

## ***Family Signs* – Tele-Intervention Program: Sign Language Support for Families of Infants and Toddlers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Texas and Beyond! – EHDI 2014**

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*Family Signs* and *Family Signs Kansas* are tele-intervention programs by which parents or family members of deaf and/or hard of hearing children in Texas and Kansas are offered the opportunity to learn sign language via instructors coming into their home through videoconferencing programs (Skype, Google+, OmniJoin). The programs are free for family members.

*Family Signs* is in its seventh year of operation.

A brief history on instructors used:

- 2004: 1:1 pilot class using Videophone
- 2005: Sorenson professional interpreters
- 2009- Spring 2012: advanced ASL users in Deaf Education and Interpreter Training Programs (volunteers receiving hours toward required internship hours)
- Spring 2012: Addition of paid, professional instructors
- Fall 2012-Current: All paid, professional instructors

*Family Signs* has been collaborating with programs that provide sign support in other states. Some already have tele-intervention programs in place, while others would like to set up a program. Our goal is to share our program model and learn from our combined successes and challenges.

Some states that are currently using the *Family Signs* program models:

- Arkansas: Arkansas School for the Deaf – Signing with Families (using advanced signers in University of Arkansas interpreter training program)
- Kansas: Family Signs Kansas (using model of paid instructors)

Other states with similar programs:

- Maine: The Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing: ASL for Families
- Wisconsin: Deaf Mentor Program First Step

Since *Family Signs Kansas* is the newest to set up their program, a side-by-side comparison is offered for those considering setting up a tele-intervention program.

**PROGRAM BASICS (Texas and Kansas):**

	<i>Family Signs</i>	<i>Family Signs Kansas</i>
<b>Budget (1 year)</b>	\$47,000	\$9,000
<b>Web-based</b> (information, registrations, communication, service delivery)	www.familysigns.org	Students find information on ksdeaf.org; coordinator gives links to registration pages
<b>Data Collection</b> (student registration, instructor applications, evaluations, and session reports)	Formstack.com	SurveyMonkey.com
<b>Email/Calendar used</b>	Google Gmail/Calendar	Google Gmail/Calendar
<b>Videoconferencing Programs</b>	Skype, Google+ (free programs) OmniJoin (\$49/month)	Skype (free program)
<b>Area of state served</b>	Entire state of Texas	State of Kansas, but student must reside at least 25 miles outside of KC metro area

**CLASSES:**

<b>Sign instruction offered</b>	ASL, SEE, ASL for Spanish speaking families	ASL
<b>Curriculum (all free and online for instructors and students to access)</b>	Beginning: Bravo via dcmp.org; Advancing: Signing Naturally and True Works ASL (local curriculum as pilot)	Start-american-sign-language.com
<b>Class (number of weeks)</b>	Fall: 14; Spring: 20; Summer: 7 (IF funding allows)	19 week course
<b>Weekly Classes</b>	30+ minutes	45+ minutes
<b>Group classes</b>	Up to 3 students (from different families)	Within same family (at same home)

**INSTRUCTORS:**

<b>Number of paid instructors</b>	8-10	8
<b>Professional Instructors</b>	College Degreed; Teachers of Deaf, Certified Interpreters	Teachers of Deaf, Certified Interpreters, 1 Paraprofessional
<b>Payment of Instructors</b>	Per class: 30 minutes max. for prep time; 30+ minute instruction time	Per class: 1 hour pay. Divided between prep time and instruction time as needed
<b>Current Instructor Makeup</b>	3 Deaf, 5 hearing (2 SEE, 2 Spanish speaking)	4 Deaf, 4 hearing

**STUDENTS:**

<b>Number of students (avg/semester)</b>	60	11 (Spring 2014: first semester of program)
<b>Student Recruitment</b>	Website, flyers to Regional Day Schools and Early Childhood Interventions, presentations at Family Weekend Retreat, conferences, e-blasts from ERCOD, Facebook (ERCOD), ERCOD brochures	Website, flyers sent through several state-side list servs, Facebook, conferences, inservices
<b>Student Registration</b>	Online: <a href="http://www.familysigns.org">www.familysigns.org</a>	Registration link is shared by coordinator
<b>Matching Instructor/Student</b>	Based on preferred available times/days	Based on preferred available times/days
<b>Additional Support for students</b>	Phone calls/emails with Coordinator and/or ERCOD Liaison to Spanish Speaking Families	Phone calls/emails with Coordinator and/or other Outreach Team members

Additional information:

***Family Signs:***

- The program is run on IDEA Discretionary Funds. The \$47,000 pays for: Coordinator salary (10-12 hours/week), instructors' salaries (8 instructors, 3-5 hours/week), training/travel, program support (OmniJoin, Formstack, website)
- Students sign up one semester at a time and can continue for multiple semesters. We are considering limiting students to number of semesters they can take, but have not done so yet.
- Approximate cost/student: 60 (fall)+ 60 (spring) + 30 (summer 2013) = 47000/150 = \$313/student

***Family Signs Kansas:***

- The program is run on Title VI grant money with a one-year cycle. The \$9000.00 pays for: instructors' salaries (8 instructors, 1-2 hours/week), training, materials (Start ASL workbooks, dry erase boards/markers for each instructor).
- The program was web based ([www.ksdeaf.org](http://www.ksdeaf.org)), but information has been taken from the website until the grant for next year is secured.
- Students sign up for semester-long class. Based on continued grant funding, students will be able to continue.
- Classes are offered in Spring and Fall. As of now, they are not offered during summer.
- Approximate cost/student: \$9000/11 = \$818/student. This includes start-up costs that we will not incur in subsequent years. Actual cost per student for the 19-week class: \$380/student.

**Does your state have a program that offers sign language support to families via tele-intervention? Are you interested in starting a program in your state? Contact us or join our Professional Learning Community!**

Professional Learning Community:

Facebook page: Tele-Intervention Sign Support (request to join as it is a closed group)

NCHAM: Tele-intervention Guide [www.infanthearing.org/ti-guide/](http://www.infanthearing.org/ti-guide/)