>> SPEAKER: So, my name is Tony Ronco, and I'm a dad. Whoo, fathers. Let's see what this subject's about. Ah, fathers. Milez, you want to introduce yourself?

>> SPEAKER: Yes. My name is Milez. I'm married, and I have two hard of hearing teenagers, a daughter who's 13 and a son who's 11. I'm also a student, a full-time student, tech, I run my own business as a life coach for the transgender community, and I'm a member of Hands & Voices.

>> SPEAKER: Okay, so, I'm a parent of two kids, both young adults. My oldest is, um, hearing and, um, wonderful, that he was the oldest and hearing, because that setup expectations, so, I knew what to expect and, so, got to apply those to my deaf daughter. This picture is her at her high school graduation and, this May, it will be college graduation. Wh oo. Get them launched. Also, a board member of California Hands & Voices and, um, headquarters. Sarah and Candace, do you want to introduce yourself?

>> SPEAKER: Okay, this is Sarah, and that is Candace.

>> SPEAKER: And the person in back who's, um, our room monitor is Candace and, so, both, moms and, um, both have deaf and hard of hearing kids as well. That's kind of a commonality, when you have Hands & Voices, but, really, a commonality for any family-based organization that services this demographic.

>> SPEAKER: Please take out your phones and scan the QR code. You will be able to see the fantastic things that we are discussing, currently hosted on the virtual waiting room under family-to-family support.

>> SPEAKER: Oh, yay, we see lots of cameras out. We appreciate that. Oh, look at that, instant satisfaction.

>> SPEAKER: If you need to move real quick to get that, please do. We really want you to follow along.

>> SPEAKER: We didn't announce this ahead of time, because we thought that may discourage you, if you thought you had homework in class.

(Laughing.)

>> SPEAKER: Okay, um, so, who created this guide? Hmm, well, it's a committee, a parent-to-parent committee and, um, within that committee is, um, a task force of fathers. Total of eight, and they represent a diverse level of experiences, diverse approaches and, um, really, um, diverse, um, their kids, us and our backgrounds, so, hopefully, we've covered not all, but many of the situations that, um, the fathers and the target audience that this is aimed towards will be there. Um, who supported it? Um, well, EHDI, of course, and a bunch of national interdisciplinary intraagencies. Just a plethora of, um, interest and, so, that really shows the importance of trying to bring fathers into this, because, as we look around this room, these are the most males I've seen here at EHDI, so, yeah. Thank you for coming.

>> SPEAKER: Terminology. Terminology really scares a lot of people, especially dads, when we get into the rooms with professionals, because people don't like to talk about, talk to dads about things. Everybody looks at the mom. When talking about fathers, we do not necessarily mean by definition. If you are fulfilling the father role, this is also for you. In this pamphlet, we choose to use the DHH plus, this is a term inclusive to many.

>> SPEAKER: And, um, here's our purpose. So, make sure that, um, you know, father has a right, high expectations. That's really any parent, but especially for fathers because, as Milez just said, sometimes, left a little behind, because they're not primary contact and, so, yeah, you can have high expectations, perfectly okay. Next, of course, is, um, know the why, what, and how to access that expertise, resources, and information. So, that is a challenge in and of itself. Fortunately, with today's Internet, we can at least get the resources on and, um, hey, you're not alone. So, this is a quote that we had. Our commitments are, ultimately, become our anchor and engine of our lives, and this is your defining commitment, and that, certainly, was true for me. When we were planning to have our kids, I never thought, my daughter's the first deaf person that we truly met and, um, we don't have any history of deafness in our family. It's somewhere in there, because it's in our genes, but, um, so, that was a defining moment, because, um, we were just not prepared. We read a ton of books on how to raise kids, we had our son's experience and, then, this is a new wrinkle.

>> SPEAKER: Checklist topics. I'm going to go over the learning curve for new dads, language and communication, and relationships. Learning new things is hard. Take it slow and, remember, you were learning with your child or children. Journeys are sometimes different, even for siblings. You have the right to ask questions. This is your right as a dad in the room. Some examples from our pamphlet, the goal is for your child to use language to communicate. This may include spoken languages, like English or your home language and/or sign language, like American Sign Language. They may also use additional auditory and visual supports, such as gestures, body language, cued speech language and augmentive alternative communications, ACC devices. Parents are the decision-makers, and professionals are the advisors. You can either accept or not accept advisors' advice. You are the expert in your child's needs through your lived experience, cultures, language, community, and other resources. Communication is key. There will be trial and error, and that is okay. I want to add, it is vital to take time with your person on this journey. You need to keep up on more than just the journey of your DHH child. Take the scenic route, more time at dinner or, maybe, on the way home from a conference.

>> SPEAKER: So, that's where I pick up on a father's role being, um, probably, central to that, because that ties right into that, and this is true for any parent, giving yourself grace, because not only do you want to impart high expectations to your child as far as how service providers and school treat your child, you also have, um, we found a very common denominator among fathers is that we have high expectations of ourselves. So, it's okay to give yourself grace. Um, talking about school, that's high expectations, there's, really, three components that you'll read about. So, it's high expectations, it's, um, accessibility, and inclusion. Those other two are, kind of, the same. What's the difference? Accessibility is making sure you can access your classroom content, while inclusion is being invited, so you can discuss that classroom content for your child, so they're not isolated within a classroom, and that brings about the child's well-being, because that applies to three things. One is education, their social circle, inside and outside of a class and, then, of course, your family. Your family is the foundation, and we have to make sure, we've all seen very similar, um, memes of which a child is isolated, maybe, during a dinner, um, discussions, and make sure that doesn't happen. High expectations, that's kind of the catch phrase here and, um, if you leave with nothing else, it's high expectations. Then, of course, um, we have a section for pro tips from fathers to professionals, lots on those, but, um, a couple of them is, um, make sure that we're involved, because, a lot of times, if we have to push to get involved, that means something's wrong and, so, that was to the professionals. There's other in there. It's a whole entire pamphlet, but want to make sure that this covers, um, a good idea of what the content is inside the pamphlet.

>> SPEAKER: For the examples of content on relationships, this is not just the relationship with you and your significant other, this is not just the relationship of you and your children or with you and whatever professional that you speak with, this is relationship geared all the way around, including your own personal relationship, making sure that you don't lose yourself in this journey. One thing that really came clear to me after joining the fatherhead task force was when I realized that I was not alone. There's not a lot of other dads in my area, so, having this group really, really helped me out. There's a spot that I want to speak on. I remember when our son received his hearing aids at the age of 3. We thought it would be the same as glasses. Go to the doctor, have the hearing aid setup, and his hearing would be perfect, right? Wrong. That is not how it is, and it's so much more. Now, we're doing better, after eight years of learning and, somedays, we feel like we don't know enough, but those relationships are what made it key on the, so far in this part of the journey.

>> SPEAKER: So, great, um, especially when your educational environment, when your team, finding your ally, that person that can help you, for fathers, to get involved into that process and, so, those are relationships to build on, and it's not just being, we're always told, at least in a lot of our training materials, um, various approaches on how to become friendly with your team and, um, one is, you know, you can be, and this doesn't really fit to us, but you can be the, um, the cookie mom. Can we be the cookie dad? So, things along those lines, to make sure we're cultivating not only within the team, but, also, transitioning into the community and, so, um, we've had wonderful relationships with the community, um, fellow parents, learning from them or just commiserating, if you have a common problem and, um, dealing with a common challenge, and that's really important, to know that you're not alone. I'll give one example. As I mentioned, my daughter is ready to graduate. I feel like I'm almost jinxing that, to keep on saying it. Knock on wood. Should be fine. Thank you. She's participating in an academic bowl competition, and her team was fortunate enough to go to the nationals, which was in Gallaudet and, um, her coach saw us, oh, crap, we're going to have to go get accommodations, but we're going to support her and, a day later, through connections, through connections, through connections, we got to stay with a family that we didn't know, and that was all due to community, and we've had little blessings like that and, um, we really appreciate it and, um, I know that we've gone to, like, family camp, that community of parents, those are lifelong friends, and they all come from different walks of life and, because they come from different walks of life, I, probably, would have never have met them without my daughter and, so, I'm very blessed to have had that, but, again, did you want to read the quote? Oh, we'll go past it, because we're in a hurry.

(Laughing.)

>> SPEAKER: I believe this is mine. It is. I was going to close on the quote. It's fine, because we're flexible, and we give ourselves grace. We'll have more time for Q & A. Okay, tips for sharing, and this is, um, what we're saying here, like, on your website or Facebook or anything else, um, and that's your family-based organization or your organization. So, I'm sure you have an e-mail blast, a great way to do the link, you can actually highlight a segment of it and ask for discussion, if you're on a Facebook page, because you don't have to, like, try to discuss the whole thing, just one segment and get some input. Um, you know, I'm from California, we have the Hands & Voices, um, group there. Uselle, if you know her, she had daycare for daddy, and what that was, it was, actually, a night at a bar, shooting pool. The kids weren't there, but, um, it was to make sure that the fathers had an opportunity, because, a lot of times, the, um, activities that happen are during the day and working and, that way, you get to know the fathers. So, it's a great way of including and being creative on getting the fathers involved. Um, social media, talked about that. You can add a packet. We just had love and literacy that was sponsored internally into, um, California. We had a booth there, and you can have handouts, right, if you have similar things going on in your state and your family-based organization. Social media, we talked about that. So, um, you can take one little bit or one little experience and ask what's your experience or how can we improve. Your membership is a great way to collect not only their experiences, but their enthusiasm.

>> SPEAKER: Take a moment and read this quote. This is something that I said when I joined the fatherhood task force. In my school district, there's only one other family that has a DHH child, so, I, literally, had nobody to turn to. Two towns over, they have a community, but with schedules and schooling and conflicts, we don't have the availability to always be there. Having this dad group gave me a place to be active and turn to for when I have questions.

>> SPEAKER: You know, one of the great things about that, um, when you get connected, because we're in a, most of, um, my daughter's friends are in the same school district, and I can connect with parents and make sure that, on services, we can coordinate on what we ask for. So, instead of just an isolated parent, asking for it, it's two or three and, so, um, gives us a little more leverage. Um, this is what we're currently working on, um, through this committee and, um, the core group, um, is the same, and the people we've invited are in rural communities. That also includes if you have to drive a long ways or long time, like, if you're, I had a meme that I posted to Facebook a few days back, it goes, LA is an hour away from LA, and it's really true, but we have this. We're also looking for people, um, to review that document, who live in a rural environment and to review it for accuracy and for content, and you can talk to Sarah or Candace in the background, you need to stand up, Candace, so everybody can see you.

(Laughing.)

>> SPEAKER: Oh, you were standing up?

(Laughing.)

>> SPEAKER: I'm teasing you.

>> SPEAKER: Here on the bottom, the three bottom ones, you can find on the CDC website. The top two are on the Hands & Voices website, and Tony's going to go a little bit more into those.

>> SPEAKER: There we go. We're flexible and give ourselves grace. So, we have a guide, making a plan for your child, um, for considerations, and all of these are just, um, guidance documents. So, if they're new parents and they haven't thought about it, it's just a click and, oh, have you considered this? So, make sure that when you go into an IFSP team meeting, you, kind of, come prepared, and if there's something that's not on the table, you can bring that forward to the team and have that discussion. So, we have these different subjects and, as Milez said, they're available on, um, the CDC website. Here's our contact information. We're more than willing to have that, just take a picture of it and, now, we're going to reserve this for questions and, hopefully, answers.

>> SPEAKER: Hi. So, what about the dads who are not comfortable with this? From other countries or different diverse backgrounds who, you know, I had to make it complicated, Tony, so, what about those dads? How do you get them to feel like they can be apart of that group?

>> SPEAKER: So, with that, we meet on Zoom, and we want to hear what other dads are going through, we want to share stories, and we want to see how they are able to relate to each other's stories.

>> SPEAKER: But I think the, yeah, unless you know where I was going.

>> SPEAKER: I think I do. Part of that is to make sure you establish commonality, because you're facing the, if not the exact same, but very similar challenges with our kids, and that's, really, the reason why we're here at EHDI, to, hopefully, improve the system, so, um, the challenges that we're facing, the next generation does not have to face and, so, there are also, like, just communication and just boundaries of what you're willing to state and not. We had a request, oh, let me back up. Do you mind if I share this story?

>> SPEAKER: I don't know which one you're talking about, but, sure. Go ahead.

(Laughing.)

>> SPEAKER: The mom and dad that wanted Arabic?

>> SPEAKER: Yeah, that's fine.

>> SPEAKER: Okay, so, they wanted someone who could speak, um, Arabic, and we don't have that, so, California, in Plurality of California, it's very diverse, most of our languages, actually, the majority is Spanish and, so, we internally didn't have it, reached out to other states and, um, her and her family have stepped up to it. So, that was a wonderful example where we tried to meet those cultural mores to make that person comfortable, so they could get past and start to ask for the resources that their child needed.

>> SPEAKER: Yes. I appreciate that. Yeah, because, like, some cultures, like, in our culture, it's embarrassing for a dad to say there's something wrong with their child and, so, to feel that they can even come to something like that and talk about it, I just feel like, maybe, that's the way you find someone who can bring them, I guess.

>> SPEAKER: Did you want to elaborate on that experience without going into personal --

>> SPEAKER: Well, and I was just going to say something related, I guess, and this is Candace. Running Minnesota Hands & Voices, having cultural liaisons or cultural parent guides, um, getting the fathers involved and, then, they become trained in how to attend events, even if they weren't staffed, but just to be part of that conversation and, so, they could talk, literally, from father figure to father figure within the culture about how they broke through that. I don't know if you wanted to comment more.

>> SPEAKER: Hi. I'm <chyley. I'm from Connecticut. I guess, my question is, um, what was your most successful event? How did you start? Like, did you start with just dads? Or did you start with dads and their kids? You know, just, kind of, coming together to make people feel comfortable, you know, you said daddy daycare, I don't know if all dads want to play pool, you know, like, maybe, they want to, I don't know, what do men do, guys? What do they do?

(Laughing.)

>> SPEAKER: Watch football, build ramps for kids, you know, any sort of, like, I don't know, I just don't have any ideas off the top of my head that wouldn't involve children. I guess, that's just my mindset, so, I'm looking for some feedback.

>> SPEAKER: So, that's great. So, we've had, here in California, we've had, um, watching football and, um, what they would say is real football, not American football, and have barbecues and cookouts and things like that. So, most of the meeting times, at least when I've been involved, it's been through family camp, so, we get dragged into family camp, my own personal experience, get dragged into family camp and, you know what? That is a great time, it's an awesome time and, so, that's where we bond. I had mentioned earlier about, um, connecting to, um, dads and families that I never would have connected to normally, um, and, um, that's where I've made lifetime friends. It's a blessing, to have that.

>> SPEAKER: Thank you very much for your discussion and the insight you've provided us. I am a pediatric audiologist, so, I'm taking us back to the diagnosis, and what is your advice, and I, certainly, can share the approaches that I've taken, but if the father is not present at the time of diagnosis and you want to make sure that this information is shared amongst the family appropriately, what would you share with the audiologists in this room, how to do that or what to do?

>> SPEAKER: So, um, that's a great topic, and we've actually had that as a topic from, um, one of our family camps and, um, you know what? There is no one answer, because all the situations are different and, so, um, Uselle, who I mentioned earlier, she had a complete explanation, that her kid had hearing loss and went into an explanation, explained everything as far as her, his options and, all she heard, this is her story, your kid has hearing loss and, fortunately, her husband was there and goes, oh, okay, so, he, kind of, cataloged it, and it's not like he had his act together, but he at least could absorb it and, then, later, they could go and, um, accept it and research it. So, the one answer you want is to make sure that they're involved as much as possible, and that's, kind of, a general thing, but how you do that, you're going to have to work with the individuals.

>> SPEAKER: Hi. I'm Eric, and I'm from Oklahoma. I am a pre-K teacher, and I'm wondering, when you mention the dads group and how they have outings, are you including hearing dads only, or is it welcoming to deaf fathers of deaf children, or is it just the hearing dads that get together? Is it open to the deaf dads? So, we realize that deaf dads represent about 5 percent of, um, the group, so, every once in awhile, we do have deaf dads who are, who come in and, of course, but they are fully welcome at anytime, of course. So, you are fully welcome to join us. Well, I have to fly over to you, but, yeah. The only benefit of that is that, um, you would be, then, the role model, too. Not the only benefit, but the added benefit to that is you would be the role model to us and, then, also, you're a successful role model, which gives the rest of us hope for our own kids. Over to you, Milez.

>> SPEAKER: I'm wondering about, you could share an experience, too, of how that went, with the hearing dads and deaf dads being present there. I'd imagine there's some humorous times and some, maybe, awkward times, but I don't know.

>> SPEAKER: One of the things that we, um, do for an ice-breaker on that is we have, um, visual games, and we do presentations on this, not only for extended families, but to include deaf members of our community and, you know, like, the hand tap game.

>> SPEAKER: We got 2 minutes.

>> SPEAKER: Here's the hand tap game. So, you would put your hands inside of each other's, I would tap the table, tap my left hand on the table, and you'd have to mimic that. Thank you so much. I got a 2-minute warning here.

>> SPEAKER: That was really a slow hand tap game, but you go back and forth, and those that don't respond to the tap, they're out, that hand's out and, so, there's no verbal communication required, it's all visual and, so, usually, the person sponsoring the event has a little award. Those little trophies, because dads are so competitive, they want them, and it's only $5, and they want them. Typically, we ask for volunteer interpreters and, of course, we'll have oral folks that, you know, won't be signing, but they're welcome too, and the reason why, um, everyone can participate, because you're doing an activity that doesn't require, um, voice.

>> SPEAKER: I wanted to get back to your question real quick over how to get dads involved in the office visits, something that my other half and I do is, if I'm not able to go there, she'll ask when is a good time for me to call up, so I can talk to the doctor. There's a lot of times that we record office visits when we both can't be there, that way, if we have questions, we either have e-mail or phone call that we can get ahold of, and that works out really, really well. We get, um, in the pamphlet, it says give written summaries of visits, including homework. That way, both parents are involved.

>> SPEAKER: All right. Thank you so much to both Tony and Milez. Appreciate that. Thank you to all, everyone for coming, and we're at time and, please, if you don't mind, if you could, um, go on to the app and fill out your evaluations for this session, if you haven't had a chance to do the other evaluations, we invite you to do that as well. Thank you.