

# Creating Connections for D/HH Children with All Modalities



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Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Conference 2025

# Presenter Disclosures

**Financial Disclosure:** Charlotte Mullen, AuD, Katie McCarthy, MBA, CPACC and Kellye Greer, M.Ed., are salaried employees with Boston Children's Hospital.

**Nonfinancial Disclosure:** None



# Boston Children's Hospital

## Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program

Our team at the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program participates in care for more than 1,000 children and their families each year, including children and adolescents with known or previously diagnosed hearing loss.

We embrace the “whole child” approach:

- Respect all types and forms of communication
- Emphasis on full range of opportunities
- Present all perspectives
- Maintain a child-centered and family-focused approach



# DHHP Outreach Program

The DHHP Outreach and Support Services program is community-based and family-oriented.

The program provides a wide range of services to families, children, schools, educators and professionals.

We advocate for children's well-being, education and opportunities for growth.



Funded through:

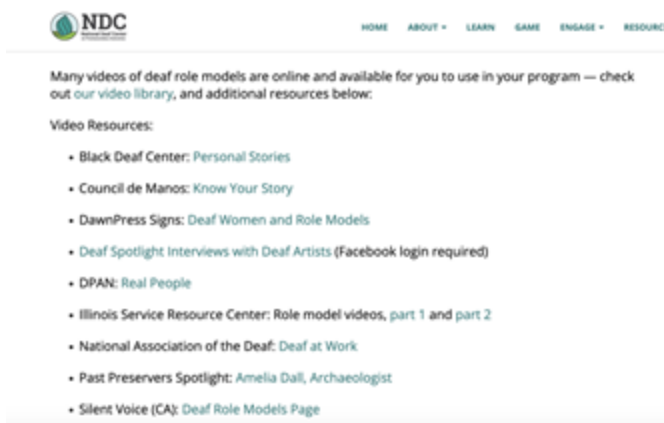


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Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
Program



# How Role Models Have an Impact on the D/HH Child's Success

- <https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/news/importance-of-deaf-role-models>



- <https://www.nationaldeafcenter.org/resource/role-models-facilitators-social-capital-deaf-individuals-research-synthesis>



# Creating a Well-Developed Social Network

- Having a well-developed social network mitigates stress
- While parents of children have a lot of things to consider such as language access, early intervention and educational programs, family responsibilities, and navigating their child's diagnoses, social networking lessens the burden.
- By creating a well-developed social network, parents can identify available accommodations, learn about access and understanding, and find a community of people who “get it.” It leads to the *belonging* stage.



# Role Models and Social Opportunities

## What the Middle Schoolers Have Informed Us

- I'm the only student in my school with hearing aids/cochlear implants.
- My school friends don't understand why it's sometimes hard for me.
- I never knew that teenagers have hearing aids/cochlear implants, too!
- Sometimes I want to be with people who understand what it's like not to hear well or know the same language I do.





# Role Models and Social Opportunities

## What Young Children Have Informed Us

- Sometimes classrooms can be loud, and I need to tell my teacher that there is too much noise for me to hear.
- If a friend is talking to me in class, I need to ask the teacher to turn off the microphone so that I can hear my friend.
- It can be hard to hear my friends on the playground.
- Hearing my friends in the lunchroom can be tricky. My friends will sit closer to me so I can hear them, but I don't always hear everything because it is loud.
- I get to pick a friend and go to lunch bunch once a week where I have lunch in a teacher's room where it is quiet, and I can hear my friend. It is good!

Collaborative efforts through the DHHP outreach program led to opportunities for middle school students to learn more about their hearing loss and their identity, feel empowered and aware about their skills and abilities, and give back to the deaf and hard of hearing community.





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# Leadership Camp

Each year, students attend a three-day weekend program at the Hulbert Center in Fairlee, VT.

Programming includes discussions about leadership, team building games, sharing experiences about hearing loss. They engage in free time activities, learning how to host games for younger children and about various ways to give back.

Room area amplification and ASL interpreters are provided for all activities.



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A group of eight students, four boys and four girls, are posing with a large, complex wooden model of a ship's hull structure. The model is made of light-colored wood and features various beams, girders, and a large, curved section that resembles a ship's bow or stern. The students are dressed in casual clothing, including hoodies, t-shirts, and jeans. They are standing in a room with wood-paneled walls and large windows with white curtains. The students are smiling and looking towards the camera. The model is positioned in the foreground, and the students are arranged behind it, some sitting on the structure and others standing. The overall atmosphere is one of pride and accomplishment in their engineering project.



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# Implementing Ideas into Action

## Recreation Day

While at camp, the middle schoolers planned a Recreation Day program for younger deaf and hard of hearing children.

Students took initiative during Recreation Day, with minimal assistance from adults; they tapped into the qualities and abilities they learned from camp (ranging from leading, explaining the rules of the games, or supporting kids one-on-one).

Families of younger children appreciated the opportunity to connect with older children and have a networking opportunity for their young child in regards to role models, social opportunities, and resources.



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# Teen Role Models for Younger Children, Not Only Adult Role Models

We identified the importance of cultivating teen role models for younger children ages 0-5 with hearing loss, giving them the opportunity to both learn from older children and to interact with children the same age as them.

When young children see teen role models in leadership positions, it sets in motion the process of self-actualization as they realize they, too, can be leaders. This can positively impact their sense of identity and belonging.



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# Accommodating All Children

## Examples of Communication and Inclusion

- Incorporate highly visible items in play
- Wheelchair accessible field of play and indoor space
- Communicate using spoken language and ASL
- Present game instructions in close proximity with limited background noise
- Model expected behaviors/gameplay
- Avoid giving directions while demonstrating gameplay
- Check for understanding
- Incorporate breaks when needed
- Provide companionship and encouragement during breaks

# Collective Outcomes with Teen Mentoring Opportunities

- Teens felt a sense of belonging
- Families could ask the teens questions
- Teens felt empowered to do more activities
- Teens became aware about identity and self in the process
- More confidence at school
- Young children benefited from older kids – wanted to be like them
- Young children and families benefited from incidental learning opportunities in their own environments



# What Can We as a Community Do?

- Budget-friendly activities and ideas for families, schools or organizations to start teen mentoring
- Virtual or in-person teen club
- Partner with local organizations to provide space and activity options.
- Encourage opportunities for parent support and networking



# What Can We as Parents and Professionals Do?

## Parents

- Look for opportunities to engage with older D/HH peers
- Actively create opportunities if none are available to you
- Reach out to local groups (DHHPs, Hands & Voices, etc.)
- Recognize the importance of developing your child's D/HH identity
- Empower your teen to consider mentor opportunities

## Professionals

- Identify potential D/HH teen role models and start a dialogue
- Help create opportunities to bring together D/HH children and teens
- Encourage teen role models to lean into their strengths and identify how they can best mentor younger D/HH children
- Support parent initiatives



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