>> MICHELLE JOHN: I'm Michelle John. You are in the current session called Vermont coalition for NASDSE guidelines, how it affects all children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. That includes deaf plus if Deafblind, in this particular section, I'm going to primarily focus on deaf and hard-of-hearing children simply because that's what the guideline speaks to. I'm the chair of the Vermont coalition and as well as President of Vermont Hands & Voices and you see my email and again at the end of the session. I have to read my notes. So I apologize. In 2022, after year of discussion, Vermont Hands & Voices Board members which there are 5 of us decided our group had enough gumption and where of all to reach out to relevant stakeholders, to gauge interest in disseminating and educating and optimizing outcomes for students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing, often referred to deaf and hard-of-hearing NASDSE guidelines. We weren't sure about the feedback we would receive, it quickly became resounding yeses from many different parties. We began scheduling meetings, taking meeting minutes and leading the minute agenda as coalition agreed upon. It's formed in 2020 by the Agency you see on here. I was going to read them all, but, honestly, it's a very word-heavy name and it doesn't matter since you're not from Vermont. But we do represent a variety of parent-led groups, agency of education, various programs in our state that serves students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. As well as the EHDI, the Vermont EHDI, and few other groups, certainly, educational audiologists, independent providers, and individuals who self-identify as deaf and hard-of-hearing. So we really try to catch as many stakeholders as possible. Vermont is a really rural state. So it was difficult to make sure we catch everyone, but also ensure there aren't too many conflicts of interest, which is nearly impossible.

So our mission is to raise awareness of deaf and hard-of-hearing NASDSE guidelines working towards implementation of Vermont. We've been focused on top-down and bottom-up awareness in education and advocacy.

So these are short-term and long-term goals. We want to do ensure we have member from all stakeholders while realizing one person cannot represent the entire population, we want to create awareness of the guidelines, educate all stakeholders on the details of the guidelines and what's contained within the document. Many people have either never heard of this document or they may have heard the name but don't really know what it entails. We wanted to create plans and policies that are reflective of best practices found within the guidelines and give space for families, deaf and hard-of-hearing adults, professionals, and administrators and others to share what they envision the guidelines could become within there are state system. And we wanted to create enough tension with like-minded individuals and organizations advocating for change, to policies, procedures, and legislation for state implementation.

That's a lot of words, but the point is we wanted everyone to know and do something about it. So what are the NASDSE guidelines? The National Association of State Directors of Special Education, called NASDSE created the third edition and most current edition in 2018. These are set for students that are Head Start and best practices and implementation. Guidelines with the selfie assessment checklist that can be used by programs to identify their strengths and areas in need of improvement. As well as template to help plan specific steps towards improvement. There were a team of writing, excuse me, of contributing writers to this document and that can be found on the first page of the document. Technically, for directors, by directors, intended audience includes administrators, school personnel, parents and families. This manual is free to all and you'll see at the top of the slide is where you can find them. You can downer load it, print it, do whatever you want with it. It's free-for-all.

I won't spend time on this slide, but I wanted to give you an idea of nationally-recognized organizations who have given their endorsement to these guidelines. Why am I at the end you might ask yourself. I do not know. Sorry, guys. There we are. So we contacted Dr. Shell Johnson who is co-editor of the 2018 guidelines. She met with us during the second coalition meeting in 2020 alongside Barbara Moran dough to discuss best methods to introduce the guidelines in a our state. We made a plan for education and awareness with ultimate goal of implementation within our state through the Vermont agency of education as a top-down bottom-up simultaneously. We understood families and students needed to be receiving the information at the same time as professionals, and administrators. Everyone needed it at the same time. I can't stress that enough. We knew being a small coalition, we need to do start small, yet come out of the gate in a way that cannot be ignored within our key stakeholders from our state, to professionals, families, deaf and hard-of-hearing adults. Population of students are deaf and hard-of-hearing and considered low incident population, their educational needs vary greatly and were often underrepresented -- my Atlanta, anyway, district budgets, school rules and organizations and as well as educational funding. We recognized what had and had not worked for other states that attempted this before us. With Dr. Johnson's assistance, we found the following data, which I won't go over but it is available on the website or app. So this is the overview of the national population that is within the United States. And then this is what Dr. Johnson found for Vermont specifically. After our meeting the coalition began with creating an infographic of the 10 essential principles of the guidelines sunny here. This would easily create awareness -- oh, yep. Thank you. Sorry. I do talk fast. [Laughter] Sorry.

This would easily create awareness of the guidelines as an initial introduction that would be both informative and eye-catching. Our hope was to give the most succinct guidelines and peak interest in learning more. Much to our surprise, after distribution within our state from legislators to individual schools, and providers, as well as families and older students, we began receiving some national inquiries regarding the use of infographic. This was in our minds free information for all to use. What we saw as best practices, in theory, should be best practices for other states. There was no need for every state to reinvent the wheel. This infographic is available as a handout on the presentation on the app as well as the website.

This came out funny. Sorry, I'm having a problem. We as coalition and as individual organizations of persons received a significant amount of feedback. What is this? What the heck is NASDSE? Tell me more. Our families, special educators, and the AOE itself lacked basic knowledge of the guidelines, in turn, having little information and best practices for students who are deaf and hard-of-hearing. We realized we needed to mobilize a bit faster. We began meeting via Zoom monthly twice a month when possible and that is saying a lot considering everyone's schedule. So we wondered how we can condense this entire manual into more digestible sections. We debated if families needed different information, we clearly decided not everyone needed it at the same time. In the end, we decided with the input of interest Johnson to create a 4 part webinar series. Giving overview of critical issues and Deaf Education and overview of the guidelines followed by 3 sessions of a deeper dive into the individual chapters with opportunities for discussion.

These one hour seminars were held on Wednesdays, October 19, November 2, November 9, and November 16 for one hour each time. Presented virtually in real-time, and recorded for later viewing. Recordings were available for 90 days after the completion of the final session or until February 16 at 11:59 p.m.

Individuals were required to register via Google form after each session all registrants were sent an email with copy of Zoom recording, PowerPoint, presentation, the captioning text and clear instructions on how to best view items based on their chosen methods. Within the live sessions in the corresponding emails, registrants were given a link to a survey where they can give feedback on the session, presenters, ask questions and give general feedback. As we knew individuals would be most motivated by receiving a certificate of attendance towards professional hours, filling up the survey was a requirement to receive credit towards the total it 4 hours possible. This information was contained within the initial registration and reiterated with email. This it only ways keeping attendance. In theory, should have been able to answer paying attention. Letting it run in the background, something we've all been guilty of at one time or another.

However, we felt this information was important. And this was voluntary. So we hope many would take advantage of the opportunity. At first, our publicity was sole toll Vermont stakeholders, much to our striez with infographic, individuals across the country began inquiring. In total 309 individuals registered representing over 35 states, as well as toe Bago and Trinidad. Tobago and Trinidad.

And you may be asking yourself, Michelle, this information about the NASDSE guidelines if your webinar series is great and all. What does it have to do with us? With the EHDI conference of all things. Many young children, especially children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing are at-risk for language delays and/or other developmental items that may need diagnosing, attention, and addressing include including but not limited to language disorders, learning disabilities, central auditory processing, and many others. This can begin at infancy or toddler hood. These are not things that magically appear at age 3, 5, or starting in 4th grade. All children should be monitored from birth much like the point of well child visits with the pediatrician. So what's the relevancy? Here we are. These very issues listed are same or similar to issues being reported by the early intervention system. I won't go over them all due to time, but feel free to take a peak at them. I learned from my last session, don't talk about all of this.

So I'm not able to give you more detailed overview of the guidelines, because we would be here for hours. Though I strongly encourage you to look at them and/or add feedback on this session's evaluation if this is something you like to see at future EHDI conference. I'm quite sure I can nudge Dr. Johnson in that direction. I did want to take the time to show you a simple list that's less detailed than the infographic I showed earlier. How many essential principles of education for school-age students are exact or similar to children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in the EI system? Ask yourself what do deaf and hard-of-hearing infants, babies, toddlers need from early intervention that other children in early intervention may not? What do children who are deaf and hard-of-hearing in early intervention need that are similar to school-age children who are also deaf and hard-of-hearing. I believe the NASDSE guidelines help address many of these issues starting from newborn screening onward. As a coalition we included a provider and person of leadership infant program in our state. And until recently, that person stayed on. That individual represented key stakeholder group that may not have been considered such without the proper people sitting at the table.

From an introductory session, Dr. Johnson shared the following slide with attendees. The this shows the relevance EHDI relevance and often as they appear as two different system, it is one path for the child, birth to adulthood. Best practices are necessary from literal birth with newborn screening with all 3 types to early intervention, to school, to post-high school life. Transition is often discussed as a preparatory stage for aging out of the school system. It's the part of the student's education most associated with that term. However, the transition to and out of EI is just as important for children birth to 3. And this includes the EHDI and EI systems.

So what can you learn from the Vermont coalition work thus far. Beyond the basic understanding of what the guidelines are and how EHDI and EI are related to them. I hope you leave this session with takeaways to begin this process in your state or territory. Here's what went well during our webinar series. We were skeptical of using a Google form but honestly didn't have the funds to pay for fancy Survey Monkey subscription. Which I added to include relevant information I needed at the time. Easy way to track number of registrants, survey completions if I sent them a certificate, et cetera. We made sure necessary individuals signed on early for each session. We made the interpreters, captioner, and presenter co-host in case things went awry. We used spotlight only on the interpreter and current speaker. We asked all others have sound and video off. And we ensured someone is tracking that and assisted attendees if needed. We had one person in charge of spotlighting and they were not the presenter and should never be the presenter. We had pre-written and edited introductions and endings. Though it may seem a bit robotic, if the person narrating these can use some of their natural personality, it feels positive for the viewer. It also eliminates forgetfulness and missing information and the other potential blunder.

Having live and recorded opportunities, the registrants weren't feeling stressed and they can watch at their leisure and watch it multiple times. And having reminder emails time remaining on the recordings, many people wrote back to those automatically, oh, my gosh, I forgot. Thank you so much.

So what else went pretty well? Having a presenter versed in the material was very important. It sounds silly and obvious. It's not for a lot of things for what I attend. And presenter interpreting agency, and captioning agency for ease of the point person made a big difference. Having the discussion of finances upfront, who pays for what, what are the fees, please don't ever go forward until you have the funding and information on funding. It's really awkward, but it's really important. Access for all. We chose to have automatic -- we chose automatically to have spoken English, captioning and interpreters. But we asked rental stroonts share other accommodations that is helpful. And giving copies of the material, acronyms, and other relevant information to interpreters and captioning priority to the meeting. This created better access with knowledgeable tools.

And believe it or not, are there more positives? Yes. [Laughter] Having regularly scheduled meeting with coalition member, checking in on progress, having an agenda, attendants and minutes for every meeting. One individual should be the chair or moderator and able to give appropriate feedback and use reflective practices such as, I think I hear you, or the group saying is that correct?, et cetera.

Assist member with discussion points disagreed upon. Allow your member to feel heard but don't let anyone dominate. Clearly define who will work on what and by when. Edit documents as a group. Have an email list for interested parties who do not want to be active participants in the group but want basic updates. They can be sounding boards for the group to ask for feedback or questions. We found that to be extremely helpful. If you don't have the time, they can still give the input. Lesson for you to learn from thrsm were a few. Interpreters, it's easy to switch off every 15 minutes. Individual in charge of spotlighting can utilize comat with the individual. Plan meetings in advance was a game-changer once we started doing it. Granted there were no-shows or last-minute cancellation of member, scheduling 3 months of meeting via polls in a Zoom meeting meant less work for the person in charge of scheduling and increase likelihood of attendants. Prior to that, it was extremely difficult for us to get everyone on the same page. The awkward "will come" I promise you is going to show up. Never expect everyone will be in sync, personality conflicts, difficulties with follow-through, change in employment or funding or flat out disagreements on a topic. The awkward will come. It will be awkward. But don't let that hinder the progress. Stay focused on the task at hand.

Think about places things could not go according to plan. Trial your recording with multiple people playing the presenter and interpreter. Show a pretend PowerPoint presentation if your presenter plans to utilize one. Make sure your QR Code and links are correct. Have a backup plan should a person in charge should be unexpectedly be available. Plan for technology issues. Make sure a coalition member has the PowerPoint presentation where the presenters were to fail. If you don't plan ahead, you might find yourself at a conference across the country up all night playing technology wizard. Guess how I know?

I absolutely cannot stress this enough. One person can be the lead. But they should not do it all. Guess how I know? [Laughter]

As the sole person in charge of creating registration survey, certificate, data collection, emails, recordings, communication with access agencies. The presenter and the coalition as a whole, and as individual spotlighting, introductions, and endings, and I could go on. Please just don't. It's not sustainable. So are there other lessons to learn from us? Yes. But I'm nearly out of time.

Want to know what you can do? Dr. Johnson shared these with our webinars. You'll know families are included. Vermont coalition for NASDSE guideline becomes a model state for others to look to and not have to reinvent the process, we also recognize that the more states who join in this work, the more others will take notice. Perhaps the takeaway from this session is really just to empower you to realize you are not simply one person with an opinion, rather, you are a person in a position with the awareness and understanding to help create change with many others across the United States and beyond. Families have done amazing things in advocacy. Professionals who integrate the family, student, and advocate's input can create a wave of hands, and yes, voices, together states can create change. We can and should be allies with our DOE, AOE and with each other. Nothing particularly positive can come from particularly compartmentalizing and it's final to can have advocacy. From sharing information, to lobbying, and everything in between. There is a wide spectrum of ways to begin the process of change. You all in conjunction with family, self advocates, and deaf and hard-of-hearing adults will create a more equitable learning environment. One where student is deaf and hard-of-hearing can have their needs met appropriately from the beginning no matter their zip code. Change can occur from top-down, bottom-up front of each system. Each of you within that system has a grand opportunity to take the lead and ignite the flames of change in your state, district, and home. We acknowledge your presence here.

If anyone has questions or comments, I actually have time. Any? Thank you, Linda. Have you seen any change? Yes and no. Yes. Our deaf and hard-of-hearing, Deafblind council, the school-age subcommittee created a tool based off the guidelines and submitted that. Eventually, all of you might see that as it trucks along the nation. But our AOE is balking a bit requiring that to be used. I think they're doing a lot of head nodding, but they don't realize we're not going away. So once they recognize we're not going away and the train left the station with or without them, it's happening. So our biggest agency who deals with the education of students is voluntarily using that tool and it's going to make a big difference.

>> Just to make a comment. So I am part of, I'm the Agency. [Laughter]

>> MICHELLE JOHN: Awkward. [Laughter]

>> It's me. But -- [Laughter] . Small world. What can I say? But we are starting a trial. We have two school districts willing to work with us on the evaluation too. So we're excited and that will start happening in March and we will move forward with others as well. So I hope that's okay, Michelle.

>> MICHELLE JOHN: Totally. If I may add, if anyone is interested in that tool, it's in draft form. That's my number one note to you. It's in draft form receiving feedback. But if you like to see it, I have been given permission by the committee to share it with you. So feel free to email me.

>> I know you said that webinars were taken down for interviewing. But are they still accessible if we kind of wanted to do what they looked like? Are they accessible somewhat for us?

>> MICHELLE JOHN: Yes, they're sitting on my computer. Absolutely, if you email me, I'm sure -- the biggest thing was, we didn't want to keep track of views nor data collection for the rest of our lives. But also the timeliness of the information. Dr. Johnson had concerns and she doesn't want someone viewing this a year-and-a-half from now? Everything has changed. But absolutely, if you email me, I can send them to you. Karen has a question or a comment. Likely a question, she's part of the coalition. [Laughter]

>> I was part of the 5 hours of figuring out what was going to work for Zoom. And just so if you're doing anything like this, the thing we figured out is if you're doing a thing on Zoom, and this is just with a regular, not a webinar account, but just a regular account and you can add on which goes up to 100 people. We added on just for a month for $50, and we can go up to 300 people so, that was one thing. So with a small monetary thing, you can do a large event. But the other thing with showing interpreters, Zoom is working on this ongoingly. But at the moment, if you want to show the slide big, you can only have one somebody that you see. So that could either be Cheryl or the interpreter. But the interpreter would be so tiny. Anybody who wants the interpreter, that's not going to be useful. So we made one recording that was shared screen plus presenter. And then also made a recording that had a big Cheryl and big interpreter. And then anybody watching could just bring those up in two windows on their computer and click start and they can see both things. And that was absolutely the best solution we found.

>> MICHELLE JOHN: Umm-hmm.

>> And I just want to make one more comment. This entire project was led by the Vermont Hands & Voices. And they did an amazing job. I'm also part of the coalition. But really proud of the work they did in this area.

>> MICHELLE JOHN: Thank you. Well, thank you very much.

(Applauds)

>> Seriously, you guys are amazing.