
EHDITION COLORADO

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From the EHDI Director

By Arlene Stredler Brown, EHDI Director

The swings in the weather sure keep me on my toes! I'm not certain if it's spring, winter, or just a typical March in Colorado. It is akin to my work with the Colorado EHDI system. We have a lot of initiatives in play and fluctuating elements add layers of complexity. Many aspects of the Colorado EHDI system are being considered for a refresh. A hearty thanks to all of you who are actively involved in this process. We truly couldn't do it without our stakeholders.



An upcoming change is merging the activities of the COVID Task Force with the Screening Task Force. This change takes effect April 2021. Our five ongoing task forces are still going strong: screening and transition to identification, diagnostic/identification and transition to early intervention, early intervention and transition to Part B, family, and DHH adults. As always, recommendations, based on task force meetings, are made to the Colorado EHDI Alliance. The Alliance members then vote on these recommendations, which, if approved, become system recommendations. It is then up to program managers and directors of state programs to evaluate these recommendations in order to make system changes.

Colorado EHDI set out to involve everyone who wanted to participate in our system review and refresh. Toward this goal, we have well over 100 people involved. Thank you, one and all! It is valuable to have your experiences and your thoughtfulness guiding our priorities and recommendations.

For so many more specifics about the work we have done in March, please read on.

Announcements

Funding specifically for issues related to COVID was provided by HRSA for one year only. The last meeting of the COVID Task Force was on February 22, 2021. COVID-related activities will be addressed in other ongoing task forces. Look for the accomplishments of this task force in this newsletter.

The Families of DHH Children Task Force meets the 1st Friday of each month. The next meeting will be April 2, 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 April 13, 2021 from 11:00-12:00 pm.

The COEHDI Alliance meets the 3rd Friday of each month from 10-11:30AM. The next meeting date is April 16, 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](#)

The Intervention Task Force meets the 3rd Tuesday of each month. The next meeting will be April 27, 2021 from 2:00-3:00PM.

The Western Region Early Intervention Conference (WREIC) is offering a session on April 29, 2021 from 10:00 am - 12:00 pm MDT. The topic is *Through Native eyes: Serving Native American Families and Tribal Communities*. More information and registration is available here: <http://www.wreic.org/apr-29-serving-native-americans--tribal-communities.html>

The Diagnostic/Identification and Transition to Intervention Task Force meets on the 1st Thursday of each month. The April meeting has been cancelled. The next meeting will be May 6, 2021 from 4:00-5:00 PM.

The DHH Adult Task Force meets quarterly on the 2nd Monday of the month. The next meeting 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 meetings. If you would like your meetings included in our monthly newsletter, contact: info@coehdi.org.

Spotlight on Sara Kennedy

This month's spotlight highlights Sara Kennedy, member of the COEHDI Alliance as well as the COVID and Screening Task Forces, co-chair of Colorado Infant Hearing Advisory Committee (CIHAC), and director of Colorado Hands & Voices.



While not born in Colorado, Sara returned to the Rockies as soon as she could. Attending nine schools across seven states as part of a military family, she completed a degree in Occupational Therapy at Kansas University and continued to travel to three more states.

Sara's third child, born at home, was identified with a severe hearing loss at 16 months old, catapulting the couple into learning everything they could about language and learning. When it became clear how delayed her daughter's language was, Sara felt she had to stop working full time to meet her daughter's needs. Eventually, Sara took a part-time position as a family liaison with her county health department, forming a hearing screening task force and starting a respite program for families of children with disabilities and special healthcare needs. When she learned about Colorado Hands & Voices, she volunteered, became a Parent Guide, and eventually became the Director in 2011.

Sara's passions include ensuring that families have early identification, intervention, and a seamless connection to parent-to-parent support throughout their journey. Parents serve as a child's first language model and most important advocate until a child grows into that role. She also works part-time for the Hands & Voices headquarters as an editor and trainer for the Guide By Your Side and (educational) Advocacy Support and Training programs. A role which gives her opportunities to work with experts around the country and see firsthand what challenges face other programs.

The first time she met another mom, Sara had desperately wanted to know what her daily life was like and how they had supported their deaf child and hearing siblings. Then, she didn't know how to ask these questions nor did the other mom know what to offer Sara. With intentional training, Colorado Hands & Voices' Parent Guides are ready to gently lead these first conversations that set the stage for a W.A.S.K: a well-adjusted, successful kid, however that may be defined by the family.

Sara lives in Colorado Springs with her husband and one remaining daughter. Her other nearby "kids" and new grandbabies drop in often. She refinishes furniture, skis, writes for fun and work, travels when she can, and likes to outsmart the occasional escape room.

The Ascent Program

The Ascent Program offers an opportunity for families of young deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind (DHHDB) children to connect with DHHDB adults. This is especially meaningful as most infants and toddlers who are DHHDB are the only DHHDB person in the family. The Ascent Program gives families an opportunity to interact with DHHDB adults. In those interactions, DHHDB adults have the opportunity to share their positive perspectives as well as their lived experiences of being deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind. These lived experiences might include, but are not limited to:

- Experiences growing up as a DHHDB person
- Educational experiences
- Work/Career experiences
- Experiences communicating with others
- Perspectives on advocacy
- Support and guidance accessing resources
- Development of a healthy DHHDB identity

Connecting with a DHHDB adult can support family members as they look to their child's future and imagine possibilities. Parents and caregivers often have questions that can be best answered by DHHDB adults who have lived with the experience of being deaf or hard of hearing. While some parents may naturally focus on what is "missing" or what their child is unable to do, due to the impact of being deaf, hard of hearing, or deafblind, DHHDB adults can offer a positive perspective and optimism, as they build relationships with families. In addition, DHHDB adults can provide support to parents and caregivers as they bond with their DHHDB child.

It is easy to request a visit from a DHHDB adult. Just click the link below to submit an application: <https://forms.gle/vhv8CQtPvtmLxPC6>

Task Force Updates

COVID-19 by Hannah Glick

(Alliance Representative: Hannah Glick)

The March newsletter of *Newborn Hearing Screening Monthly* has been distributed to professionals across the state. The latest issue focuses on newborn hearing screening scripts that professionals

involved in newborn hearing screening can use to inform families about the importance of newborn hearing screening during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic. The newsletter also focuses on several key ideas related to professional communication with families. As mentioned above, the COVID Task Force will no longer meet. However, our work will continue as part of the ongoing Screening Task Force and will include; the midwife screening initiative. All interested COVID-19 Task Force members are invited to join the Screening Task Force.

Families of DHH Children by Heather Abraham

(Alliance Representatives: Geoff Goodside and Emily Augsburger)

The Families of DHH Children Task Force is digging into data! The group is reviewing HRSA guidelines regarding data reporting criteria specific to family-to-family supports. The goal is to analyze when and how families are provided the opportunity to access family-to-family support in order to ensure that families are connected with this support early and offered multiple opportunities for support throughout their child's birth to three journey.

Screening Task Force by Arlene Stredler Brown

(Alliance Representative: Kristin Sommerfeldt)

Based on a survey that was conducted in 2020, many initiatives are underway. The activities in play are: (a) supporting PCPs' access to newborn hearing screening results of their patients; (b) offering technical assistance to newborn hearing screeners; (c) identifying the respective responsibilities of COEHDI and CDPHE; (d) engaging educational audiologists in screening and rescreening activities; (e) identifying needs of Colorado's midwives in order for them to support newborn hearing screening; (f) participating in efforts for Hands & Voices to update and expand use of their *Roadmaps*; and (g) creating and distributing a monthly newsletter to screeners. Whew! We've been busy.

There are a handful of good ideas that continue to be explored including regional meetings, identifying a follow-up coordinator, and creating a brochure about newborn hearing screening.

Please look at the meeting notes from this task force to learn more. They can be found at https://www.coehdi.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/CO-EHDI-Screening-Task-Force_Meeting-Notes_March-2021.docx

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

(Alliance Representative: Annette Landes)

The intent of our Colorado EHDI grant has been to review elements of our state system and to consider ways to refresh it. This intent is just what is being addressed at this task force's meeting. The initiative to support tele-audiology is gaining momentum. There are more and more opportunities to learn from successful tele-audiology programs (e.g., Nebraska and Iowa). There is support from the NCHAM Tele-Audiology Learning Community. We also have a clearly-articulated need for tele-audiology on the western slope. A subcommittee has formed and will meet this month to look at the delivery of diagnostic ABR through tele-audiology.

An interim system was established in April, 2020 wherein clinical audiologists were asked, by Part C and the Colorado School for the Deaf and Blind (CSDB), to refer all newly-identified children to the seven Regional Colorado Hearing (CO-Hear) Resource Coordinators. CSDB funds these coordinators. In addition to the activities of the CO-Hear Coordinators, Part C Service Coordinators have a role to assure children have an opportunity to benefit from Part C offerings. Part C and CSDB continue their work, independently of COEHDI, to define the activities of their respective coordinators.

The opportunity for families to receive parent-to-parent support is an integral part of this transition process too. This topic is on the task force agenda for upcoming meetings.

Intervention Task Force by Heather Abraham

(Alliance Representative: TBD)

The second meeting of the Intervention Task Force convened this month. Currently, task force members are prioritizing topics in order to determine which topics take priority for this group's future work. According to task force members, the transition from Part C to Part B services ranks as the highest priority. As a result, the group will begin to educate itself regarding the issues related to transition, such as: legal requirements, differences and similarities in transition processes throughout the state, and strengths and needs that currently exist in relation to the transition process that families experience. The group's findings will be shared with all.

HIDS Update

The Health Information Data System, launched in October 2020 by the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), has an ever-increasing number of users. As of March 16, 2021, there are 114 users. This includes: (a) 54 screeners; (b) 34 clinical audiologists; (c) 4 educational audiologists; (d) 9 midwives; and (e) 13 early intervention personnel.

EHDI System Data for 2019

As planned, 2019 data is being collected, in arrears. Thank you one and all for populating the HIDS database with 2019 data. This data will serve as an informal base rate upon which to set goals for our COEHDI system going forward. A collaborative effort among CDPHE, COEHDI, CU-Boulder, and CSDB has supported this effort. This data will be reported to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). Please note that this data will not be included in the 2019 national report. For 2019, there are five states and/or territories, including Colorado, who will not be included in the 2019 national statistics reported by the CDC.

Alliance Meeting Brief

March's Alliance meeting was attended by 15 of our 16 members. There were 10 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: adoption of February 2021 meeting minutes, announcements, a discussion about Alliance membership, an update on the number of HIDS users, and task force updates. One important announcement to note is that Year 1 subgrant reports are due on April 30, 2021. An update is coming soon regarding the release of Year 2 subgrants.

The next Alliance meeting will take place on Friday April 16, 2021 from 10-11:30 AM. Contact Arlene Stredler Brown (astredlerbrown@coehdi.org) or Heather Abraham (habraham@coehdi.org) 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>).

Gratitude/Acknowledgements

By Arlene Stredler Brown

It is my pleasure to have worked with Hannah Glick, PhD, CCC-A this year. Hannah stepped in to lead many initiatives specific to the influence of COVID on EHDI activities. A neuroscientist, audiologist, teacher, mentor and public speaker describes her background. Even more impressive is her perspective on the field of audiology. From the lab to the office, and from the classroom to life, Dr. Glick actively mentors aspiring students and early-career professionals to unlock their passion and purpose. How fortunate we have been to have Dr. Glick working with Colorado EHDI. A consummate professional, she led activities of the COVID Task Force. She was available to provide much-needed technical assistance to screeners. She led the initiative to determine the current status of screening by midwives in Colorado. Additionally, she developed and disseminated three issues of the *Newborn Hearing Screening Monthly* to more than 200 recipients. Having a clinical audiologist as a part of our team has served to support a well-rounded leadership model. Thank you, Hannah, for finding time for COEHDI activities. We look forward to your continued participation in our system refresh.