>> Hello, everyone. Hello, welcome to our presentation about Deaf mentor pilot project. We gave this presentation in 2021, but from 2019 and 2020, it was our first year of services. And we only had one year of data. Now we have three years of data. We're more knowledgeable. We've done more assessments and so we thought we share that data with you. I'm Brella Diaz and I'm the coordinator of this program. My colleagues will go ahead and introduce themselves.

>> Hello, everyone. I'm Connie Robinson. I work with the birth to 5 program for western Tennessee.

>> Hi, I'm Tracy Duncan. I'm with the birth to 5 language and literacy program in middle Tennessee Nashville.

>> I'm Emily mills and I'm a parent of a hard-of-hearing child that is part of the Deaf mentor.

>> And I'm Alyssa and I'm the language for birth to 5 east Tennessee.

>> So in the flyers that were recently passed out, our program has two components, the Deaf mentor program and parent advisor program which I will abbreviate as PA. The Deaf mentor's role, well, they have a lot to offer. They're focusing on their area of expertise, which are providing families opportunities to learn American Sign Language, opportunities to develop literacy skills through visual modalities. And to connect families with the Deaf Community, Deaf Culture, and deaf history.

It becomes the role model for the child. Many families don't have access to deaf and hard-of-hearing adults in the area which they live, so Deaf mentors can also be a role model and language model for the family and child. Families can see how the Deaf monitor interacts with the child which will impact how the parents interact with the child. They also provide a safe space to connect with the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing adult. And also for the families to work on their own pace. Some families are rearing to go if other families need time to move into the process of learning. The Deaf monitors are there to support them on their journey. Now we'll talk about parent advisors, Tracy.

>> The sky high. Can you hear me? The sky high parent advisors or PA in our program play just as vital role as the Deaf mentor. Parent advisors partner with family to create a home environment and a community environment that supports full access to sufficient early language using hearing assistive technologies, communication opportunities, encouraging parents to self-identify, to being included in a nurturing environment that supports language and literacy in daily routines.

We provide information and resources within that family's community, the state, and national based on their interest. The parent advisory uses a coaching model with families. The family leads the discussions. Parent advisors are knowledgeable about all the communication opportunities and support whatever that family chooses. That could include spoken English, spoken Spanish, or other spoken languages. Cued language or other opportunities, ASL, or other opportunities to engage naturally and playfully with their child. Play advisor role is not an audiologist, therapist, or the teacher. Teacher of the Deaf or anything, when they're in their home, they're there as a parent advisor supporting that family. The communication, the transitions, the community involvement, providing information upon request. And as they make informed decisions.

>> Once a month, the Deaf parent advisor and advisor will go in the home together. They will have a joint visit with the family, which is an opportunity for the family to see a person who can hear and a Deaf person working in collaboration and be allies for one another. Every family is different and they have their own unique journey. So the deaf monitor and parent advisor make sure to meet the families where they are and provide services based on their unique journeys. We don't provide, most service provision is done in a silo.

So we're trying to breakdown a type of silo that could happen between parent advisors and Deaf mentors by bringing them together. This also helps with smoother communication between the services and more consistent service provision to the families. It also models that people can have different perspectives, and that's okay. We can move to language assessment. Go back one.

>> So both professionals conduct separate language assessments. The VCSL is done by the deaf mentors to measure that child's ASL and visual communication development. The sky high language developmental scale, or the LDS is done by the parent advisor. It measures the child's language development overall with ASL, Spanish, gestures, facial expressions, spoken English, cued, whatever.

>> We also empower the families to develop their own child communication plan or CCP. This gives the family opportunity to really think about what they want for their family over the next year of service. And it can be any type of goal related to language, technology, communication, social-emotional development. We give them the opportunity through empowerment to make their own decision. Then the deaf mentors and the parent advisors can meet the needs of the family as the goals developed by them.

>> The deaf mentors and parent advisor also partner with Tennessee school for the deaf birth to 5 and explaining literacy program which is an outreach program for the school of the deaf. This program hosts multiple events each month just for families. These are family get-togethers, virtual, or in person, workshops on literacy, book club, play group and book club for children and families, and different webinars.

>> So now you have the background of the program. We're doing to move into the data piece. We collect tons of data. Tennessee legislation was passed to support us. There are specific objectives determined by the state. There are number of them. But specifically, they want to make sure that our program is developing language acquisition cultural awareness and connecting families to communities and advocacy. That we're supporting communication with their child and the parents are satisfied with the services they're receiving. We collect this data to meet the requirements of the money we received in order to hopefully continue to receive those monies. We use the language assessment that were discussed, the LDS and VCSL. And also the Deafness perception survey. Pre and post program evaluations. Home visit, meaning the Deaf mentors and the parent advisors fill out a form after they visited the family. And then the family will also report on how often the child uses their hearing technologies. We also look at competence in daily routine using American Sign Language and English. Those are our data collection measures. And I am not a big data person, I'm not sure if you are, bear with me as I try to explain this data. If it is unclear, please come see me later and we can go into it in more depth. What we have found is one-third of the children who are part of the program, after one month of service, their language acquisition is fairly stagnant. There might be some small gains. And we found those one-third had additional disabilities that actually created barriers to growth. It could be environmental as well, which is fine. It's good to know that data. Two-thirds of the children on average after one month participation in the program had a one-month gain both expressively and receptively in language and those gains continued with each month. After one year of participation in the program, they had one year of gain in language. And we also saw that some of the children after one month of service participation had a 3.8 month of growth. And you can see some of the trajectories on this graph that show children who had incredible gains in their language acquisition. We were very happy to see those gains. And going back to one-third of children compared to the children to gained, we wanted to look at how often families were meeting with the mentors. 58% had consistent meeting with mentors, and 77% had consistent meeting with parent advisors. With more meetings comes more exposure and more support, so we can correlate the gains with the meeting frequency and consistency.

To pieces of data we think are important to share today were about competence in raising a Deaf child. You can see the pre-statistics. Some felt confident. Some felt okay. There was a certain percentage that had zero confidence. And you can see the gain at the end of the program. The confidence grew. The disagree, so no one at the end struggled or felt like they didn't have confidence in raising a Deaf child after they ended the program. We focused a lot on language acquisition and using visual modalities. But we want to make sure that parents have access to hearing technologies in spoken English if that's what the parents choose. We want all of our families to have bilingual access for their child. So 60% of the family said the children used their hearing aids, BAHA and cochlear implant and they had full access to auditory information. So you can see the difference in average hours per day that the children were wearing their hearing assistive technologies. I saved the best for last in this chart. Our biggest win would be the comparison between the pre and post confidence in using daily routines, or participating in daily routines, like bath time, meals, bed times, being out in the public doing family things. Pre, most of the families reported low confidence. They didn't have confidence or they were very low in confidence as they didn't know how to work through their daily routines and communicate with their child. After up with year of service, you can see a huge flip in confidence levels.

Families jumped from no or low confidence to feeling very confident in their ability to participate in daily routines with their child. Confidence does not equate to fluency. Many families after one year are not the most fluent in American Sign Language. They're still on their learning journey. But they felt confident, confidence leads to motivation and that is something we want to celebrate. 100% of the families agreed, or strongly agreed that they had increases in confidence post program. Okay. So I have been talking about the data stuff. You might be nodding off a bit. Why don't we hear from a parent who actually participated in the program, to hear about their experience. So I'm going to turn things over to Emily.

>> Hello. As you can see, the little guy on the left, that is Julian. He will be 2 in couple of weeks. He is the only one of my children diagnosed with hearing loss. And he is 5th generation hearing loss. So I type my story up so I won't go down a rabbit hole. I was diagnosed with late onset hearing loss at the age of 10. I was never offered resources or given any type of support growing up. I wasn't given access to a community that could understand what I was going through, what my daily living was like. Although I am fourth generation hearing loss, it was nothing ever spoken about in my family. It was very hush-hush and we just didn't acknowledge it. So as a child, I felt isolated from everyone, including my family. After my diagnosis, that was it. I was left to fill in the gaps if figure things out on my own. Julian was diagnosed with bilateral. Only one of my children diagnosed with hearing loss. Initially, my husband was in denial and hoped the test was wrong. His siblings were sad about the diagnosis, but one was excited because he had been wanting to learn ASL. Perfect excuse, right? I, however, immediately knew I wanted a different outcome for Julian than myself. We made the decision for Julian to get hearing aids and he's been aided since he was 2 months old. I didn't get mine until I was 32. Because of my experiences, I knew I wanted Julian to have choices and opportunities. I knew that I wanted our family to become a bilingual family learning ASL and English. And I wanted Julian to have full access to language. I wanted to be able to provide him with the support in community I never had, and so, therefore, the research began.

I self referred to Tennessee early intervention services and there I learned about the Tennessee Deaf mentor parent advisor program. While waiting for placement in the program, our parent advisor referred my family to ASL connect and we also participated in the shared reading front page jump-start our journey. When we learn we would be starting the program in fall of '22, we were extremely excited. The Deaf mentor advisor program offered our family support as we came to accept Julian's hearing loss diagnosis. While few of my children embraced our journey and were all in and eager to learn about Deaf Culture and ASL and others didn't understand the point. If he can hear, why do we need to learn another language? But because of the support of our Deaf mentor and parent advisor, we now participate in a program completely as a family. Program helps give insight to our family so they can have better understanding of importance of language and literacy. Our parent advisor has given us information and provided our family with resources to enrich Julian's environment. Since I was able to a require language prior to my diagnosis, -- sense I was able to acquire language prior to my hearing loss, I didn't understand just how important language and literacy are in early development or what change I can make to create a better environment for him. Our parent advisor and Deaf mentor not only provided my family with support, but supported balanced information, skills, and resources. Now I know how to better advocate for Julian. The program helps us understand how we can better support Julian in acquiring language and provides us with tools to help make communication possible. Julian is almost 2 and can now code-switch between English and ASL based on how he wants to communicate. And that has seriously been amazing to watch over the last couple of months. Our Deaf mentor and parent advisor created a safe community for us to learn. As a family, we're learning together not only a new language, but a culture I never had the privilege of being part of growing up. We've had the pleasure of meeting some incredible people and attended community events with other deaf and hard-of-hearing families. Being able to connect with other families and adults to include our Deaf mentor has given us the opportunity to ask questions about education and daily life, and accommodations. The list goes on. And we all look forward more and more to learning, and we get excited about our monthly visits. And when our Deaf mentor comes, and as a family, we all agree Deaf mentor and parent advisor program has truly enriched our lives.

(Applauds)

>> If you Luke to learn more about the program, you can contact us. We have business cards to handout. And we also have our contact information here. And we would like to thank you for attending. I believe we have one or two minutes remaining if there are any questions? There you go. I'll leave this slide up. I see couple of questions. Yen if we have time. But bring it up.

>> So you said that you were state, basically it's 2 programs. There's Deaf mentor program which supports sign language and Deaf Culture, et cetera. And the parent advisor program, which is more about LSL kind of approach?

>> It's one program, but we're split into -- so we're not two separate programs. We're the same program. When families connect with us, they can't say I only want a Deaf mentor or I only want a parent advisor. They always get both.

>> Got it. So my question is, do you also have early intervention services? And are they coordinated with your program? How does that work? How do you share information?

>> Most of our families have both, have EI services and Deaf mentor, and parent advisor services. Some families age out of the EI program. And they can still continue with us, because we provide services until the age of 5. We do work with the EI service providers. And we collaborate with them.

>> Follow-up question, sorry. So two legs of this program are through the outreach program at the Tennessee School for the Deaf. But EI, obviously, is through the local school district. Yeah? Tracy, what did you say?

>> We are not Part C. EI is Part C. So that's the biggest difference. They get state funding, because they are. We also receive state funding, but we're housed under the School for the Deaf.

>> Thank you, that helps a lot.

>> I'm pretty sure time is out for us. But feel free to find me, hit me up in the halls, or any one of our team member up here at the table. Thank you, everybody, for attending. Appreciate it.