

**Building better lives for children who are deaf and hard of hearing by providing parent-to-parent support to families.**

At Minnesota Hands & Voices, we provide parent-to-parent support—someone to lean on when you need it most. We connect families that have children of all ages and every type of hearing loss. We can help you meet other parents who have a child like yours. We have a lending library with books, videos and other materials to help you learn more about your child's conditions. We also offer workshops on topics related to hearing loss. To learn more about the services we offer, visit our web site: [www.mnhandandvoices.org](http://www.mnhandandvoices.org), or contact us.

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Lifetrack Resources is supported by the Greater Twin Cities, Hastings, and St. Croix United Ways.

Lifetrack Resources values diversity and is an EEO/AA employer and service provider.

Accredited by CARF for Employment Services: Community Employment Services, Job Development, Job Site Training, and Job Support.

Approved as a provider by: Medicare and Medical Assistance and Minnesota Rehabilitation Services Branch.

JUST FOR YOU:

**The parent of a child who is hard of hearing**



**“Connect with other parents. We have learned a ton from other parents. We have learned from people who paved the way.”**



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## The Diagnosis: “Hard of Hearing”

“To say I was shocked would be an understatement. I was stunned. It was like being hit by a baseball bat.”

One of the most common reactions to the diagnosis is shock. This is true even when the audiologist tells parents the loss is “only mild,” “only moderate,” or “only in one ear.” Parents often don’t know what the diagnosis implies or what it means for the future.

Parents of a child who already has a diagnosis of a physical or developmental problem may be especially stressed when they find out that their child has a hearing loss as well. It may feel like “not this too!” Sometimes, however, the addition of a hearing loss as a second diagnosis actually helps a parent deal with it more easily, since some services may already be set up, or the hearing loss pales in comparison to a more serious diagnosis. Parents may put the hearing loss “on the back burner” for a bit as they deal with the first diagnosis.

**A major weapon parents use in dealing with the shock of diagnosis is to get educated about hearing loss.** For example, parents get in touch with other parents, they search the Internet, they go to the library and check out books, and they call around to organizations they think might be able to help them. MN Hands & Voices can help you get in touch with many sources of information and support.

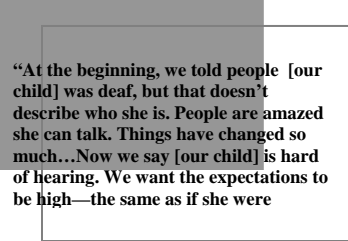
“We had no idea what the diagnosis would mean for our child and family. We thought we would need to learn sign language. We thought we might have to move closer to a deaf school.”

“I read 11 books in a row. My husband teases me that I stayed up and read all night.”

## The Next Step: “Early Intervention”

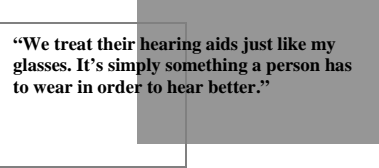
The early times after the diagnosis are often the toughest part of the whole journey. If all the other parents who have been in your shoes could talk to you right now, they would likely tell you, “please be kind to yourself.”

After diagnosis, parents usually get connected with Early Intervention services. These services are provided by the child’s school district and/or county programs and include such things as service planning and speech therapy. Parents also find support by talking with a supportive family member, getting connected to a special school or program that serves kids who are hard of hearing, and meeting other families who have child with a hearing loss. MN Hands & Voices can help you find the right services for your child and connect you with other families that have children who are hard of hearing.



“At the beginning, we told people [our child] was deaf, but that doesn’t describe who she is. People are amazed she can talk. Things have changed so much...Now we say [our child] is hard of hearing. We want the expectations to be high—the same as if she were

**Most children with a mild or moderate hearing loss wear hearing aids.** Parents report that some kids love their hearing aids, some don’t. Some children, even babies, are delighted to wear the aids and hear new sounds. Other parents report that getting a child to wear hearing aids is “a real battle.” However, they all agree that the right hearing aids and positive attitude are the keys to success for their children.



“We treat their hearing aids just like my glasses. It’s simply something a person has to wear in order to hear better.”

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## The School Years: “Advocating”

For the most part, parents find that teachers and other school staff understand their children’s special needs once they’ve been explained. Sometimes, though, parents have to push to get services. They feel their kids are in a gray area between those who have normal hearing and those who are deaf. And, sometimes they find the schools don’t provide services because their kids aren’t “deaf enough,”

“The best advice is to be the strongest advocate you can for your child. No one is going to do something without your initiating it.”

Dealing with others’ lack of knowledge about hearing loss is an ongoing issue for families. People may make light of hearing loss or think the parent is exaggerating the problem. Parents are often the only ones who see the day-to-day impact the hearing loss has on the child and the family. They spend a lot of time making sure hearing aids are working, going to school meetings, seeing the audiologist or ear doctor for checkups, and dealing with social issues that are result of the hearing loss.

“It’s an invisible disability. People belittle it. They say, ‘Sometimes I don’t hear either,’ or ‘It’s a guy thing.’ People don’t comprehend that it’s a real medical problem you deal with everyday.”

As time goes on, most parents say they are pleased and relieved by how well their children are doing. Children learn to wear their hearing aids, use lip-reading to supplement their hearing, pay attention to non-oral cues for what is going on, otherwise find ways to communicate well with others. Parents find they have a wonderful child who just happens to be hard of hearing.

“I see just as bright a future for my child who is hard of hearing as I do my other kids.”