>> Good morning, everyone!. Welcome to this session called collaboration between Deaf mentor family services and Minnesota Hands & Voices, that equals to successfully supported families. My name is Brenda hummer ding and I'm the Guide By Your Side manager from Minnesota Hands & Voices and we have Emily Smith lumbering who is the director from the Deaf mentor family services program. And we have Haley na zareio, who is the d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing guide program coordinator for Minnesota Hands & V oices.

Today I would like to go over quickly what the objectives of our presentation is. First, you're going to learn from Emily about the Deaf mentor family services program and you're going to learn from Haiti about the Minnesota Hands & V oices d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing guide program and what all they have to offer to families.

Hopefully you'll be able to collect some ideas on how the programs work together to serve families and then, most importantly, hopefully you will leave here with a better understanding about the importance of collaboration between programs.

A couple other things. We are planning to leave time at the end for questions, so we welcome all those questions. And so if you hear each of us present and you have questions, write 'em down, save them for the end. Also know that this PowerPoint is on the app, the C vents event app, so you're welcome to download it and review it. We have a lot of QR codes, so in case you missed taking a picture of it or want to research more, you can download the PowerPoint. Now I'm going to turn it over to Emily.

>> Hello. I am Emily and I'm happy to be with you this morning. I want to give you a bit about my personal background so that you can understand the reason why I do the work I do. I was born Deaf two months premature and I was in the ICU for those two months. My parents can hear. I was the first Deaf person they met.

So after two months in the in this NICU I went home as a healthy baby. Several tests were done before I was released from the hospital to make sure I was okay and one was the screening test. This was back in the 80s and it was not a common test at that time. And it found that I was Deaf. So a year before I was born, if I can back up, my parents lost my sister. She passed away. So they were already grieving. They experienced the worst thing parents could experience ever. Then they found out that I was Deaf. The first question they asked the doctor is: Can my daughter or will my daughter be able to have a conversation with a group of people? And the physician said: Most likely not.

And then my mom said, well, then that's not going to be my kid. There was a d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing division near the hospital, which was a state agency and my parents wanted to know what it was like to be a Deaf adult. So they went to t he d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing services division and said, hey, we just had a Deaf baby. What do we do? The staff were completely shocked because they had never had a parent advocate for themselves in that w ay, but that's my mom. She's a brave lady!

She's guns A ablation, getting things going so she could get answers to her questions. She was told that my parents should learn sign to make sure that I grew up also in the Deaf community.

That I had access to peers and my parents said okay.

The hospital I was born was in St. Paul but we actually lived in Southern rural Minnesota. We went back home to rural Minnesota where there were very few resources. I went to a public school where there happened to be about 20 d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing students, so it just was Tsarandipitous, spinal meningitis was rampant at that time so I actually grew up with a great group of peers in a mainstream school. My classmates, I had a classmate at the same age who was Deaf and my mom was a fierce advocate for my education to make sure that I was not below grade level, that I was either on or above grade level.

We actually had two interpreters in our c lassroom. One for me and one for my classmate, who was also Deaf. So that we were able to not have to always be together, not always have to be in the same group. We could be individuals. I graduated from that public school, had a great educational e xperience.

My family signs well. We could have deep conversations about anything, real conversations about the world.

Because of that, I became the person I am today as the director of the Deaf Mentor Family Services to make sure that families have access to Deaf adults and they know what it means for their child in the future, that they feel confident that their kid's going to be okay. So that's the reason why I do the work that I do.

That's my personal background. You can find more about my professional background on the app. I find the professional stuff is maybe a little bit more boring than my personal story.

Minnesota Hands & Voices and the Deaf family mentor services are separate programs under the Lutheran social services LSS. They're both housed there. LSS is the largest nonprofit organization in Minnesota that serves 65 million Minnesotans, to make sure that individuals have full access to their communities and the Deaf Mentor Services is part of that. We're funded by the d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing division, so look at that circle of life. My parents went to the division to ask what they should do to support their Deaf child and now, look, I am being funded by the same service that supported my parents.

We serve the full state.

We match families with mentors based on where they live and also the background, the age of the children. We have a pretty detailed pairing process.

Our services focus on birth to six because of language acquisition, and then we also do accept families who have families from 7 to 21 as well but our main focus is birth to six.

We serve Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and hard of hearing children. We do have Deaf-Blind mentors. We hired a person who is Deaf-Blind a year ago who follows the same curriculum, but then also shares her experience as a Deaf-Blind person and is able to be paired with families who have children who are Deaf-Blind.

We have two programs under Deaf Mentor Family Services, the Deaf Mentor Program and the Empower program. Let's focus on the Deaf mentor program f irst. That is geared towards language acquisition and the Deaf mentor being a model. We use the sky high curriculum. That's the only evidence-based curriculum on teaching American Sign Language to families in the entire world.

We teach language to parents so they can communicate with their child at home and continue that access to communication and language in the home.

So the Deaf mentors also talk about their experience as Deaf people living in this world. They will be open to any communication and questions about their lived experience. Deaf mentors typically work with families for two years. We recently had an experience where we extended that to a third year. The sky high curriculum is a two-year curriculum and the additional year can was more on a check in basis. We have additional fundings at this time that can support that additional year.

Also, the Deaf mentors can attend the IFSP meetings for families to advocate for them and talk about the needs of a Deaf person living in this world based on their experience. The Empower program is focused for children age 7 to 21. This gives them an opportunity to learn self-advocacy skills from a Deaf adult who's had the lived experience.

We have to advocate for ourselves as Deaf/hard of hearing and Deaf-Blind individuals. Those skills are developed through our experiences and we can share what we've learned with children so that they can develop those skills early.

What we see is families might choose one program over the other and then they end up signing up for both.

The Empower Program is limited to 8 sessions.

We talk in there about advocacy skills, social cues, thinking about future needs and the like, technology use, so that's typically limited to 8 sessions.

The Deaf Mentors are trained on a biannual basis. We bring everyone in from all over the state to get trained every six months, because we're often working in silos. We do this in a camp environment, which is really fun. We're in cabins, we're all together, it's a great opportunity to support one another, to r etrain, to be trained on new topics, to know issues that are coming up out in the work that's being done with the families.

All mentors have to be trained fully in sky high before they are placed with a family.

We use the bravo video curriculum through DCMP.

It is old, right? So there's nothing wrong with the 80s, so you'll see that the tone, the clothing and the hair is very 80s-based, but the content is relevant to today and it is a very in-depth c urriculum.

Typically families will work on two videos at a time and then meet with the Deaf Mentor to practice those signs. Then again we'll watch another one or two videos and meet with a Deaf Mentor. The bravo curriculum lasts for about 8 sessions. It brings accountability. That's where we can see how committed the families are. We want to make sure the Deaf Mentor's time is well used. We value their expertise and we also want to make sure that we're best supporting the families. So the Bravo series is an accountability and structured part that starts the program.

The initial meeting with the Deaf Mentor after matching is via Zoom. I will be in that meeting with them as well as an interpreter to do introductions, to ask questions, to set expectations and give them a feel for what the meetings will look like. And then we also say there will be no interpreters after this meeting, which sometimes the families freak out a bit, but we do show how versatile our Deaf Mentors are in communicating without an interpreter.

We give them some examples during the meetings as to the use of technology or good old pen and paper, gesturing, and also the curriculum that is the foundation for the meetings. The families then realize that they don't have to rely on an interpreter to be able to communicate with their Deaf mentor, because you can't rely on an interpreter and actually learn American Sign Language at the same time. It would be like having a Spanish interpreter and learning French at the same time. It just doesn't work. So we have a really great first session via Zoom that lasts for an hour.

We can see the emotions of the family and also we can see that they realize they are going to have someone with them. We emphasize that the program is family-centered and we're focusing on the whole child.

When I mentioned the whole child approach, instead of just focusing on hearing, that we look at the child as a whole, parents typically will realize, oh, right, we need to focus on the fact that our child is a whole human being; it's not just about their e ars.

Every six months we train the Deaf Mentors on a variety of different topics over a long weekend, Friday through Sunday.

We also have monthly Zoom meetings where the Deaf Mentors can get together to talk about updates. Those last usually an hour to an hour and a half. Sometimes we have special topics that we discuss during those Zoom meetings, because it's not enough to get together only twice a year. We want to make sure that there is a system of support for our Deaf Mentors.

I jumped a bit and talked to you about what the sessions look like and now this slide is revisiting that.

In-person sessions have the Deaf Mentor coming into the family's home where they do an icebreaker, talk about the week, maybe read a book, play a game, whatever the child is interested in at that time.

We notice that the families trust the Deaf Mentor more when they see a relationship building between their child and the Deaf Mentor. After the i cebreaker, they move into an ASL lesson. Concepts are learned through the Bravo curriculum. New signs are exposed and then practiced. Also, there are sentences then translated into American Sign Language. We have dialogue practice to make sure that there's communication happening. So there are activities with a signer A and a signer B that include the new vocabulary so that it can stick and they're also practicing dialogic communication. We also make sure that we are doing things outside of the home. The meetings don't have to happen in the home. They can be in a museum, a park, the grocery store.

And also, this helps the family see their child interacting out in the world and also see how a Deaf adult communicates if they can't find something in the store or if they want to see something specific at the museum.

It's also great for the child to see that as w ell.

Those types of excursions happen usually in the second year. The first year is more about building confidence and language. We keep families abreast of Deaf community events that are happening and the Deaf Mentor typically will be a bridge to those events. They will say they are going to be there and then invite the families to go, because often families won't attend if they don't know anyone else who is going to be there.

We have an early visual communication book with a few lessons that we use, because parents who can hear aren't used to making the environment visual for their child. For example, if someone knocks at the door, people who can hear will go to the sound and then answer the door. If someone's screaming, they will not necessarily tell the Deaf child. The Deaf child is left out of the loop. So we work on making sure that if someone knocks at the door, the parents say o h, someone's here!

Who do you think it is? And bring the child with them to the door so they can greet the person coming into the home. The goal is to foster more inclusivity for the child and support the family in making everything that's happening in the home more visible.

We also have a whole list of attention-getting strategies.

We share history of the Deaf Culture and Deaf community.

We also try to make families aware of what's happening in the Deaf community. For example, mostly parents get information auditorially and then they talk about what they hear on the news and incidentally they will just sponge up what they hear and then talk about it as a family. So those things have to be purposefully talked about with their Deaf child. We have a database CRM database. Deaf Mentors have access to the information on their families only that lists what lesson they're working on, what they did, what questions come up. They will input data into that database for the families they are working with.

Once it's submitted, the families will get a copy of that report.

This shows progress. There are no grades. I want to make sure that that's clear. It just shows progress.

d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing division monitors the progress that we're making with the families and we submit quarterly reports to them as our funders. Let's see if I have any more or not. All right!

This is my wonderful mentoring team. They are the heart of our service.

They really are.

They do this work because they were a Deaf child or d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing child.

Some of our mentors have Deaf parents and went to a School for the Deaf. Some are main streamed, oral, have cochlear implants, wear hearing aids.

The primary criteria for becoming a Deaf mentor is they use American Sign Language and they're part of the Deaf community. I think that wraps up my piece on the Deaf Mentor Services. Oops. I have one more. How families apply. We have a very simple Microsoft form where they input their demographic information, how old their child was at identification, why they want to learn American Sign Language, how they learned about our services, and other information.

I receive an email once that form has been submitted and I pair a Deaf Mentor based on criteria and then we schedule things from there!

I think that's it for my piece. Yes!

Okay. Now I would like to introduce the next presenter. I'm thrilled to introduce Haiti Naczario, from Minnesota Hands & Voices. She's the Deaf and Hard of hearing Guide Coordinator.

>> Hi everybody. My name is Haiti na czario. And I am Minnesota Hands & Voices HH guide c oordinator. Thank you, Emily, for introducing me. Our program, I oversee a group o f d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing and one Deaf-Blind adult and we visit with families that have a d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing child or Deaf-Blind and we share our experiences and we're role models for them and we share resources and we have a nice c onversation.

And that's one of my hats. Then I take it off and it's me, Haiti, as a person, a person who was D eaf. So I'll tell you a little bit about how I became Haiti, the Deaf adult. I was born in New York, specifically Bronx, Bronx, New York. And I was born hearing. My mom hearing, my dad hard of hearing. I don't know how many of you have experienced this, but way back, talking about being d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing was not something that people would do it very freely. My dad would not talk about that very much. My grandfather used hearing aids, but they didn't talk about this. The only thing I knew was that I needed to raise my voice and look at my grandfather so he could understand me. That was the only thing that I knew.

So after nine years of living in New York, my parents, who are Puerto Rican decide they want to go back home, which I loved!

So we went to Puerto Rico. By the time I was 16 I was starting to notice that in the classroom I couldn't hear my friends or the teacher. So I was trying to position myself in the classroom in a way that I could hear teacher and classroom. And the best seat for me was in the middle. I could hear a little bit of the teacher, I could hear my friends in the back, of course I want to be the cool kid that sat in the back, chatting with the rest of their friends but I needed to find the place that I understood what was going on.

One day one of my friends tells me, Haiti, you're speaking too loud. And I'm like, really? Well, that's funny, because I'm not hearing very well in the classroom. Now you're telling me this. I think I may not be hearing well.

So we visited the audiologist and indeed they confirm that I have a hearing loss. When I return in a year, they tell me that my hearing loss is genetic because I have family members that have a hearing loss and that it's progressive because, from the first visit to this one, I had lost a significant amount.

That was a shock to me, but my support were my parents and my parents said: It's fine. Everything's going to be okay. So that first interaction with my parents saying: We'll be fine, was everything. So I was able to find resources. It was hard, but I was able to find resources. Hearing aids were my first technology to be able to hear a little better. Accommodations in school and college, a note-taker, FM system, but all my friends were hearing. Everything I knew about life was about hearing. Everything I envisioned in life for the future was hearing. I didn't know about Deaf community, a bout d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing folks. I did not know anything else.

So that was truly missing for me.

We all know that as human beings we're social, we love to socialize, we need to be with people that we connect. And when we find someone that we connect with, we're like yes!

You just want to have coffee every day with this person because you find things you have in common, you want to chat, you want to hang out. I did not have that. I had friends that I loved being with, but they were all hearing. There was nothing that I could say, oh, do you know when this happens? No. Do you know when like you're at a store like at a Starbucks and they call your name and you can't hear it and the coffee gets cold because you're waiting for your coffee? No, that doesn't happen to me. So I needed someone to relate to.

So I come to Minnesota and I find this big community of very proud d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing adults, which I'm proud now to be a part of.

So as mentioned, I work for Minnesota Hands & Voices and Minnesota Hands & Voices offers unbiased resources to families. So we're telling families these are all the resources that are available for y ou, and whatever the family chooses that fits for them, that's the right choice for them. We have three programs that are under Minnesota Hands & Voices and I'll touch on two a little bit and I'll go a little deeper on the D/HH guides. Parent guides, as you see in the first one, we have 8 parents o f d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing children and they identify a common bond by sharing experiences, wisdom, insight, and they provide resources.

So imagine you being that moment when you're a parent of a d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing child and you've never met another d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing child before, another adult before, and you meet with a parent who tells you, hey, I have been through this, it's going to be okay, let's talk about it, let me share my experience. Here are all the resources available to you. That's one program.

Another, and you'll see on the right, is the A SJA. Two are parents of d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing children and one is a D/HH adult that's under my program as well. And they provide educational, advocacy, support and resources to families that need guidance through special education law on creating educational plans for their D/HH children. So basically when you're in school you have rights as a d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing or Deaf-Blind student. And it's important to know. It's important to know the law and how to advocate for yourself.

And these asgia advocates are wonderful people that guide you through that path. Then there's our program, the D/HH guides. We currently have f our d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing adults and one is Deaf-Blind.

And we're uniquely qualified to provide families with a positive and hopeful perspective for their day-to-day life. Experiences as a D/HH adult person living in a hearing world. Like mentioned, we visit with families. We could do this online. We could do this virtual. We're here to say this is me, a D/HH adult that grew, look at me, I'm fine, I'm doing well, let me share my experience.

This is hopeful for both perspectives, for parents and for child. The child gets to see for the first time what I wanted, which was this is what I might look like. Like this is someone who shares some of the experiences that I've had. And for a parent to see what their child can become. The resources are on the table and the family decides what path they want to choose.

These are our d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing guides. The first one, Hannah Haraman, she identifies as Deaf-Blind. She has one hearing aid. She has taught us so much. I will say I have never worked with a Deaf-Blind person before and the amount of knowledge that I have now. And I'm still learning and I still want to learn. It's awesome.

Shelby gel den identifies as hard of hearing and has one hearing aid. Myself, Haiti. Kelsey Woodward identifies as Deaf, uses ASL to communicate. Sophia Barlass identifies as hard of hearing, she voices, uses ASL and is also our admin assistant for Minnesota Hands & Voices. We all have different experiences. Nobody is the same. All these experiences are very rich for families and they learn from us. We try to pair D/HH guide with the family.

If the family's very interested in going through the path of being in a Deaf community, Deaf Culture, ASL, Kelsey Woodward is a great role model for them. If they're more interested in learning about the cochlear implants and about hearing aids, then I might go and visit with them. We have Shelby Gelden who has hearing aids. We have some Deaf-Blind families who are interested in meeting with Hannah. We try to pair them, but if they're really just interested in meeting any D/HH guide, we can go to that too.

So why meet with a D/HH guide? D/HH adults share their lived experience and they allow a safe space for conversation. When we sit with the family, sometimes parents don't really know what questions to ask. They don't really know what questions they have yet. We start a conversation and they go uh-oh oh, that just reminded me that I have a question for you. It's a safe space to just talk. It's not like a homework, when I bring paperwork for you and you have to sit a nd -- it's more let's just talk, let's just chat.

It's an opportunity for the D/HH families to learn about the resources available for them. It helps build a support network. And it helps families navigate the common challenges and the joys that we have. And our services are free to all the families in Minnesota. So basically, this slide should be titled: Why not?

Be sure to use all the resources available to y ou. All right.

So where can you meet a D/HH guide and what else do we offer?

Like I mentioned, in-person and virtual visit with families. The number of visits really is dependent on what the family wants. Sometimes there's a lot of overwhelming feelings in that first visit because of all the resources, because of meeting someone, ah, like this for the first time, so they will just say you know what, I am fine for now and I would like to contact you later so we can chat.

Sometimes the children are like oh, I really want to meet with you again!

It was so fun to just have a nice chat with someone who's like me or to play a game. When you play a game, this is equally important, you're showing the child how you can play a game and play a game with their parents, communicating differently, and you can still have fun.

We collaborate with other D/HH professionals. You'll see a picture there with two Deaf Mentors, Emily and Jackie. This is really fantastic. We're two different programs, servicing the same community, D/HH and Deaf-Blind, and we're role models for them, for those children.

We also have D/HH guide-led events. These events will have the lead, which is a D/HH guide, and in some cases will be a parent guide. They will have a resource. They will include a Deaf Mentor.

And it's usually an educational and fun part. The first part we might touch a subject that the parents are interested in, the second part where the kiddos have some fun. Some crafts, activities, games.

Next is D/HH virtual book club. And this is a chance for children to read a book and be able to discuss it. These books have D/HH characters. That means when they're discussing it, they're talking about their own experiences as well. And last but not least, we have a YouTube channel with educational and fun videos and interests of staff. I know that a lot of parents, a lot of hearing parents, feel a little nervous about meeting a D/HH Deaf-Blind person for the first time and they're thinking oh, my gosh, how am I going to communicate with them. I don't sign or will they hear me, and they're a little nervous. Sometimes these videos help with that. It shows, look, we're just a normal person. This is how I communicate. There's not going to be an issue. We can get an interpreter. We can use the phone to communicate. We can use a notepad.

It's a way for them to have a little bit of exposure in case they're feeling a little bit nervous or shy about it. There's also fun videos for kids. We want this to be a family interaction. So these videos, these fun videos, are activities that the kiddos can do with their parents.

Here you will see a virtual event. So after t he -- after COVID we needed to think how can we still deliver these services to families, how can we still be there for them. So we have virtual events. The great thing about virtual events is that I could be in Minnesota and you could be here in Ohio and we could have an event. Of course, at our services they're Minnesota-based so that means we're in different parts of Minnesota and we're still having an event. We're still in the same location.

In the second box you'll see Hannah Deaf-Blind guide and she's leading the event and there's a Deaf Mentor so this is a way we're collaborating in this virtual event.

So D/HH guide visits, this is an example of a D/HH guide visit. We have two things that we're b ringing to our visits. One is Fostering JOY, Fostering JOY journal for kids. It's in English and Spanish. I don't know if I probably failed to say, so being Puerto Rican, I know Spanish too, so I'm also servicing Spanish speaking families. I told a short story in another session and I'll repeat it now so you understand.

In one of the visits that I did to a family who has a child who's d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing, the parents were at the table and the mom started to cry. And I was thinking, oh, well I'll give her a minute. She's probably overwhelmed. So much information coming, meeting me for the first time. But her comment was actually, will my child be happy. It made me think, oh, my gosh, did I ever tell my mom I was happy, that I had joys that were separate from b eing d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing, and even being a d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing person, I have lots of j oys. Minnesota Hands & Voices already has a Fostering JOY journal for adults, for parents, being able to remember the joys of being a parent. We need these kids to write down their joys, to remember them, to have a keep sake to look back with their parents and think about all the joys. These little things that can happen like looking out the window and seeing a little bird, their parent asking them, hey, do you want me to cook your favorite dinner, these are joys that we have. Not everything is focused on us being a d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing. We have, just like any other person, joys. That's one way that D/HH guide can sit with child and talk about the journal.

Here I have, and you can see at the end of the session, one example of one of the pages we have in the Fostering JOY journal. The first question is: Ask a grown up why is your grown up proud of you? What would your grown up say is the biggest challenge you have ever overcome?

The second page, accommodations. What are the accommodations you use? These things at the end of the day bring you joy to remember what are the accommodations you used and also builds self-advocacy skills.

And we also have this. Hands & Voices leave heroes. They are 10 superpowers. We have cards. I have them somewhere in my bag that the kids can dialect. You connect an experience with a superpower. So for example, if you're looking at a third one, it says advocacy. If the child ever mentions in a moment where they self-advocated, where they said to the teacher can I move to this chair because I can hear you better? Oh, my gosh, you did this!

You're a superhero. All these kids are superheroes and we have to remind them. We have these cards and give them to them and they have fun c ollecting them. Plus they get reminded each day that they're superheroes.

So because our programs are similar, we got asked a lot, well, what is the difference. So we decided to create a Venn diagram so Emily will be able to share what her program offers. I will share mine, and then we'll talk about what is the overlap or the similarities.

>> I'm not sure the best place for me to stand. So we will go through the different sections here in the Venn diagram. Language-based programming for the Deaf Mentor program. The goal is to teach families ASL, communication, language, Deaf Culture, advocacy and early visual communication.

Families usually sign up for two years, which is 53 sessions, but we just added the third year with monthly check in visits. And the Deaf Mentors are all trained under the sky high Deaf curriculum and the Empower program. That's what we offer at Deaf Mentor family services.

>> Minnesota Hands & Voices program, s upport-based program. The goal is to visit with families who desire a connection with a D/HH adult and learn their experience. The number of visits depend on the needs and desires of the family. We model the communication, meaning that if a family is saying I want to learn ASL, well, we have a person that uses ASL in her daily life and she can visit and she can model, but we are not really there to teach and this is why the Deaf mentors are so amazing, because they can do this.

We have the superpower cards that are given at visits and events and have the Fostering JOY journal for kids. Here we go with the overlap.

>> So we are going to take turns to talk about the gray overlap on this Venn diagram. Firstly, we both support d/Deaf/ families of d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing children.

>> Shares experiences of being a d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing individual with families.

>> We do direct referrals to programs general email address via CRM, which is our database.

So we refer to one another through that system.

>> And families have access to both programs at any point of their journey, not having to choose one or the other. So we can be together supporting families. And next we have Brenda hum Erding that will talk to you about referrals.

>> Okay. I want to make sure I leave room for questions so I'm going to go through my PowerPoint pretty fast. My quick elevator speech. This is a picture of me what I normally look like. That was before when I didn't have to use glasses.

First of all, I grew up with Deaf grandparents. I was exposed to ASL and the Deaf Culture. I don't know it's hard for me to tell my story. Anyway, I was identified at 16, got hearing aids.

Later my grandparents passed away so I didn't use sign no more.

I got married. Had twin girls. They both have a hearing loss.

They both have a hearing loss and they're both doing wonderful. One is married, has two boys, and they both are Deaf too. So we just have a lot of technology, a lot of different communication modes within our family. Anyway, okay, now moving on to the fun stuff. And I want to apologize. My slides are not as fun and fancy with all the beautiful pictures. What I do at Minnesota Hands & Voices, I'm the Guide By Your Side manager and I do all the referrals coming in to our program. I also do reporting out.

So I just wanted to give you a quick glimpse of our database and what happens when any staff at Minnesota Hands & Voices want to refer to the Deaf Mentor program. We have, again, the typing in the notes when they have a contact with the family. And if the family says yes, they want to learn ASL, they want to learn more about the Deaf Culture, we can refer them to the Deaf Mentor program by simply clicking yes on a box in our database.

What that does, whoops, I went the wrong way.

What that does is it creates an email that goes to Emily, so this is just an example of maybe Haiti talked with the family and they wanted to be connected with the Deaf Mentor. So then it sends, again, and I apologize, I wrote this wrong. We are both -- we are one line of service, but we are, like Emily said, we are two separate programs and we're under LSS. So because of that, we're allowed, we have two separate databases. So I can't see her clients. She can't see ours.

But because we are both under LSS, we can share the necessary information to make the referral. So one thing I want to share about this is we have been doing this for about a year now. We are going to start tweaking it even more because we're finding families are still confused about our program, being different.

So they will reach out to us and say I need to contact a Deaf Mentor. And I'll say we need to have you talk to Emily. So we are going to probably be adding like the families' emails to this particular situation so it's a way of us introducing Emily when we make the referral to the family. We're always evolving.

Another thing in how we collaborate and work together. In particular, when it says Minnesota Hands & Voices and Deaf Mentor program, it's really Emily and I. We work together on a monthly basis to track the names of the families referred to the program, the dates they were referred, the dates of the enrollment into her program, and then I take that necessary information and report it back to our grant's d atabase.

Then also the other thing we do is we do quarterly joint reports about events and meetings that we have where both of the programs have attended.

If you know me and if you've seen me present before, I'm a data geek. I just wanted to share some 2022 data that we collected. We had at least 16 events where a Deaf Mentor and a d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing guide were both in attendance. We also had additional events where they were planning but at last minute they couldn't show u p. This just gives you a glimpse of what some of the titles and topics of those events were. As Haiti mentioned, virtual book clubs, we've had a couple in-person picnics that were all over the state, again, talking about Fostering JOY, Deaf awareness, and reading, all of that. I just found this interesting because our staff, when I say -- when my staff, so the parent guides, they refer families and also Haiti and her staff can refer families to the Deaf Mentor program.

And so we have 48 families that were referred this past year. Then also 42 families were referred to the d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing guides from our parent guide.

One other thing that we also do together is once a year we have a joint advisory board meeting, with the Minnesota Hands & Voices Advisory Board and the Deaf Mentor family services Advisory Board, we have a joint meeting together.

Again, this is just a QR code so you can learn how to refer to Minnesota Hands & Voices. And this is just our contact information. So now I would like to open it up. If you have any questions.

>> Hi. Are you seeing a need for some type of an ASL language acquisition program for language m odels to go into daycares? Have parents asked for that for their Deaf children?

>> That's a good question. It doesn't actually happen often enough.

If that were to happen, absolutely, we would make it work. A Deaf Mentor would go into a daycare setting with their family there with their child to model to their provider what it looks like to work with our team. My experience with my own children, I was quite fortunate, I was looking for a daycare, found one that was an in-home daycare setting and that daycare provider found out I was Deaf and my kids are CODAs and her on her own volition went to the Community College and took an ASL course. For a person to show what does this language look like with the daycare, it's possible. You have to have open - - I'll add that our Deaf Mentor program is not limited to families only. We actually can work with grandparents, cousins, uncles, aunts, and daycare providers if they are so interested. We're really open to broadening those connections and having a Deaf Mentor plan for entire session on that.

>> I can add too, just some personal experience. My daughter lives in rural Minnesota. There is a challenge to find daycare alone, but she has had the opportunities to have, obviously, t he d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing teacher come to the daycare to provide the service there. Again, my daughter and her family is choosing not to use ASL. They want to use listening spoken language. They're oral. But again, there is that opportunity to have the d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing teacher come in to the daycare setting as well. More questions.

>> Yeah, I would like to make sure that my question gets interpreted to the audience while I sign it. Is that okay? Can we do that?

I wasn't sure who was looking at me. Okay. Perfect. My question for you is: What age is it appropriate for adults to take part in this p rogram d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing Deaf-Blind to become these role models? What are the ages of your guides?

>> That's a really good question. We don't actually have a specific age limit. We do have a range. We have people over 60 who become Deaf Mentor. We have some in college. It depends on their experience growing up and their enthusiasm for being part of this kind of program. What is their purpose how I screen and interview, I ask their story and how it might work to work with a family. I want to know that they're qualified as a Deaf Mentor and ultimately it's the family's decision and can they draw the boundaries correctly. Are they friendly and have the interpersonal skills and empathy. So there's not an age limit but I do certainly look for certain characteristics.

>> A follow-up, is it at least college age and above? Would you ever accept a high schooler into your program?

>> No, we need them to have a bit more lived experience before they work with families.

>> Haiti: The same for our program. The D/HH guide program, we do not have a limit either, except obviously older than 18. We have not had much interest for interviewing let's say over 30. I won't say my age. We've had much more interest in younger. I think maybe because the positions are usually less hours, on call, and because of the nature of the job. But there isn't an age, so if someone comes in and they're 50 and they say we want to be a role model, a D/HH guide and they have the skills like Emily mentioned, and they're able to share their experience, then they're welcome to.

>> Should I stand up or will you copy sign for the audience? Maybe I'll stand up.

I'm really impressed with this presentation. I'm really impressed with the collaborative work that you're doing. And I'm thinking about that issue of collaboration. Let's say the Deaf Mentor program and you're using sign language and I think we don't see that kind of collaboration happening in other places in other states. How would you, I guess, what words of advice do you have for those of us in the room to encourage collaboration in our own areas?

That's the million dollars question.

>> I think if you have the right people involved you can make headway. People who really have the ability in the spirit of mutual respect to have real, deep conversations, who care about each other, but we are separate programs. We're serving the same community. Sometimes the families get confused. And so I think through this collaborative model, families are better able to access resources across the board. But all of the Hands & Voices programs in every state should do it. It doesn't seem like they're doing it. They're on their own track, so how do we get them onboard?

>> Brenda: Again, the Hands & Voices mission is to be as unbiased and to provide the families all the different options. So if a family wants to learn ASL, that's when we turn it over to Emily. If the family wants to learn cued speech, we give them more resources for that. As Hands & Voices, that is not our job to teach families ASL or teach families cued language. That is not our level. That's the importance of this collaboration. We are not in competition. We want to pass that on. Two minutes left. I'm going to say if we don't get to your questions, please, we will be out in the hallway so you can ask more questions. I don't know who was n ext. I'm sorry.

>> Emily: Haiti and I are actually really good friends in real life.

>> So my question is, what percentage of families accept the Guide By Your Side program, t he d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing guide program, and the Deaf Mentor program?

>> Since you're a data geek -- .

>> I would have to quick do the math, but we average about 300 referrals a year. So if you saw the numbers on the last screen, 48 were referred to the Deaf Mentor, 42 referred to d/Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing guide. You would have to figure out the percentage. I can't do it right now in my head. I'm sorry, we have to finish. We will go out to the hallway to let the next room get ready but we will be out there to answer any questions. Thank you for coming!