



Preventing Language Deprivation After Newborn Screenings

A DeaLead, Home Based Approach

Presenter

Erica Scorpio | Executive Director | The Holley Family Village

Session Overview

- Why early access to accessible language matters
- The risk of language deprivation
- Our Deaf-led, home-based prevention model
- How this model complements EHDI systems
- Sustainability and system-level opportunities

Who We Are



- The Holley Institute
 - Founded in 1993
 - Newborn hearing screening
- Holley Family Village
 - Founded in 1996
 - Non-profit 501(c)3
 - Focus on providing programs and services for Deaf/hard of hearing children and their families



From Screening to Support

- Established before universal newborn screening became law
- Hospital committee identified a gap

Today:

~3,500 infants screened annually

- Expanded in 1996 → Holley Family Village in Brooklyn, MI

Language Deprivation The Preventable Risk

- Language deprivation is not caused by deafness.
- It occurs when children experience delayed access to a fully accessible language.
- Critical developmental window:
Birth – Age 5



Why Early Accessible Language is Critical

Early language exposure supports:

- Brain development
- Attachment and bonding
- Early literacy
- Emotional regulation
- Long-term educational outcomes



Community Health and Literacy Program(CHLP) Overview

A Deaf-Led, home-based language access program

- Serving families across Michigan since 2019
- Birth to age 12
- Home-based and free to families
- Language & literacy focused
- 2,300+ mentor service hours delivered



What Happens During Home Visits



Visits focus on real-life interaction:

- Play-based communication
- Parent coaching
- Deaf language models
- Visual attention strategies
- Early literacy integration

The American Sign Language Assessment Tools

ASL Receptive Skills Test

- Developed for children aged 3 to 13 years
- Measures children's understanding of ASL grammar
- Assesses 8 grammatical structures (number/distribution, negation, noun/verb distinction, spatial verbs, size/shape specifiers, handling classifiers, role shift, and conditionals)

[More Info](#)

ASL Expressive Skills Test

- Developed for children aged 4 to 13 years
- Measures children's ability to sign a story in ASL (expressive language)
- Assesses narrative (story) structure and ASL grammatical features (spatial verbs, agreement verbs, manner, aspect, role shift)
- Testers must be certified to use the test (complete a training workshop)

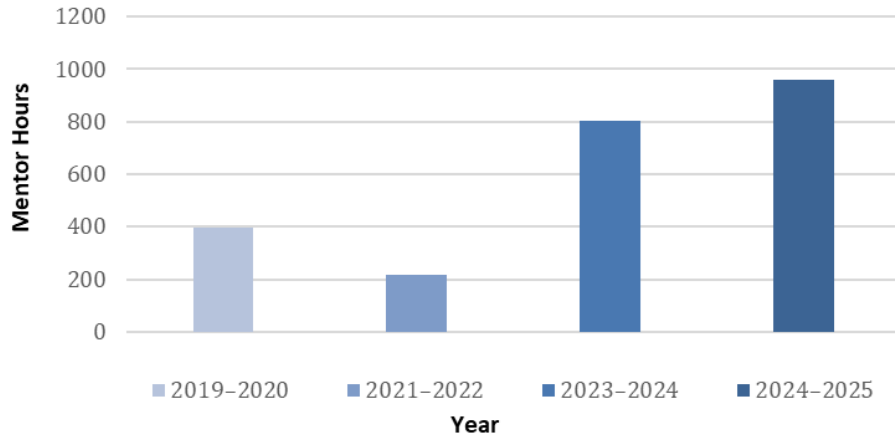
[More Info](#)

63-77%

Children enter CHLP below appropriate language level

Outcomes We See

Community Health and Literacy Program (2019-2025)



- **29%** increase in ASL language development
- **36%** increase in adult ASL proficiency
- **100%** of families would recommend the program

Why Deafed Matters

- Authentic language exposure
- Cultural competence
- Builds trust with families
- Expands family perspectives
- Provides strong language models





How CHLP Complements EHDI

Bridging Identification to Language Access

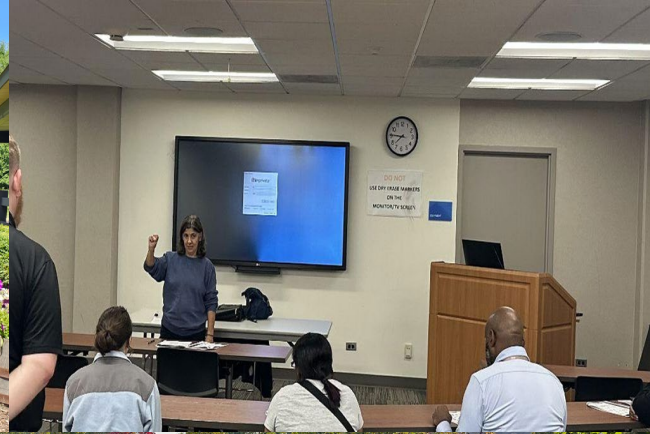
- Supports families after newborn hearing screening
- Provides early accessible language exposure
- Reinforces early intervention goals

Deaf-Led Family Support

- Deaf mentors model natural ASL communication
- Coaching helps families build language-rich home environments

Strengthening Outcomes

- Improves family communication capacity
- Promotes language development and literacy



Sustainability Challenge

Growing Demand

- 51 families served since 2019
- Waitlists continue to expand across Michigan counties

Limited Mentor Capacity

- Deaf mentors provide home visits, training, and community events
- Mentor availability limits program expansion

Funding & System Integration

- Home-based language mentorship often not covered by traditional funding streams
- Programs rely on grants and philanthropic support

Opportunities within EHDI Systems

Earlier Language Access

- Introduce Deaf mentors soon after diagnosis
- Support families during the 1-3-6 EHDI timeline

Stronger Family Support

- Partner with community programs to provide ASL coaching and mentorship
- Expand language-rich home environments

Data & Collaboration

- Track language milestones alongside hearing screening outcomes
- Strengthen partnerships between state programs and community organizations

Could This Model Work in Your State?

- Possible Replication Strategies
- Partner with state EHDI programs
- Integrate Deaf mentor programs into early intervention
- Use home-visiting models to support families
- Collaborate with early intervention providers
- Partner with community-based ASL and Deaf organizations

What We Hope You Leave

- Language Access Matters
- ASL Provides Immediate Language Access
- Families Thrive With Support
- Language Access Improves Outcomes





Early identification is important.

Early language access is
essential.

Contact Information

Erica Scorpio

Executive Director

The Holley Institute

escorpi1@hfhs.org

313-343-7583 (voice/text)

Maria Klein

Community Health and Literacy
Program

The Holley Institute

klein.m@holleyfv.org

313-687-4645(text)

General Contact Information:

theholleyinstitute@gmail.com

313-343-3165 (voice)

1142 Desales Brooklyn, MI