Families as Partners

Coalition for Global Hearing Health Conference 2015
Hands & Voices

- Founded in Colorado – USA 1996
- Organization for families, lead by families
- Currently 44 Chapters, 23 GBYS Programs, 2 ASTra Programs

**Mission:**

*Hands & Voices is a parent driven organization that supports families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology.*

**Vision:**

*We envision a world where children who are deaf and hard of hearing have every opportunity to achieve their full potential.*
The single most important predictor of a newly identified child’s success is the meaningful and effective involvement of his or her parents and family. (2000 Journals of Perinatology, 20, S132-137. Yoshinaga-Itano, C., Coulter, D., Thompson, V.)

Parent to Parent Support is a proven practice for: meaningful and effective involvement of his or her parents and family
Issues Identified:

- Stigma
- Oppression
- Isolation
- Lack of Information and resources
- Parents don’t see/understand their role
- Systems don’t recognize the parent role

Comments from the parents:

“If the parent believes there is stigma, so will the child.”

“The love and respect of the parents to the child is what can provide the example.”

“We keep knocking until our knuckles bleed.”

“On days I cannot walk, I crawl.”
Key Elements of Partnering with Families

- Creates understanding and empathy
- Provides knowledge about the child, family, and culture
- Opportunity for honest and clear communication
- Ability to reciprocally share information
- Offers connections and support to families
Key Qualities of Parent Partners

- Desire to help others
- Ability to see beyond their own story
- Understanding of common challenges faced by families
- Motivation to impact systems
- Capacity to engage and maintain involvement
Essential Training Components

Dependent on the status of the circumstances
  o Ways to locate and reach other families
  o Identify needs
  o Prioritize needs
  o Understanding of role
  o How to stay connected
  o How to connect to the system(s)
  o On-going learning opportunities
Secret to Hands & Voices Success — “What works for your child is what makes the choice right”

- It starts with one family story...
Why? Families as Partners?

- How better to understand the day to day challenges and opportunities of families from a particular area or country
- Critical to ensure sustainability and optimal outcomes

OUTCOMES of Families as Partners

- Overcoming potential cultural stigma
- Reduce feelings of isolation
- Engagement and commitment from the families
- Ensuring that what your doing is meeting the needs of the families your serving
- Influence on the system
- Increase the possibility of on-going support once “you” are gone

So the real question is... why not?
Family and Community Empowerment Committee:
Promote a family and community centered approach to hearing loss with social integration and awareness through effective services such as counseling, parent groups and community based habilitation programs. Some examples of how the CGHH might accomplish this goal; Create resource materials that equip and empower families with information regarding communication and habilitation options, Advocate by creating awareness of best practices with schools, communities, and medical providers, Explore way of expanding CGHH membership among families and community representatives, Advocate and Equip through related tools and promotional materials, Develop relationships and collaboration with related organizations and societies, Create CGHH website content for families and community representative.
Thank you!
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Hands & Voices

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