

The logo for the Center for Technical Learning (CTL) is displayed in a large, white, serif font on a black, tilted rectangular background.The text "ON THE CUTTING EDGE" is written in a white, serif font on a black rectangular background.

The Deaf Education and Families Project by Rachel Friedman Narr, Ph.D.

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Imagine learning your beautiful healthy baby is Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Imagine not having ever met a Deaf or Hard of Hearing person in your life. You have no idea what this means for you or your newborn. This is when you meet a parent mentor from the Deaf Education And Families Project (DEAF Project)/Parent Links. Through the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening and Early Start Programs in California, families just learning they have a Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) child can be referred to other families raising DHH children. DEAF Project at CSUN has the statewide Parent Links grant for Southern California that runs through the Family Focus Resource Center, which is also located at CSUN (<https://www.csun.edu/family-focus-resource-center>). Parent mentors out of Rowell Family Empowerment Center in Redding cover Northern California.

Every year, approximately 350 families with DHH infants in Southern California are referred to Parent Links. Another 100 or so take advantage of the multiple events offered by DEAF Project/ Parent Links annually. Parent Links parent mentors reach out to families to check in with them, let them know they are not alone, and to provide information and resources.

In addition to offering support and resources, DEAF Project hosts three classes in American Sign Language (ASL) for families. Surprisingly, many local school districts don't tend to offer ASL classes at times and in ways families can benefit. Our classes are specifically designed for families raising DHH children. Families can drop in/out at any time and the classes provide a supportive and engaging environment so that family members can get used to learning a new language.

DEAF Project also hosts Family Fun Days with the purpose of connecting families with other families, and DHH children with other DHH children. More than 80% of DHH students are educated in "mainstream" settings where they are the only DHH child in a school or classroom. This can be isolating for both the family and the child. Family Fun Days are at parks, amusement centers, pumpkin patches...anywhere really! We often recruit volunteers to interact with the children, freeing parents to chat with each other and make connections.

DEAF Project was started in 2007 because an ability and wellness mindset toward—and with—DHH children and their families is rare. There remains a critical need for families to receive positively framed information and support at the time of the first hearing screening referral through the diagnostic, referral, and follow-up processes. The information disseminated to families must be specifically designed for the unique needs of infants and toddlers who are DHH. This information is most effective when provided by knowledgeable professionals and parent mentors who have a comprehensive understanding of all possibilities available to DHH children. Overwhelmingly, the majority of information parents still receive from medical institutions when they learn that their child is DHH suggests that these infants are disabled and their treatment focuses upon the notion of disability and remediation. We believe DHH children can accomplish anything with strong family bonds and high expectations.

Dr. Rachel Friedman Narr is a Professor in Deaf Education/ Special Education at California State University, Northridge. She is committed to ensuring teachers are well prepared to teach diverse students in Deaf Education classrooms, as well as working with parents of Deaf /Hard of Hearing children. Rachel is the Director of Deaf Education And Families Project/Parent Links at CSUN, a parent-to-parent support network. Rachel has a breadth of experience working with DHH students birth-22 years and their families, both as a Speech-Language Pathologist and Deaf Educator.

The Deaf Education and Families Project Recommended Resources

California Hands & Voices

Connect with other families raising DHH children
<http://cahandsandvoices.org/>

Dawn Sign Press

Provides a rich variety of quality materials for American Sign Language, Deaf Culture, and Education
<http://www.dawnsign.com>

VL2: Visual Language and Visual Learning from Gallaudet University

A wealth of research, videos, research briefs, and publications
<http://vl2.gallaudet.edu/index.php>

VL2 Parent Information Packet

FREE for parents with DHH children. Just ASK!
<http://vl2parentspackage.org/>

VL2 Storybooks App

<http://vl2storybookapps.com/>

Language Equality and Acquisition for Deaf Kids (LEAD-K)

Making sure ALL Deaf/Hard of Hearing students are Kindergarten Ready!
<http://www.lead-k.org/>

California Department of Education: Deaf and Hard of Hearing Division

<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/ss/dh/>

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