



HANDS &  
VOICES™

PO Box 3093

Boulder CO 80307

(303) 492-6283

We are Community  
We are Family  
We are Strong

March 16, 2020

**Dear H&V Chapters, family-based organizations, parents, friends and colleagues of Hands & Voices.**

As the Executive Director of Hands & Voices Headquarters(HQ)... and as a mom, wife, daughter, community, national and global citizen, I am writing to you today in the midst of the unfolding of the daily impact of the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) in all of our lives at every level.

I wanted to take a moment to share our hearts with you from Hands & Voices. I think of the three statements at the top of this letter, and that was what first came to me in context to what unites us all together in the community we call Hands & Voices.

I want to assure you that at H&V HQ, our staff and board are continuing to work and support our Chapters and Programs, including our Family Leadership in Language and Learning Family-Based Organizations (FBO) and stakeholders, throughout this turbulent time.

I am so grateful to see that many of you are already reaching out, continuing support to the families we serve, in creative and safe ways during this time. Keep it up! Our families need you now more than ever. We are also here for one another. At H&V HQ, we are building some resources and supports that you will be able to contribute to, access, and to share with others as we move forward. Emotional support, Educational Advocacy, information and resources that can help our families should and will continue through this period. Support and sharing of ideas and the 'wisdom among us' for one another will be highlighted through our website and other social media platforms. And yes, we will continue to honor and share the spirit of *Fostering Joy* among us!

In the coming days look for more information and links to resources we are gathering. For now, if you are a family that needs support, you can find local resources here:

H&V Chapters: <https://handsandvoices.org/chapters/starts.htm>

and here:





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FL3 Family-Based Organizations: <https://handsandvoices.org/fl3/topics/fam-fam-support/need-support.html>

I want to share a thought from one of our H&V Leadership-to-Leadership graduates and H&V Chapter Leader from Kentucky, Sarah Roof who has this to say...

*As H&V leaders, we are in a unique situation - life in the outside world seems to have come to a screeching halt, but our families still need support. The support may look different, but as Chapters, let's be creative in how we deliver that. Are we providing resources on our social media pages or through email? Do we set up a Zoom or conference call for a parent chat? We should each be asking what we can do to continue to provide quality, unbiased support to our families in these uncertain times. At the same time, we need to be checking in with ourselves, being cognizant to make sure we are receiving the support we need so we can extend it to others. Reach out to other Chapter leaders for ideas!*

*Let's also take a deep breath and extend some flexibility and grace - to ourselves, to each other, to our staffs and our families. Everyone is dealing with this differently. As parent leaders of children who are D/HH, we are used to curveballs. Let's take this one and "hit it out of the park" for our families as we continue to lead and serve. -Sarah*

Finally, I want to share this thought from one of our H&V HQ staff, Stephanie Olson.

*"I recently read that neuroscience is able to show that when looking at brain scans, it is neurologically impossible for our brain to hold gratitude and fear at the same time. We at Hands & Voices are choosing gratitude over fear. We continue to feel grateful for all of you and the work that you do for your families and community. We feel a deep sense of gratitude for the children that continue to remind of us of the "why" behind Hands & Voices. If fear or feeling overwhelmed starts to take over your mind try finding something that you are grateful for. If you need help (and that is okay) reach out to one another- chances are someone at Hands & Voices is thinking how grateful they are for you." - Stephanie*

Stand Strong H&V Community, we will get through this together!

Sincerely,

Janet DesGeorges  
Executive Director, Hands & Voices Headquarters  
[janet@handsandvoices.org](mailto:janet@handsandvoices.org)

