

Hands & Voices Headquarters

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Advisory Council

This Hands & Voices document outlines information for establishing and maintaining a **Deaf/Hard of Hearing Advisory Council (DHH)**. This group will increase the internal (organizational service delivery) and external (direct support to families) effectiveness of Headquarters (HQ) and Chapters in serving all families, including DHH parents of DHH children, and infusing DHH lived perspectives into the organization.

Background

Research has shown the immense benefits parents gain when they have an opportunity to interact with and learn from DHH Leaders who have lived experience to share. There is also significant value in fully engaging and including DHH Leaders in the systems that serve DHH children and families. At Hands & Voices HQ, DHH infusion has been a priority for over two decades. The creation of a Coordinator of DHH Infusion role was a pivotal step. While this role is essential within the leadership team at Hands & Voices HQ, we recognize that one role cannot represent the significant diversity of lived experience within the DHH community, which is rich with ideas, wisdom, and experience. Additionally, with more and more chapters opting to implement a DHH Guide By Your Side (GBYS) program, and to infuse DHH Leaders on their boards and committees, it is more important than ever for the organization to seek out the support and guidance of the DHH community. The H&V DHH Advisory Council expands the opportunity for DHH Leadership within the organization. This will also serve to increase deaf and hearing cross-cultural awareness.

Purpose

The purpose of the **H&V DHH Advisory Council** is to bring together DHH Leaders with a rich diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds, varying types and degrees of hearing status, communication mode and language, age of onset, educational and family background, to advise on HQ and Chapter specific needs, and to increase partnerships at the national level between parents of DHH children and the DHH community.

I. The role of the Advisory Council

1. To provide leadership to H&V HQ to ensure Hands & Voices (at the HQ and Chapter level) develops policies, structures, and practices that value and support the goal of active participation in all levels of our organization by DHH individuals.

2. To act as a valuable resource to families with deaf and hard of hearing children, enabling them to interact with peers and adults who embrace the Hands & Voices philosophy of non-biased support.
3. To provide support to H&V Chapters who are working with hearing and DHH parents of children who are DHH through local H&V Chapters, including the GBYS and ASTra programs.

II. General Qualifications of Advisory Council Members:

1. Complete an application to request participation in the Advisory Council.
2. Council members must identify as DHH.
3. Council members must be affiliated with a Hands & Voices Chapter in some capacity unless otherwise determined by the DHH Infusion Coordinator(s) or Executive Director.
4. Council members may be a DHH Leader, DHH parent of a DHH child/children, and/or a DHH professional in the EHDI system (audiologist, Teacher of the Deaf, pediatrician, SLP, etc).

III. Composition of the Advisory Council

1. Council will include DHH Leaders with a mix of native languages and communication modes, varying types and degrees of hearing status, age of onset, educational and family background, communication mode and language preferences and including DHH individuals who are DHH Plus, reflecting the diversity of the DHH community.
2. At least 10% of members must be DHH Parents of DHH children.
3. Council members will be selected with consideration to include leadership opportunities for underrepresented populations in the EHDI system: DHH parents of DHH children, BIPOC DHH Leaders, Fathers of DHH Children, LGBTQ DHH Leaders, etc.
4. Council will be diverse geographically.

IV. Responsibilities, Roles and Commitment of an Advisory Council Member

1. Proactively contribute ideas and recommendations about the needs of parents, including DHH parents to improve and enhance resources and services for families.
2. Provide input to the H&V HQ efforts to develop policies, structures, and practices that support cultural and linguistic perspective.
3. Attend monthly meetings to provide input to DHH relevant activities, culture and discuss DHH-related concerns and issues, ideas for improvement of resources and services being provided. (approximately 1 hour per month)
4. Act as liaisons to the DHH Communities they are a part of to provide and receive input as representatives of the council.
5. Attend one, in-person, annual meeting at the annual Leadership Conference (as funding allows) (approximately 1-2 hour commitment)
6. Contribute to targeted requests for input via email, social media, and/or in-person, as requested in a timely manner. (approximately 12-18 hours per year)
7. Participate in H&V basic training for Advisory Council members. (i.e. Supporting Families without Bias, We are Hands & Voices, Introduction to H&V Programs)

V. Advisory Council Member Core Principles

The Advisory Council Members shall:

1. Understand, dialogue about, and have respect for the H&V Mission, Vision and philosophy (available on the Hands & Voices HQ website).
2. Share insights and information about their experiences to enlighten others.
3. See beyond their own individual experiences and strive to represent the needs of other traditions within the DHH culture/community.
4. Respect and understand families with other communication modes, special needs, medical and cultural viewpoints.
5. Communicate comfortably in a respectful manner while having an open mind within a group with candor.
6. Possess the elements of collaboration:
 1. mutual respect for skills and knowledge
 2. honest and clear communication
 3. understanding and empathy
 4. mutually agreed upon goals

5. shared planning and decision making
6. open and two-way sharing of information
7. accessibility and responsiveness
8. joint evaluation of progress
9. understand the dangers of labeling and blaming

VI. Advisory Council Rules

Hands & Voices HQ will govern the DHH Advisory Council by the following rules:

1. **Term:** No term limits for Advisory Council members, assuming they actively contribute to the group/attend meetings.
2. **Resignation:** A committee member may resign at any time, preferably by delivering or sending (via mail) a written letter of resignation to the H&V HQ DHH Infusion Coordinator(s) and/or H&V Executive Director. Such resignation shall be effective upon receipt (unless specified to be effective at some other time) and acceptance thereof shall not be necessary to make it effective unless it so states.
3. **Removal:** Committee members may be removed at the discretion of H&V HQ DHH Infusion Coordinator(s) and/or Executive Director.
4. **Number of Members:** The committee shall have no more than 11 members.

VII. Decision Making

The **H&V HQ Advisory Council** advises and assists H&V HQ in matters relating to service provision to parents and leaders who identify as DHH, as well as provide lived perspectives on issues, policies and procedures within the organization. Input received from the committee members is documented and reviewed by the H&V HQ DHH Infusion Coordinator(s) and/or Executive Director. Implementation of input within daily operations is at the discretion of H&V HQ. The H&V HQ Executive Director and HQ retain decision making responsibilities for Hands & Voices programs and services.