Education Advocacy for Parents with Deaf or Hard of Hearing Children

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Sponsored by Morgan, Lewis & Bockius, LLP.
Background

- Born and raised in West Palm Beach, FL- mainstreamed
- Deaf parents, hearing siblings
- Bilingual- ASL and written English
- Moved to Alabama and went to Deaf school at 10 years old
- B.A.s in *Deaf Studies and Sociology*, M.A. in *Family-Centered Deaf Education* at Gallaudet
- Taught at two schools (Kendall School and MSD-CC)
- Worked with autistic children
- Recently graduated from University of Baltimore Law school
- Currently a staff attorney focusing on Education Advocacy
- Godmother of four wonderful multi-cultural Deaf children who now live in Illinois (11, 9, 7, and 3)
Overview

- What’s NAD?
- Landscape of Deaf Education
- Research and Media
- Basic Review of IDEA
- Common Challenges
- Things to Keep in Mind
- NAD Resources
What’s NAD?

- National Association of the Deaf, the oldest civil rights organization established in 1880
- Network of over 200 affiliates (including 49 state associations)
- Main focus – disability rights and civil rights
  - Captioning
  - Education
  - Employment
  - Telecommunications
  - Housing
  - Mental Health
- Youth Programs
New Education Advocate program - States and Parents (with American Society for Deaf Children)

Education Strategy Team - 15 experts (including parent representative)

Two staff attorneys providing support for IEP meetings or referrals

Website full with information and position statements

NEW Parents Section (more info coming soon!)
Landscape of Deaf Education

- Estimated 300-350K deaf and hard of hearing children
- 92-96% are enrolled in schools other than state schools for the Deaf*
- 80% of 67,000 served under IDEA are alone*
- Research shows benefits of sign language - cognitive, social, emotional and academic
- Increased sophistication of technology (CI, digital hearing aids, FM system)

Positive Things

• Switched at Birth- ABC Family on Mondays
• Through Your Child’s Eyes- http://www.csun.edu/~tyce/enindex.html
• ASL curriculum and checklists rapidly expanding
• ASL and English Bilingualism is more formalized with school-wide training. Includes spoken languages. (Clerc Center)
• Increased awareness with language deprivation. Brown University Lecture- Sanjay Gulati, M.D., Harvard Medical School

NEEDED: More focus on our multicultural and hard of hearing children and families and more diverse incl. deaf/hoh staff/teachers in all schools
Basic Review of INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES Education ACT (IDEA)

- Federal legislation passed in 1975
- Part B and Part C
- Reasons for the Act
- Goal and purpose- Free Appropriate Public Education in a Least Restrictive Environment
- Act vs. Regulations
- Benefits for many
- Required continuum (special school, mainstream, etc)
Growing up with the IDEA Law

Birth to 3

3 to 4

4 to 21

Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)

Individualized Education Program (IEP)
What is the IEP process?

- An IEP is an Individualized Education Program (or Plan)
- The IEP Team writes the IEP.

IEP information includes:
- Goals for the student to achieve this year.
- Services and accommodations to enable the student to achieve these goals.
- Determination of placement (where services will be provided)
Special Factors in IDEA

In the case of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, IEP team members must consider the child’s:

• language and communication needs;
• opportunities for direct communications with peers and professional personnel in the child’s language and communication mode;
• academic level; and
• full range of needs, including opportunities for direct instruction in the child’s language and communication mode [§300.324(2)(iv)].

It’s important to note that, regardless of a child’s disability, IEP teams must consider a child’s communication needs. In determining the child’s communication needs, the IEP team might ask:
• What communicative demands and opportunities does the child have?
• Does the child have the skills and strategies necessary to meet those communicative demands and take advantage of communicative opportunities?
• Can the child fulfill his or her need to communicate in different settings?
• Does the child communicate appropriately and effectively, and if not, why not? How would the deficit in communication be described?
What are Parents’ rights?

- Meaningful participation in IEP Team.
  - Opportunity to participate in all meetings
  - Call meetings when needed
  - IEP not decided in advance
  - Record meetings
  - Who can you request/bring with you?
    - Interpreters – request in advance
    - Advocates- let them know
    - Family members, babysitters, friends
    - Anyone with “special knowledge or expertise” with child - request/bring
- Access to student’s records
Tips for effective advocacy

- WRITE DOWN EVERYTHING
  - Requests for meetings
  - Requests for evaluations
  - Parent concerns
  - Meeting summaries
  - Date, time, and addressee of phone calls
  - “Confirm” content of calls/meetings in writing
- Record all meetings
- Do not sign right away

“If it was not written down, it was not said. If it was not written down, it did not happen.”
-Pete Wright of Wrightslaw.com
5 Rules of Successful IFSP/IEP Meetings

1) Know what you want
2) Do not blame or criticize
3) Protect the parent-school relationship
4) Seek win-win solutions/ideas
5) Understand the school’s position
COMMON CHALLENGES

- Access to qualified interpreters
- Lack of access to speech language pathologist
- Access to American Sign Language in Early Intervention
- School district saying no to school for the deaf
- Lack of experienced teachers
- Different expectations for child by school and parents

"Your child speaks well and seems to function well, let's throw her in a class of 20-30 kids in an extraordinarily loud classroom with teachers, staff and students who have no ASL and no knowledge of the education of deaf children."

- Parent on forum
“Monolingualism...... is the illiteracy of the 21st century”

Time magazine July 29th, 2013

Bilingualism is not only about learning a second or third language, it makes the brain more efficient at other tasks.

Things to Keep in Mind

- Language Access - appropriate for YOUR child
- Consistency with bilingualism - ASL, English, and your family language (read & spoken) at home
- Language separation and planning - follow the world approach
- Critical mass (opportunity to interact with other deaf children)
- Diverse Deaf role models
- Extracurricular opportunities (clubs, sports)
- Social-emotional needs (friends)
- Paraprofessionals with expertise for deaf children (SLP, Audiologist, CI, PT, OT)
- Relationship with family (foundation starts now)
- Empower your child in daily settings (home and out)
Learning Circle by Mary A. Rappazzo
General Resources

- www.deafchildren.org (American Society for Deaf Children)
- VL2.Gallaudet.edu
- http://aslized.org/
- CSDECEToddler on Youtube
- http://americansignlanguageinece.tumblr.com/
- www.wrightslaw.com
- http://spanglishbaby.com/
- http://www.handsandvoices.org/
- Clerccenter.Gallaudet.edu (Info to Go)
Check the new Parents Section on www.nad.org and sign up for e-blasts under Contact Us!

Follow IG - @deafeducation and @nad1880

See the Youtube channel - Deaf Education

Become a NAD member to get NADMag and discounts

Contact NAD Legal Advocacy Center for support or information on IEP advocacy or disability discrimination - www.nad.org/contactus

Go to our national training conferences! (next one is in Birmingham, Alabama, September 2015)