



# Aren't They Too Young for That?

One family's experience using an ASL  
interpreter, and what it can mean for other  
families

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**EHDI 2024**



# About Amy

- Mom of two, one who is Deaf+ (congenital heart disease, genetic condition, sev-prof hearing loss)
- Educator with experience from third grade to adulthood
- Current adjunct faculty member at Elgin Community College
- Illinois Hands and Voices Board Member
- Illinois Service Resource Center Parent Facilitator
- Working on a masters degree in social work

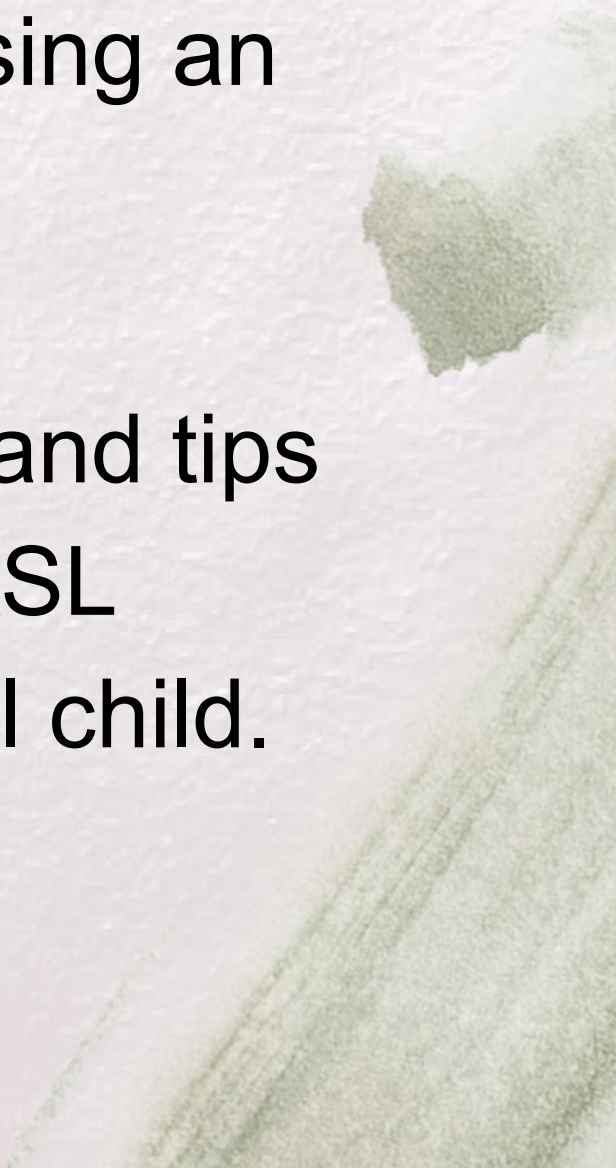


# Affiliations

- Illinois Hands and Voices Guide By Your Side
- Illinois Service Resource Center
- Elgin Community College, Elgin, Illinois
- Northwestern Illinois Association



# Objectives

- Participants will recognize factors and beliefs that may stop a family from requesting an ASL interpreter, despite being interested in using one.
  - Participants will familiarize themselves with unexpected benefits and challenges in using an ASL interpreter with a small child.
  - Participants will leave with talking points and tips to use with a family who is curious if an ASL interpreter will be beneficial for their small child.
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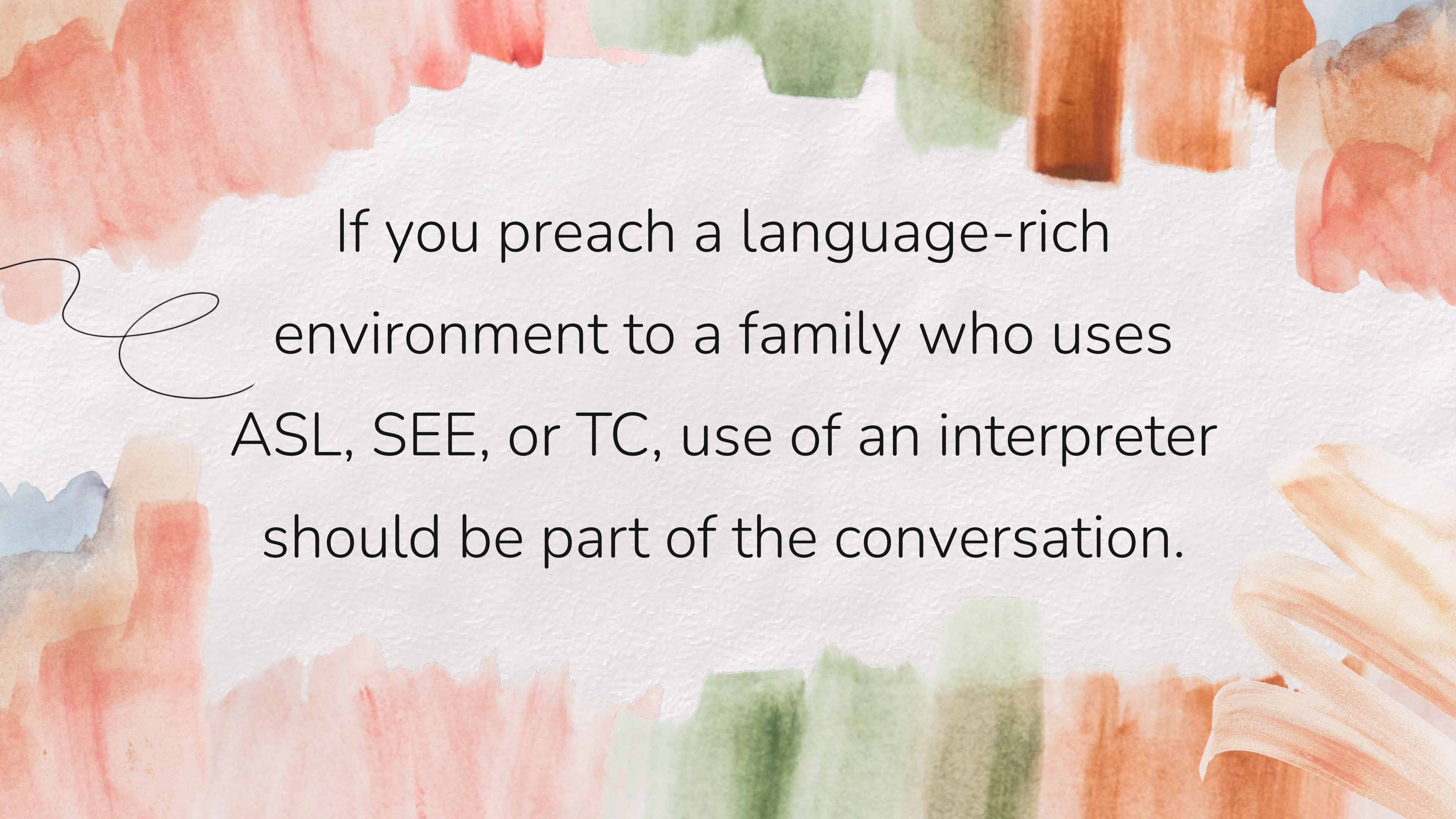
Meet Evan



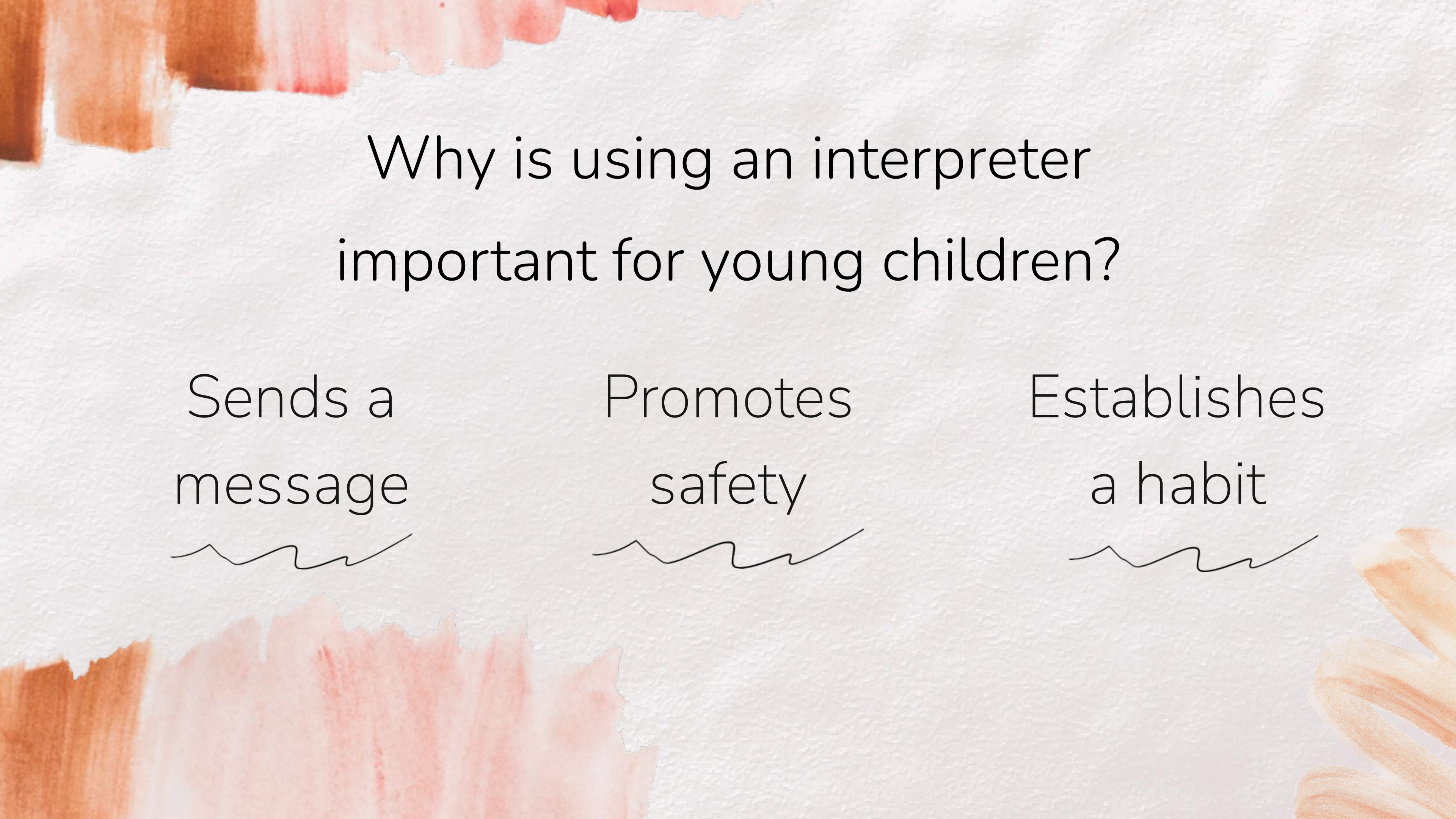
# Our Motivation

- Set an example for him
- Make a statement to medical professionals that it's not something they can ignore
- Help him to start develop an awareness of his health
- Provide a sense of comfort



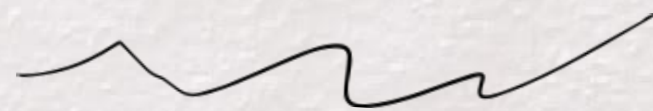


If you preach a language-rich environment to a family who uses ASL, SEE, or TC, use of an interpreter should be part of the conversation.

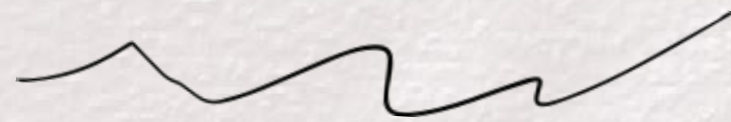


Why is using an interpreter  
important for young children?

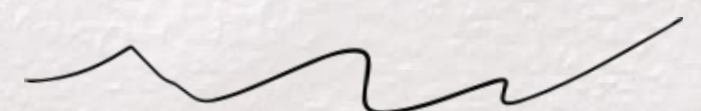
Sends a  
message



Promotes  
safety



Establishes  
a habit



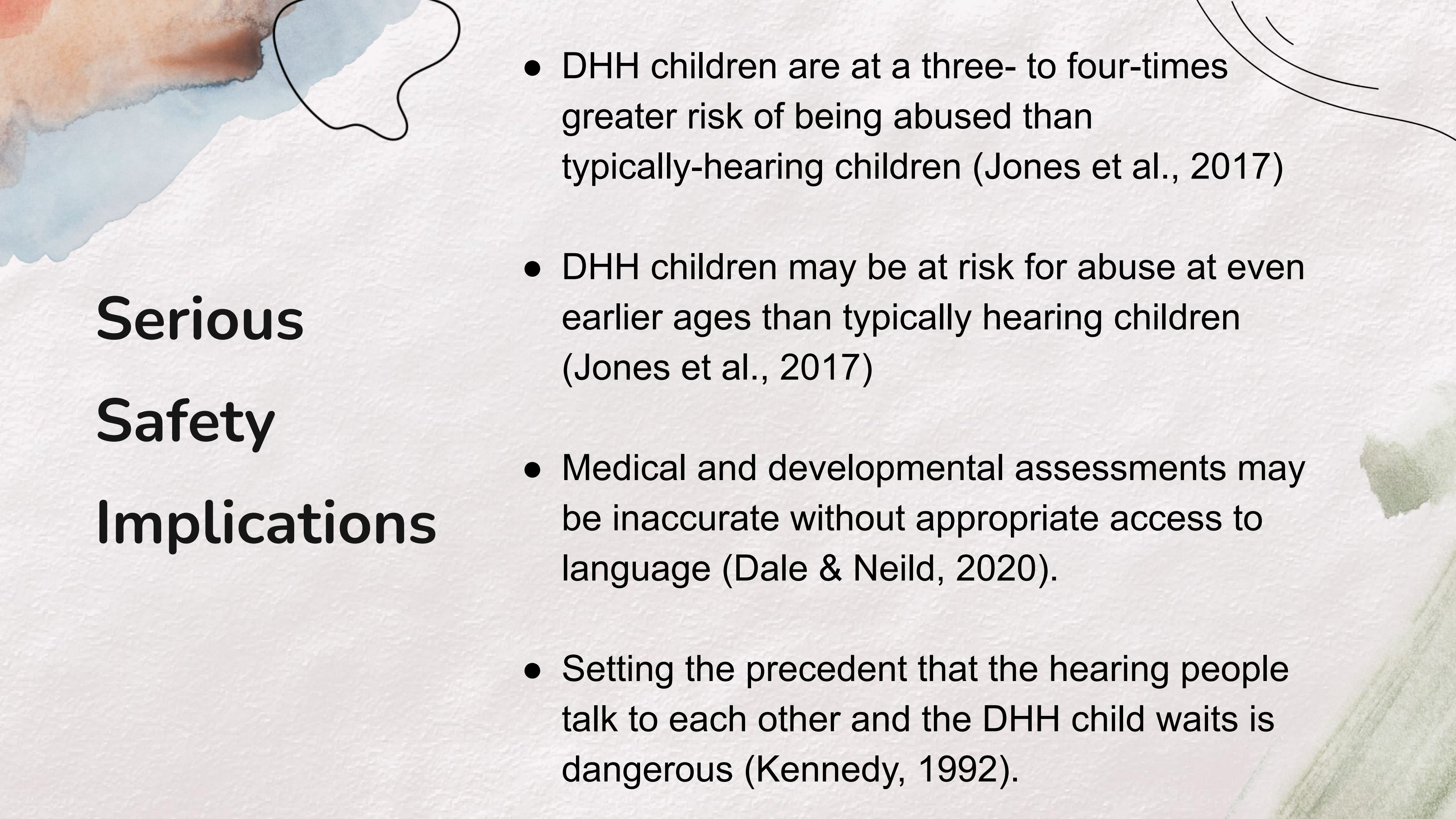




# Sends a Message

If it's not a big deal to you, why would it be  
a big deal to the family?

Not using an interpreter can encourage  
passivity for both the family and the child  
(Jones et al., 2017)



# Serious Safety Implications


- DHH children are at a three- to four-times greater risk of being abused than typically-hearing children (Jones et al., 2017)
- DHH children may be at risk for abuse at even earlier ages than typically hearing children (Jones et al., 2017)
- Medical and developmental assessments may be inaccurate without appropriate access to language (Dale & Neild, 2020).
- Setting the precedent that the hearing people talk to each other and the DHH child waits is dangerous (Kennedy, 1992).



# Establishes a Habit

People tend to avoid situations that are especially difficult, confusing, or uncomfortable.

Research shows that DHH people tend to participate in fewer preventative health practices than hearing people (Lombardi, 2023).

The background features soft watercolor washes in shades of green and orange. Black line art elements include a jagged, leaf-like shape on the left, a scalloped edge at the top, and a curved line on the right.

So why don't  
families use  
interpreters?

- They feel like they don't sign enough or aren't "deaf enough."
- They don't think they're old enough or won't know what to do.
- They feel guilty that they should be able to do it themselves.
- They get resistance from an authority figure.
- They feel it's an invasion of privacy.



# How can you help?



**Teach them how  
to get one**




**Help troubleshoot  
push back**



**Educate  
colleagues**



Most of all, make sure you aren't creating a barrier unintentionally.



Empowered families  
empower their kids.



# References

Dale, B. A., & Neild, R. (2020). The assessment needs of families with children who are deaf and hard of hearing referred for an autism spectrum disorder evaluation. *Psychology in the Schools*, 57(3), 475–484. <https://doi-org/10.1002/pits.22328>

Jones, C., Stalker, K., Franklin, A., Fry, D., Cameron, A., & Taylor, J. (2017). Enablers of help-seeking for deaf and disabled children following abuse and barriers to protection: a qualitative study. *Child & Family Social Work*, 22(2), 762–771.

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Kennedy, M. (1992). The Case for Interpreters - Exploring Communication with Children who are Deaf. *Child Abuse Review*, 1(3), 191–193.

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Thank you!

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