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### **From the EHDI Director, Arlene Stredler Brown**

Winter greetings. I am appreciating the changing landscape. I mean that quite literally. The first hill on the eastern slope of the Rocky Mountains is right outside my door. I rely on my view for inspiration. So, it’s particularly nice to see the hills with some snow on them, adding white to the winter wheat color palette. I appreciate the change. I can’t escape the opportunity to share that this literal change in landscape may be emblematic of the changing landscape occurring in our EHDI system. While most remains the same, we are working diligently, with the help of so many of you, to review and refresh our systems. Change is inevitable. I welcome it and I hope you do too.

Your Colorado EHDI (COEHDI) team is looking at a wider distribution of the newsletter. I am working with stakeholder leads to expand our email distribution lists and/or share the link to this newsletter in other publications. The newsletter gives you a snapshot of what we are doing. Our COEHDI website is replete with more detailed information, and it is continually being updated. Thank you to task force members who have supplied us with website content.

This year’s National EHDI meeting will be held, virtually, the first week in March. Following the recommendation of the national technical support center, each state is encouraged to hold a virtual stakeholder meeting before or after the EHDI conference. Ours will be held after the conference at a date to be determined. If you registered for the national EHDI meeting, and you indicated that you want to attend the stakeholder meeting, I have your email address. I will be communicating with you soon about the stakeholder meeting.

Please read through the articles and updates below to know more about our work. It’s bountiful!

### **Spotlight on Sara Robinson**

This month’s spotlight highlights Sara Robinson, a member of our DHH Adult Task Force.

Professionally, I have worked as a speech-language pathologist specializing in children who are D/deaf and hard-of-hearing for the past 11 years. I started my career at Boys Town National Research Hospital in Omaha, NE and currently work at Children’s Hospital Colorado in Colorado Springs. I am passionate about supporting family choice in communication and walking alongside families and their children throughout their journey.

Personally, I am hard-of-hearing and was first identified with hearing loss after a school screening in 1st grade. Growing up hard-of-hearing is what led me to pursue my career. I enjoy connecting with children and families over shared experiences. Many of the children I work with enjoy seeing my sparkly purple earmolds!

Outside of work, I am often busy in my role as “Aunt Sara” to a total of 7 nieces and nephews, all of whom live in Colorado Springs. I also love running outside, reading good books, drinking coffee and doing puzzles!

**Announcements**

The Dx/Id Task Force meets on the 1st Thursday of each month. The next meeting date will be March 4, 2021 from 4:00-5:00 pm.

The Families of DHH Children Task Force meets the 1st Friday of each month. The next meeting will be March 5, 2021 from 12:00-1:00 pm.

The Screening Task Force meets on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. The next meeting date will be March 9, 2021 from 11:00-12:00 pm.

The Intervention Task Force had its first meeting on February 16, 2021. It will meet on the 3rd Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be March 16, 2021 from 2:00-3:00PM.

The COEHDI Alliance meets the 3rd Friday of each month from 10-11:30AM. The next meeting date is March 19, 2021. Meetings are open to the public and members of the public are invited to submit a public comment. In order to facilitate the meeting in a punctual manner, we request that those wishing to submit public comments complete a request form in advance so that we may add your comment to the appropriate place in our agenda. The public comment request form can be found at this link: [Public Comment Request Form](https://forms.gle/sgoRmD9TVRZdTU7V8)

The COVID Task Force has been meeting the 4th Monday of each month. Funding for the work of this task force ends on March 31, 2021. The activities of the COVID Task Force will be assumed by the Screening Task Force. The next, and last, meeting of the COVID Task Force is scheduled for March 22, 2021 from 12:00-1:00 pm.

The DHH Adult Task Force will meet the 2nd Monday, four times per year. The next meeting date will be May 10, 2021 from 2:00-3:30 pm.

All Colorado EHDI Alliance and Task Force meetings will be announced here as will other Colorado EHDI system stakeholder meetings. If you would like your meetings included in our monthly newsletter, contact: info@coehdi.org.

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**Data Management Update**

As of early February, there are 105 HIDS users, which is an increase from a month ago. There are 46 screeners, eight midwives, 38 audiologists (including 4 educational audiologists) and 13 early intervention personnel including seven Regional Colorado Hearing (CO-Hear) Resource Coordinators.

Colorado EHDI is committed to collecting and sharing 2019 screening, identification and early intervention data to guide our goals for this calendar year and beyond. Colorado EHDI has agreed to share 2019 data with the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). While this information will not be included in the national database, we will benefit from CDC’s internal analyses of our data in light of other states’ data. Thank you to the staff at the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment for collecting and sharing the 2019 data for screening and identification with COEHDI. And, hearty thanks to Allison Sedey for accessing various databases to collect and report early intervention data for 2019.

### **Task Force Updates**

There are currently six task forces. Below are the individual task force updates.

**COVID-19 by Hannah Glick**

**(Alliance Representative:** TBD**)**

The COVID-19 task force has been hard at work creating and launching the February issue of *The Newborn Hearing Screening Monthly.* This is a new Colorado EHDI publication designed to provide timely information, education, and support to newborn hearing screeners during the pandemic and beyond. The February issue can be found [here](https://www.coehdi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Hearing-Screening-Monthly-Issue-2.pdf). In addition, the COVID-19 Task Force, in collaboration with the Screening Task Force, began our midwife initiative. Our goals are to support screening efforts for babies born at home and/or in birthing centers with a midwife during the pandemic and after. Hannah Glick continues to provide technical support to newborn hearing screeners. For technical assistance, you can contact Hannah at: hannah.glick@colorado.edu

**Families of DHH Children by Heather Abraham**

**(Alliance Representatives:** Geoff Goodside and Emily Augsberger**)**

The Family Task Force reviewed the EHDI structure and goals for family-to-family support as stated in the Colorado EHDI Work Plan that is an official document submitted to our federal funder. The group discussed how to support parent input and engagement in all aspects of our Colorado EHDI system (e.g., screening, identification, early intervention, family-to-family support, and DHH adult-to-family support). In addition, the group reviewed the new Colorado EHDI website and provided feedback and input.

**DHH Adults by Heather Abraham**

**(Alliance Representatives:** Sara Robinson and Sarah Honigfeld**)**

This month, the task force discussed accessibility related to online meetings. The group reviewed common meeting platforms (e.g., Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams) and the quality of their captioning, auditory and other visual access needs (e.g., the ability to see other participants, display supplemental information, and access to the sign language interpreters and/or cued language transliterators).

The members acknowledged that the task force remains a critical component of the EHDI system; members have an opportunity to provide feedback and input about various aspects of the COEHDI system. Task force members recommended having meetings four times per year, rather than monthly, in the future. There are several supporting reasons. The group sees their role as an “advisory” one. And, many of the task force members participate in other task forces.

**Screening Task Force by Arlene Stredler Brown**

**(Alliance Representative:** Kristin Sommerfeldt**)**

By the end of March, COEHDI will report our 2019 data to the Centers for Disease Control. Thanks to all who have taken the time, and put forth considerable effort, to populate the statistics for children born in 2019 into HIDS.

At the February task force meeting, with input from many members, we compiled a list of all initiatives, past and present, that focus on increasing screening and rescreening and reducing loss to followup (LTF). At the task force meeting in March, we will review and prioritize these initiatives. We want to support activities that have the most successful outcomes and are sustainable.

This task force is also investigating ways to encourage and support midwives’ participation in newborn hearing screening and rescreening. Hannah Glick is spearheading these efforts. A report from a lead midwife in Colorado identifies midwives’ need for screening equipment and their wish for a brochure about newborn hearing screening to distribute to expecting parents. Hannah is currently providing technical support to midwives.

**Diagnostic/Identification and Transition from Diagnostic/Identification to Early Intervention Task Force by Arlene Stredler Brown**

**(Alliance Representative:** Emily Chamberlain**)**

The COEHDI Newsletter is published monthly and summarizes grant-funded activities along with many announcements and initiatives describing activities in our state. In February, there was a discussion about dissemination of the newsletter to more stakeholders around the state including screeners, PCPs, clinical and educational audiologists, parents, deaf and hard of hearing adults, and early interventionists. COEHDI staff will be contacting people around the state as we strive to give more people access to the newsletter.

Families and professionals in Colorado are fortunate to have the expertise of seven Regional Colorado Hearing (CO-Hear) Coordinators. They work with families as children transition from identification to early intervention. Part C Service Coordinators have a role in this transition as well. Several documents, including the *Program Review: Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind* which was submitted to the Joint Budget Committee of the Colorado legislature in August, 2019, make recommendations for system enhancements. The task force will review the recommendations in these documents during our March meeting. Recommendations will be prioritized as we pursue our responsibility to refresh this part of our COEHDI system.

**Intervention Task Force by Heather Abraham**

**(Alliance Representative:** TBD**)**

The first meeting of the Intervention Task Force took place on February 16, 2021. The group reviewed the structure of COEHDI work in relation to the roles of the Colorado EHDI Alliance and our six task forces. In addition, task force members discussed norms of collaboration and the overall goals of this task force. The group prioritized topics for future work so we now have a roadmap for the issues that this task force will address. The next task force meeting will take place on March 16, 2021 from 2:00-3:00 pm.

### **Alliance Meeting Brief**

February’s Alliance meeting was attended by 11 of our 16 members. There were 19 additional attendees including members of the COEHDI Core Team, task force members, members of the public, and those who were providing accommodations. Agenda items and decisions made include the following: updates related to the Ascent Program training, EHDI National Conference stakeholder meeting, continuing Alliance membership, subgrant reports, the HIDS database, and reports from the task forces. It was mentioned that much of the “heavy-lifting” is being done on the task force level. Alliance meetings are an opportunity for stakeholders to hear about the work being done by the task forces. The Alliance considers recommendations from the task forces and decides when to endorse recommendations into our COEHDI system.

The next Alliance meeting will take place on Friday March 19, 2021 from 10-11:30AM. Contact a member of the Alliance, Core Team, and/or any of the task forces to obtain meeting access information. See our website for monthly meeting minutes (<https://www.coehdi.org/alliance>) as well as the link to the public comment form (<https://forms.gle/df7LSFGAEyPAgDqJ7>).

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### **Gratitude/Acknowledgements**

We continue to highlight our task force members who have graciously volunteered to roll up their sleeves and drive forward the work of COEHDI. This month, we recognize the Intervention Task Force. Its members include:

* Emily Augsburger
* Marti Bleidt
* Krissa Britsch
* Lisa Cannon
* Stephanie Carson
* Michelle Coates
* Jesi Cooney
* Cathy Cortese
* Kelly Doolittle
* Kelly Fernandez-Kroyer
* Jami Fries
* Kirsten Gardzelewski
* Brittany Goodside
* Pat Greenway
* Sarah Honigfeld
* Beth Little
* Brittany Loeser
* Laura Merrill
* Shauna Moden
* Dani Nouguier
* Jessica Peterson
* Mah-rya Proper
* Ashley Renslow
* Tiffany Sharpe
* Jennifer Schryer
* Christy Scott
* Allison Sedey
* Arlene Stredler Brown
* Emily Walsh
* Lynn Wismann

At its first meeting the Intervention Task Force reviewed a list of priority topics for discussion in the months to come. We look forward to the impact of their efforts. Join us for a socially-distanced \*hand waving\* in applauding their efforts!