choice Right™*

*Non-biased support for families of children who  
are deaf and hard of hearing*

Co-sponsored by the  
Educational Resource Center on Deafness

# Title of Event

Photo/graphic here

*Sponsored in part by*

*Texas Hands & Voices™*

***What Works for your Child is What  
Makes the Choice Right™***

*Non-biased support for families of children  
who are deaf and hard of hearing*

*and by the  
Educational Resource Center on Deafness*

**Join us!** Description of your event & who should attend & why.

**When?** Date  
Time

**Where?** Name of location  
Address  
Address

**Contact** To ask questions or to request an interpreter contact Your Name  
xxx-xxx-xxxx  
email.com

*Directions, summary, map, requests, etc. can go in  
this box.*

*See  
You  
There !*



**Texas Guide by Your Side (GBYS) is hosting:**

## **“Saturday In the Park”**

**for families with deaf or hard of hearing children**

**It will be a time for parents to meet and share ideas and a great time for the children socialize. Snacks & Water provided.**

**Where: West Guth Park, 9700 Up River Road  
Corpus Christi, TX 78410**

**When: November 12, 2011**

**Time: 11:00am - 2:00pm**

**Questions: Jamie Gordon, GBYS Parent Guide  
jgordon@txgbys.org or call/text 361-548-9548**



***Hands & Voices: “What Works for your Child is What Makes the Choice Right”™***

*Offering support, information and resources in an unbiased manner for families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing*

**TEXAS HANDS & VOICES™**  
[www.txhandsandvoices.org](http://www.txhandsandvoices.org)  
[www.txgbys.org](http://www.txgbys.org)

*¡Venga a Volar el Cometa!*

**Sábado**

**Nov. 19, 2011**

**11:00-2:00**

**Gilleland Creek Park Gazebo  
Pflugerville, TX**



## ¡Conozca Nuevas Amistades!

Un evento de Guía a Tu Lado por Manos y Voces de Texas, para familias con niños sordos o hipoacústicos y la comunidad y profesionales que los apoyan.

Traigan sillas y alimentos para su familia y un antojito para compartir con otros.  
**Los cometas y las bebidas se proporcionan.**

**Gilleland Creek Gazebo está localizado entre el Parque Gilleland Creek y Pflugerpark  
515 City Park Rd  
Pflugerville, Texas 78660**

¿Preguntas? Llame o envíe correo a Ángela Leija (512) 786-4036  
[aleija@txgbys.org](mailto:aleija@txgbys.org)



**TEXAS HANDS & VOICES™**

[www.txhandsandvoices.org](http://www.txhandsandvoices.org)

[www.txgbys.org](http://www.txgbys.org)

***Lo Que Funciona para Su Hijo  
Confirma que su Decisión fue la  
Correcta™***

*Ofrecemos apoyo, informes, y recursos en una manera imparcial a familias de niños sordos o hipoacústicos*

- Juegos para los Niños
- Tiempo para que Adultos Platiquen, Compartan, y Aprendan
- Nos Acompañará un Padre de Guía a Tu Lado para dar contestación a sus preguntas sobre el programa GBYS

# **Audiology & Technology Information Session**

A TEXAS HANDS & VOICES, GUIDE BY YOUR SIDE event  
for families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing

Sunday, October 9, 2011

2:30 PM – 4:00 PM

St. Anne Catholic Church, Parish Hall

1111 South Cherry

Tomball, TX 77375

[www.stanne-tomball.org](http://www.stanne-tomball.org)

Join us for an informational session on audiology and the latest in technological gadgets with Dr. Kathleen Strafuss. Dr. Strafuss has worked in a variety of settings as a speech/language pathologist and an audiologist, including schools, hospitals, rehabilitation centers and private practice. She is licensed to practice audiology and speech/ language pathology in Texas.

Bring your questions and concerns. Share your experiences with other families. Supervised snacks, games and playtime for the kids.

TEXAS HANDS & VOICES™

[www.txhandsandvoices.org](http://www.txhandsandvoices.org)

[www.txgbys.org](http://www.txgbys.org)

What works for your Child is What Makes the Choice Right™

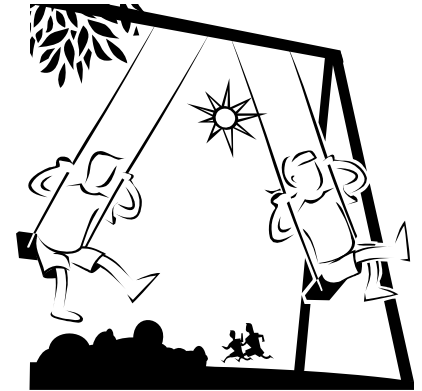
Support, information and resources offered in an unbiased manner for families of children who are deaf and hard of hearing

Contact: [kwelch@txgbys.org](mailto:kwelch@txgbys.org) 281-358-9949 or [kberger@txgbys.org](mailto:kberger@txgbys.org) 281-773-0107





# 2012 Summer Playgroup



For families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing and the community and professionals who support them

Come make friends and play with us this summer. We'll bring ice pops, water & lemonade...

You bring your family, snacks, chairs and stories!

**June 16** – 10am @ XYZ Park Playground. Meet by the jungle gym near the restrooms and gazebo. Bring your balls, gloves, Frisbees. We will have tug-o-war rope, bubbles and soccer cones.

**July 12** – 2pm @ Children's Museum – Meet at front door. Museum is free on Thursday afternoons. Before 2pm admission is \$\$ for adults and \$ for kids 12 and under.

**July 22** – 2pm – 5pm @ ABC Diner on Main Street - kids eat free! Meet at sandbox RSVP for faster service.

**August 11** - 10am – Water Park on 21<sup>st</sup> street and 5<sup>th</sup> avenue – Meet in front of entrance. Admission is \$\$ for adults and \$ for kids 12 and under.

**August 19** - 2pm – Zoo day! We have some free passes – call if you need one, limited supply!

# See you there!

For more information contact:

Name

Phone

Email



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# Model & Photography Release Agreement



## Grant

I irrevocably grant to Texas Hands & Voices ("Company") and Company's assigns, licensees and successors the right to use my image in all forms and media including composite or modified representations for all purposes, including advertising, trade or any commercial purpose throughout the world and in perpetuity. I waive the right to inspect or approve versions of my image used for publication or the written copy that may used in connection with the images.

## Release

I release Company and Company's assigns, licensees and successors from any claims that may arise regarding the use of my image including any claims of defamation, invasion of privacy, or infringement of moral rights, rights of publicity or copyright. Company is not obligated to utilize any of the rights granted in this Agreement.

I have read and understood this agreement and I am over the age of 18. This Agreement expresses the complete understanding of the parties.

Description of image (or attach proof):

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address/email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Parent/Guardian Consent (if the person is under 18)

I am the parent or guardian of the minor named above. I have the legal right to consent to and do consent to the terms and conditions of this model release.

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Address/email: \_\_\_\_\_

## Copyright Transfer

I certify that I am the photographer/copyright owner of the above referenced images and I do hereby transfer all rights of these images Texas Hands & Voices.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Address/email: \_\_\_\_\_



Title of Event \_\_\_\_\_

Host Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Event Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Event Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Circle All That Apply:

Parent Training      Professional Training      Social-Informational      Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Overview/Summary: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

	Estimated	Actual
Total Cost		
Total Income (if any)		
# Individual Attendees (attach sign in sheet)		
# Families represented		
# Professionals		
# Volunteers involved		
# Hours Involved in Preparation		
# Hours of event (setup to takedown)		
Total \$ value of donations		
Other		

**Preparation:** (attach receipts if any fees incurred)

- Reservations: (how far in advance were these needed? Include contact info or website)
  
- Presenter(s): (name, title/organization, contact info for each)
  
- Sponsors: (name, title/organization, contact info for each & who donated what?)
  
- Rental/Borrowed items (games, decorations):
  
- Purchased items:
  
- Advertisements: (where? when?)
  
- Interpreting Agency/Individual and costs: (Sign Language? Spanish? fees?)
  
- Childcare: (Costs? Security Plan? How was this set up? Activities/Games?)

**Assessment:**

- Which project/presentation/event(s) did your attendees seem to enjoy the most or get the most out of? What made these particularly good?
  
- Which project/presentation/event(s) did your attendees seem to enjoy least or get the least out of? What made these less successful?
  
- Is there something Texas Hands & Voices could have done or provided which would have improved the whole experience?

**Contact:**

Texas Hands & Voices may offer events similar to yours in the future. May the person in charge of this event next time contact you with questions? If so, please indicate the best way for us to reach you.

Name:	Name:
Phone/VP:	Phone/VP:
Phone/VP:	Phone/VP:
E-Mail:	E-Mail:
E-Mail:	E-Mail:

**Additional Comments on back? Yes No**



# TEXAS HANDS & VOICES

"What works for your child is what makes the choice right!"

PO Box 2208

Cypress, TX 77410-2208

www.txhandsandvoices.org

## General Expense Reimbursement Request

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Please Circle All That Apply:

I. Outreach/Event

II. Training/Conference

III. Fundraising

IV. Administrative/Office

V. Public Relations

VI. Other

Please provide brief description of any category circled

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

List Expenses:

Amount:

\_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL

\$ \_\_\_\_\_

**RECEIPTS MUST  
ACCOMPANY ALL  
REQUESTS!**

***Sales tax is NOT  
Reimbursable!***

**ATTACH RECEIPTS and Submit to: Texas Hands & Voices C/O Treasurer Sharon Parham**

*\*Reimbursements should be submitted within 30 days of purchase or event date.*

*\*\*Reimbursements must be requested within the same fiscal year as purchases were made.*

BOARD APPROVAL: \_\_\_\_\_

Finance Committee Member Signature/date

&

\_\_\_\_\_

Board Member Signature/date

APPLICANT'S SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

TREASURER USE: Amount \_\_\_\_\_ Date Paid \_\_\_\_\_ CC \_\_\_\_\_ Check # \_\_\_\_\_ Initials \_\_\_\_\_