



Outreach Program

Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Elizabeth Burmaster, State Superintendent
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Dear Parents and/or Professionals:

The Wisconsin Educational Services Program for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WESPDHH) – Outreach Program, in collaboration with Wisconsin Sound Beginnings is pleased to announce the establishment of the “*Guide-By-Your-Side Program*” – which is a voluntary program that will link parents of children who are deaf, hard of hearing or deafblind with families of newly diagnosed children with hearing loss!

The “*Guide-By-Your-Side Program*” will be comprised of approximately 15-20 trained “*Parent Guides*” representing the five Department of Health and Family Services regions of the state of Wisconsin. Parent Guides will work with parents of newly diagnosed children who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing up to 3 home visits to answer questions and provide information and resources for the family. When a child is identified with a hearing loss (with the parent’s consent), the audiologist will make a referral (through WE-TRAC, a data and tracking system) to the WESPDHH Outreach Program and the child’s County Birth to 3 Program. The WESPDHH Outreach Program will link a Parent Guide with identified family and Parent Guides will initiate a home visit within 2 weeks of the referral. Parent Guides will provide information and resources to the family and will ensure that connections to the County Birth to 3 Program or local school district are made.

The goal of the “*Guide-By-Your-Side Program*” is to provide parents of newly identified children with hearing loss with opportunities to meet with a Parent Guide in order to: 1) provide parents with the opportunity to establish a supportive relationship with another parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing; 2) provide parents with unbiased information regarding communication options for their child; 3) provide parents with an understanding of the unique needs of infants who are deaf/hard of hearing; 4) link parents to resources available locally, regionally and statewide; and 5) to effectively link families to their county Birth to 3 Program or school district.

Please help us to spread the word about this exciting new program. Currently, we are in the process of recruiting 15 parents to become Regional Parent Guides as well as 3 bilingual Statewide Parent Guides who are bilingual in American Sign Language, Spanish and Hmong. Parent Guides will be paid for their time and will be expected to attend an in-depth training on February 13th and 14th, 2004. With this cover letter, you will also find regional and bilingual parent guide job descriptions, an application/nomination form and a reference form. Our success in recruiting parent throughout the state of Wisconsin depends upon you! If you are a family member, we encourage you to consider applying for this position. If you are a professional, please help us to spread the word and pass this information along to parents.

Sincerely,

Marcy Dicker Dropkin
Outreach Director, WESPDHH

Elizabeth Seeliger
Program Director, Wisconsin Sound Beginnings

Jean Nothnagel
Wisconsin Birth to 3 Program