**The following is a transcript of a virtual presentation focusing on The Virginia Communication Plan for a Student Who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing that took place on March 31, 2021 in Virginia. The transcript was provided to Virginia Hands & Voices by Virginia Relay. Call moderator was Terese Urban and co-facilitator was Gianina Thornton, board members of Virginia Hands & Voices. The presenter was Wanda Council, Education Specialist for Sensory Disabilities with the Virginia Department of Education.**

>> TERI URBAN: Hello, everyone. Good afternoon. Welcome. Just give us a few minutes here while we let everyone in the waiting room. My name is Teri Urban. Thank you for joining us today. It is a lovely sunny, warm day in the Richmond area. We'll just give it another couple seconds while everyone gets let in. >> Just saying hello from the Washington, D.C. area, northern Virginia. >> TERI URBAN: Wonderful. Hello. >> Hi. I'll mute again. >> TERI URBAN: That's great. This is Teri. If everyone can be sure to turn off their videos and turn off the cameras, turn off the microphones. That way we have limited visual distractions on the screen. Perfect. Thank you, everyone. All right. Let's go ahead and get started. Good afternoon again. My name is Teri Urban. Welcome to our virtual presentation regarding the Virginia communication plan for students who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing that is presented by Ms. Wanda Council, education specialist with the Virginia Department of Education. We've got our videos turned off. That's great. With evidence our microphones muted, even better. Everyone should see the captions automatically inplayed at the bottom of the screen. This is exciting for us. Usually our captioners with Hamilton rely a are captioning to a separate box and we were able to trouble shoot and get it directly in Zoom. We have our captioner Karen with Virginia Relay and we have Lauren our ASL interpreter who is from us from civic access today. Thank you everyone for joining us. We have my cohost, Gina Thornton who is also a parent of two Deaf children. She is going to be co-facilitating the presentation with me today. Let me take a minute and introduce myself. Like I said I'm Teri Urban, the chair of Virginia hands and voices. I'm the parent of three children. My oldest is ten years old and Deaf. We live in central Virginia. For those who aren't very familiar with our organization, welcome. We see a lot of, or we saw a lot of familiar names popping through on the registration list. We also see many new names that we haven't recognized before. We want to welcome you to the hands & voices family. If you are not familiar, hands & voices are a nonprofit 501(c)(3) parent-driven organization dedicated to supporting children who are deaf and hard of hearing without bias towards communication choices or methodologies. Really what makes us unique, we are unbiased about communication choices and do believe that a choice that a family makes is the right choice. Our membership and supporters are comprised of children and adults, parents and professionals, all over the state of Virginia who use their hands, their voices or both to communicate. So before I turn this over to Gina to go over some Zoom rules and tips, again I would like to thank everyone for taking the time this afternoon to be here with us. I especially would like to thank Ms. Council for sharing her knowledge with us this afternoon. I had the pleasure of getting to know Juan do over the past couple of years since moving to Virginia. She has been very supportive of our mission here at hands & voices. This presentation is a perfect example of how she supported us. We are pleased to have so many professionals joining us today to learn more about this important tool. We acknowledge this virtual world that we are living in has many challenges. We appreciate you being here today and being present. During the registration process we had asked what your role is working with children. I just don't want to rattle on through the list but we have teachers of the deaf, speech and language pathologists, audiologists, directors, specialists, administrators, teachers, interpreters, social workers, principals, assistant principals, graduate students and of course parents joining us today. So thank you. Interestingly, less than 30 percent of those who registered have utilized the Virginia communication plan in the past. So we also received a great list of questions. And Ms. Council built a few of those into her presentation. We will open up the presentation afterwards for the Q&A portion. Make sure you stick around. My role is complete. I am so happy. I'm going to turn my video off and turn this over to Gina who then will turn it over to Wanda and again we are happy to have you here. Thank you very much. Gina, you're muted. This is Teri. >> GIANINA THORNTON: Unmute. Okay. Thank you, Teri. May name is Gina. Like Teri said I'm parent of two children who are deaf, ages almost three and four years old. We are so happy today to have this packed house for this presentation. I just want to take a few seconds here to go over the Zoom setup for today just to make sure it runs smooth for everyone. There are so many people on this call. Just because there are so many people on the call we want to make sure that everybody's mic is muted and that their video is off. That is just to make sure that we are cutting back on all the visual distractions. If you take a second and look in the right-hand corner you'll see a view button. If you click on that button you can change your view from speaker to gallery. I have spotlighted the interpreter for today. I will also be spotlighting Wanda when her presentation starts. She will be running a Power Point presentation. So the Power Point will show up on the screen and I just wanted to mention that the interpreter and Wanda will be showing up on the right-hand side. You can move your, scroll the Power Point recitation over if you need the interpreter and Wanda to be larger. You can have control of that. You are only affecting your own view. You won't be changing the view for anybody else. Gosh, okay. Let's see what else. If you have questions during the presentation, we are going to be using the chat box. So that we can keep cameras off and mics mute. Go ahead and type your question into the chat box. If you have a question specifically about something that Wanda is going over in the moment, type it into the chat and she will do her best to answer the question before moving on. We also will have time at the end for questions. We will have a specific time to type questions into the chat at the end. Let's see what else. We will also have a short evaluation that we are going to send out after the presentation. We will be greatly appreciate your feedback on the session. So look for that in your email. And now, it is my pleasure to introduce our speaker Ms. Wanda Council. I'm going to mute myself and turn off my video. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Okay. Thank you, Gina. And thank you, Teri for that wonderful introduction. I am so excited to be here with you this afternoon. Teri and Gina and I have been communicating with one another for a while about this topic. I'm so delighted that I was invited to come and share some information with you that will hopefully give you some additional information, another tool that you can put in your toolbox. I would like to thank Virginia hands & voices. Overall, just for all of the support that has been provided in many different ways for children, for professionals, in Virginia. Serving the Commonwealth very well and I'm happy on behalf of the Department of Education to be able to collaborate with them. Just to give you a little bit of additional background in terms of myself, I have recognized many of your names as I've looked over the registration list. I'm very delighted to see some names from those of you who I have known over the years and hopefully after today and meeting some more of you we will cross paths again perhaps when we return to a more normal world and start doing more activities face-to-face. I am an education specialist with the Virginia Department of Education as Teri mentioned. I have been with DOE for seven and a half years ago in my position. I'm the specialist primarily assigned to represent students across the Commonwealth who have sensory disabilities. In addition to students who are deaf and hard of hearing, I work and collaborate with other professionals and organizations for students with deaf-blindness, students who are blind and visually impaired. Prior to my arrival at DOE7 and a half years ago I was working in Newport news public schools with special education, I was with York county before that as an instruction am specialist and speech and language pathologist. I'm again happy to know I'm happy to reconnect with some of you I've known over the years. What we will be doing this afternoon, what I have prepared and been asked by Teri and hands and voices is to provide an overview of the Virginia communication plan for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing. As Teri mentioned in your responses during registration there seemed to be less than, I think, 30 percent who indicated that they were familiar with it. So hopefully after today you will be more familiar with it and that you will find it as a useful tool that you can continue with. I am going to share my screen for the Power Point presentation this afternoon. And hopefully that, what you should be seeing now is the Power Point. Tracey or Gianina, please let me know if it is not showing up as I expected it to be. >> TERI URBAN: It looks great. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Awesome. Okay. So I need to -- give me just a moment here. Let this catch up with me. I need to advance my slides. There we go. For the overview I'm going to talk with you in terms of the Virginia communication plan. We will start by going over the background and purpose of having such a plan available for school division IEP teams to use. Then we will have an opportunity to look at what might actually be involved in developing a plan for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing. Also we will have a chance to look at some guidance documents, some additional resources that we have in Virginia that can help support you in your use of the plan. As Teri mentioned, we will have some Q&A opportunity for some questions and hopefully some answers at the end. To start with the background and purpose, those of you who have been working in the public schools for a while are probably familiar with obviously the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 and also our state regulations that we have in Virginia governing special education for children with disabilities in Virginia. Both of these pieces that are here are not new when it comes to. (Captioner having choppy audio.) IEP for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. IDEA 2004 included language in addition to our regulations in which mirror IDEA. For children who are deaf an hard of hearing. Here is the actual language. IDEA or under IDEA and also Virginia regulations, this citation here, this code right here refers to the Virginia regulations. This refers to IDEA. And so the language is specific to what IEP teams. (Captioner having difficulty with choppy audio.) Something that is different than you have for other students. A child who is deaf or hard of hearing consider. It references the. (Captioner going to disconnect and reconnect Internet.) >> WANDA COUNCIL: Consider whether the child requires assistive technology and services. In these mandates. One is state. For students who are deaf or hard of hearing. So you don't have to, you can respond in the chat if you would like, but just think about that for a minute. Based on that legislation, does it mandate the T and use of a communication plan? The answer is no. The federal and state regulations don't mandate that we use a specified plan, a communication plan or special document. But what the federal and state regulations do mandate is that they mandate the consideration of those special factors as part of the IEP development. And review process. So that was one of the questions that has been asked. It is actually something that has been asked of me, you know, in terms of inquiries that come to me through email or through a phone call is whether or not a school division has to have an actual plan. So it again, because it is not in our regulations, it is not mandated in the regulations in Virginia, it is not mandated in IDEA, school divisions are not required to use any version of a specific communication plan. But again, those special factors, considerations, have to be followed, we have to follow the need for that in the IEP development in review. So Virginia school divisions may include the Virginia communication plan in their local policies, their practices and procedures. Even though it is not mandated there are some school divisions even in Virginia that may require it. It may not, you know, it could be something that is just practiced. It may be something that is actually in a policy or procedure for their special education programs and services. So that is really up to the localities in Virginia. Over however, just so you know, there are some states that actually have a specified communication plan type document that is, that they do mandate that are used, is used consistently across the whole state within school divisions. So moving on from that, let's talk about the plan itself. A communication plan and perhaps thinking about developing a plan for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing. So what is it? The Virginia communication plan. You've heard of it. Those of you who have been working in the field for quite some time probably recognize that this has been around for a while. This is not something that is brand new. Why are we making a big deal of it right now? It is because it was updated. We did some revisions to it and kind of brought it back to life. Well, not brought it back to life. It was still in existence but we did some revisions and it has been posted to the VDOE website since 2019. The interest in it is because as more people are becoming more aware of it and wanting to utilize it, that's why we have more interest in it at this time. It is intended to be a tool. The communication plan that we have is a tool. It is a document that was developed to assist IEP teams with a more systematic process for gathering and examining student information, in order to consider the student's language, their communication, and their academic needs and for considering the student's assistive technology needs. Those are things that are mandated by the regulations. So the document that we developed in Virginia that we are discussing this afternoon is designed to just be something that school division IEP teams can use to assist with that process. I am guessing that in any school division with any IEP, those components are covered in the development of the IEP overall. What the communication plan document can do is just add more structure to the whole process and hopefully alleviate some of the concerns about what the decisions are and how they are made that are focused on students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Now, our Virginia communication plan posted at the VDOE website can be used exactly as it is. It is a fillable form document that is on our website. You can enter data into it. It can also be modified. If a school division were to use the document and decide that they wanted to change the formatting or change the order of the items on it, you can certainly do that. I would just strongly suggest that if you are going to use the tool and make modifications to it, identify it, make it the Jefferson County public schools communication plan for a student who is deaf and hard of hearing. Consider the fact that even within a school division that maybe the team is utilizing it consistently, there may be modifications that need to be made because of the individualized needs of a student. You know, no two deaf and hard of hearing students are exactly alike. So you have to consider the needs of the student and make sure that the document is going to work for you the way that you need it to. In considering the student's individualized needs, you want to focus on making sure that there is an opportunity for the student to have effective communication. Not just based on what is convenient or what someone might, what might be preferred but what is going to be effective for that student. Ensuring that that mode of communication, the language and the mode of communication allow the student to have access to the general curriculum, regardless of what setting they are in, what their placement might be within the school division or within a school setting, that they have access to the general curriculum. That they are able to receive and access their specially designed instruction that is in their IEP and take we also take into consideration students that may have additional disabilities. Some students such as students with deaf-blindness have the vision loss in addition to being deaf or hard of hearing. So you have to take into account there may be additional disabilities. There could be other medical needs or other types of disabilities that you have to take into account as well. So when we are looking at the components of the plan, the Virginia communication plan, there are five primary areas that it entails. The language and communication modalities, amplification and accommodations, opportunities for direct communication. The student's academic level and what is considered the full range of needs. Meaning any other factors that might impact the student that may impact communication. All of those items need to be considered in the plan. And again, think in terms of these are, this is guidance. This is to provide systematic way to consider everything that is mandated in the regulations and to make sure that in that consideration there is meaningful discussion. There is meaningful thought behind it. And that it is not just a decision being made and coming to an IEP meeting and everything is already decided. But that there is that opportunity to consider all of the different factors, special factors that are required under the regulations. IEP team can utilize the Virginia communication plan within that IEP framework. So the development and review process that exists for any IEP. The communication plan can be used within that framework. It is not intended to be used outside of the IEP process. What has been developed is to be a tool to help with that process. So as far as the local policies and procedures that a school division might have for scheduling an IEP meeting, conducting an IEP meeting, notifying the parents, inviting them to the meeting, who needs to be at the meeting, when you are discussing the communication plan as part of that process you would follow those same procedures. So the communication plan can be used to review current data that is a very important part in terms of developing the plan is that you have current data. You can certainly review information and you would want to be aware of information that already exists, evaluations that have already been conducted. Information that is already, reports that are already in the student's educational record. However, you also have to consider that you are making decisions and you are going to have discussions about a student as of that date and time. So you want to make sure that the information that you are going to refer to reflects where that student is in terms of their communication and their language. So if the information that you have in the student's educational record is, say, three years old. You know, it has been since the last Triennial assessment and there is no updated information and if there is limited observational data, limited data collection, that you would be able to draw upon, that might be a point that needs to be discussed to consider what information you might need in order to make sure that you are going to be able to consider valid data. You need to consider the strengths of the student and document the information in the IEP. The information gathered through going through this process can be used in the present level of academic achievement and functional performance in the special factors considerations section that is on most IEPs. And in the prior written notice. That is meaning that once you have made decisions, you have had your discussions, you made decisions, that the parents are given, are provided the prior written notice regarding the considerations. Especially if there is anything that has been recommended by the IEP team or proposed, that the parent or if the parents are requesting something that is different or not in agreement, you want to make sure that you have an opportunity that following those discussions that you can document in the prior written notice. The communication plan allows you to plan supports that would be needed for the student, with the implementation of services also allowing for you to be able to review and monitor the student's progress. So knowing that this goes through the IEP process, you certainly have to consider input from the educational team. And that includes general and special ed teachers and with students who are deaf or hard of hearing you want to make sure that the teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing is a participant. Often times they may serve as case manager or have some other responsibility for pulling the meeting together, completing the documents for the IEP and basically taking those steps. So your teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing, your related service providers, speech language pathologists, interpreters, queued, transliterators, audiologists, there could be others. School counselor and other individuals who have been involved with the student, who would be able to contribute to the discussions, consider them in terms of participating. It may be that if they are not able to be an actual participant that day for the meeting, for your discussion with your IEP meeting, you can at least gather information from them prior to the meeting. Definitely the parents. Parents are participants as part of that educational team. In terms of the student. Paraprofessionals, interveners, for students who have deaf-blindness. The student themselves as we encourage students participating in the IEP process for something such as a communication plan. When we are talking about what is effective for a student, if that student -- if it's appropriate based on the student's age and their interest level and the parent's interest in having them present. You would want to make sure that you can ats least have them present to participate or have gathered information from them perhaps prior to the meeting. Certainlily administrators. Some administrators may only know the student in terms of being a part of the IEP process. But certainly in a school the principal, assistant principal, special ed, leads, other members of the administrative team may actually have interactions with the students. You can certainly determine which administrators might need to or you might ask to be in on a meeting if they have input in terms of developing the communication plan for the student. So we've talked a bit about consideration, having meaningful discussion prior to making decisions. And then the other term that I wanted to focus on is direct. Consider opportunities for direct instruction and communication in the student's language and communication mode. So that terminology "direct" basically means that the student is able to communicate in their mode, whatever their language and mode is that they have, has been determined that they will be utilizing that they can use that directly with their peers, with other adults, and across multiple settings within the school environment. So within general ed, small group individual resource, extracurricular activities, considering that the student's communication mode and the language that is used might be the same in all of those, but there may be differences. The student may have more than one preference. They may utilize different things in different settings. And with peers and adults. We cannot guarantee who the students are going to be in a school in terms of the student population. Whether or not we will have ten students who are deaf and hard of hearing in classrooms and elementary school, or whether there will be two, one a kindergartener and one a fifth grader. It can be challenging but we have to make sure we are considering, at least giving some careful thought and discussion as to ways to allow for some type of opportunity and interaction tore that student with other students and adults through their communication mode and with the language that has been chosen. We also have to consider the student's assistive technology needs. Whether it is a personal device, hearing aids, cochlear implants, or something that has been issued through the school. Again it could be hearing aids, could be an FM system. You have to consider what the needs are for the student in utilizing it, monitoring and making sure that the device is working, functioning adequately for the student each and every day and that monitoring can sometimes require multiple times, multiple checks either by the student themself or with an adult assigned to make sure that they can trouble shoot if there are any problems. And training for the student or school personnel and the parents if needed in understanding how to use the student's assistive technology. This could also mean a student who may use a laptop or some other type device if they have to access captioning services. And making sure that they know how to utilize it and access the technology. So I'm going to move on to talk about some of the guidance, resources and some resources that we have across Virginia that may be helpful for you in accessing information. I am going to come back to the communication plan in just a minute. We are going to take a quick look at that. But I would like to mention our guidance document, the guidelines for working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing in Virginia public schools, and appendix G is where you will actually find the communication plan is in that document. Also within the body of the document itself there are, of the guidance document, there is some more information that references the Virginia communication plan. You will receive, I believe that Teri, hands & voices is going to post the Power Point after the presentation today. So these are all hyperlinked. It will take you to the actual document if you would like to access them. The other one is the optimizing outcomes for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, educational service guidelines, third edition. This is a document thats was updated. It has been updated multiple times since 2006. The latest shall 2018. The national directors of state special education, they referenced this communication plan. Not the Virginia communication plan, but they do reference the communication plan itself. Also through the Virginia iep system and the sample IEP that we have posted on the DOE website that the Virginia system has taken and used that for the system itself. There is actually reference in the special factors consideration section of that document that references the Virginia communication plan being used, that it is available and can be used by school teams for that special consideration that is something that should occur, the special carlings should occur early in the IEP meeting. That drives other components such as writing goals and objectives and discussing some of the other services. The technical assistance center for children who are deaf and hard of hearing at the partnership for, VCU and VNOC. It is Tim similar to TTAC. Tracey Yurechko is the director. A week ago through Tracey's work in collaboration with some teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing in Virginia, they have actually been able to start, initiate some social groups, some virtual social groups. This is another one of those great things that has come out of our COVID-19 situation. But virtual social groups that will actually or have actually allowed students from school divisions, not will all within the sale school division but students from several school divisions being able to come together and to have some social time virtually under the guidance of Tracey Yurechko and teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, to have discussions on specific topics that are appropriate for their grade level group. So an elementary group, middle school group, high school group. This is something that just kicked off about a week ago. It is my understanding that the planning is going forward. We have a pilot going right now to see what the interest is and how we can get more students connected. This is a wonderful, wonderful opportunity even though it is getting started. Tracey is more than welcome if anyone else is interested in becoming part of that, any other teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, there is a process that we have to go through, that Tracey set up with the teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing to make sure that any type of communication and connecting students this way has approval of the parents. Also of a school administrator. If there are any concerns about exchanging information or confidentiality, that all of those needs are addressed before anything actually happens. So feel free to reach out to Tracey. We are excited about this. We are looking forward to this expanding and growing and being another resource that we have for connecting students who are deaf and hard of hearing in Virginia. The Virginia school for the deaf and the blind, of course, is a school in Staunton, Virginia. The students there who are deaf and hard of hearing use a variety of communication modalities and their language choices, VSDB is able to accommodate students with different options for their communications. And one of the nice things in terms of VSDB's campus, the students who attend as day students or residential students, is that it extends beyond the school day. The social activities that might have occurred after school also allow the students to have that social interaction, direct communication with other students, direct communication in their preferred mode with adults. And the school personnel, their outreach services program over the years has offered some other opportunities in the community for families to come together with children. So this is an area that we continue to strive to be creative in and thinking of how we can connect families and students to be Abe to be together and to also be able to interact with other adults who are deaf and hard of hearing. The Virginia project for children and young adults with deaf-blindness offers support to school divisions in terms of students who are dual sensory impaired. So Ira Padhye, the project director, should you have any questions, reach out to Ira and she can assist with providing information. She and her team can assist with providing information and resources for any of your students in terms of developing a communication plan around their, them being deaf and hard of hearing. Ira and her team can certainly assist with that. The Virginia Department for the deaf and hard of hearing is a state agency that we collaborate with in terms of the professional -- sorry, our evaluations forth educational interpreters, the process that interpreters go through in terms of the VQAS or the EIPA, to make sure that we have qualified staff in those roles within the schools. So you can certainly reach out to VDDHH. Of course, as a state agency they offer other services as well for the deaf community. And Eric RFA is the director. And the Virginia haled loan bank. You may or may into no in Virginia we have an actual loan bank for hearing aids. There are some FM systems that can be loaned to families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing whose school divisions in those situations where it may be that the student's hearing aid, you are waiting to get new hearing aids. It may take some time to get all of that processed. The family might be waiting to get it processed through their insurance to purchase the hearing aids. The hearing aid loan bank can provide loaner hearing aids. It involves coordination through an audiologist's office but it allows for about a six month period to be able to loan hearing aids for a student. Also FM systems that a student may use in a school. If the school is considering whether or not a student needs a F.M. system, through the loan bank they may be able to obtain a loaner device that you can use on a trim basis, collect data and determine whether or not it is something to be purchased for the student. The accessible instructional materials center in VA offers materials for students, even those who are deaf hard of hearing. If they kneeled captioningses, if they need text and documents in a form that need to be downloaded and provided in an accessible trial. The accessible instructional materials center can assist through that. The Virginia accessal interpreter regional professional development program that provides professional trfls, mentoring Virginia interpreters to ensure that those interpreters, those individuals meet the qualifications that are in our place for interpreters working with the deaf and hard of hearing. I am going to circle back and I am going to pause and pray ... the Virginia communication plan will open. It looks like it is cooperating. Let's see what happens here. (Pause.) >> WANDA COUNCIL: Let me do this. I'm going to do it differently. I'm going to stop sharing and go back in and see if I can pull that up. (Pause.) >> WANDA COUNCIL: I hope that you are seeing the Virginia communication plan. Teri, let me know if it is not. >> TERI URBAN: Wanda, we can see it. >> WANDA COUNCIL: The Virginia communication plan for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, revised settlement 2019. Quickly, the sections in the document as I've mentioned, it is in accessible form. We had to make it accessible, to put it on the website we had to make it accessible. It created some challenges in some of the formatting but we think it is a user friendly document. The language and communication modalities is where we have that ... (Audio breaking up for the captioner.) >> WANDA COUNCIL: Or describe what the communication skills is. This is not carved in stone. And certainly if this doesn't work for you or for your team, you can certainly look for it differently. The second page of that is an actual section where you can look at the student communication ... to utilize and consider the individual student, how they yule lies a certain mode of communication. You don't have to go through and have a full discussion about each and every one of these unless there has not been a preference selected. If the family or the student have not already selected what form of communication they want to use and this is the first time. I think of those situations where you may have a very, very young student. You may have a preschooler, a two-year-old who it is their first iep. They are just coming to an early childhood early education program, there may be discussions with them and the family versus a student who is a senior in high school who has been rocking and rolling and using ASL since they were in kindergarten. But the consideration and how the document is filled out is based on the needs of the student. You look at academic language, both receptively and expressively. Social language, receptively, expressively. And the home language receptively and expressively. Before the IEP might would probably be helpful for the family, the for the parents to know that you are going to be reviewing this document and certainly give them a chance to look over it so that they can be prepared to contribute and be a participant in the discussions. Other team members can certainly review the document and indicate where they might determine that the student is in terms of their skill levels for whatever mode of communication they are currently using or you anticipate that they might be using. When you come to the meeting you have your consideration, your discussion more in depth. You review data. You have discussions about the data. And try to reach consensus about what all of that means. There may be differences between what is seen academically and socially in school versus what is being seen at home. That could happen. We also have to consider two different environments. The need for the language, the need for that mode of communication could vary. But this is a tool again. This is a tool. You can use it to help support that process. There is areas that allow you to summarize the student's general language skills. Talking about the language used in the home, the mode of will will communication, how effective it is for the student with the family and caregivers. How effective it is with the student and their peers. And if not, what is interfering with that? There is the amplification section. Again looking at the different types of assistive technology devices, supportive technologies for a students. Whether or not they use them at school consistently. Use them at home, whether they are consistent. Again to guide the team in understanding what the student's needs are. The hearing technology checks. Who is going to check? Who is going to make sure that the hearing aids are working? That the batteries have not died right after lunch time. Is it the student? Is it another staff member? What happens if the teacher or that staff member is out, whose responsibility is it? It allows opportunities for that. What is the student's level of independence in using that type of technology? Any assistive devices or service rs that the student might neerksd caption media, CART, visual alerts and alarms for safety in the school. Interpreting, transliteration. Does the student need an interpreter. Full-time? Do they need them in every class, every setting? There is always an "other's' to consider everything else. Is there a plan in place, hopefully there is, if someone is absent. If the interpreter is absent, how will communication occur for this student? Again these are things that you probably have had discussions about. This is a document where you can actually have that information recorded, use it to guide the development of the IEP, and make it a part of the student's record. If you leave as a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing or the student moves to another place in Virginia, having this information available will be very helpful for the team so that they will have it to start with when they review the student's IEP. Opportunities for direct communication. Now, please understand, opportunities for direct communication is not a guarantee that there is going to be another student in the student's classroom using the same language and mode for the student to communicate with on a regular basis. You know, maybe and may not. But there is a need for IEP teams and families to be creative and thinking about how that might on cur. What we are formalizing with the virtual social groups through the technical assistance center for deaf and hard of hearing is one of the opportunities that we are trying to create. Not to say it is the only one but something like that that could occur that would support that. How much time. How little time. It is individualized. These are IEP team decisions. Opportunities for communication with professional staff and other school personnel. Ensuring that the student can communicate directly with peers. And also with deaf and hard of hearing role models. Is there another person? Are there other adults in the school? Could be the interpreter, could be a paraprofessional that might be able to communicate in the same, obviously in the same mode of communication for the student. And any other support services that might be needed. The student's academic level is their language. Is the language and communication. Are there skills where they need to be, for this student to be able to access the grade level curriculum and make progress in that. What other supports might be needed in considering the full range of what the student might require. Here we indicated on the form that maybe a single person has been responsible for gathering information and recording the information for the team. And we've suggested that that person provide their name so that they could be identified if there is ever a chance to have to go back and ask someone questions or just to be able to make sure that we have, that you have that information in the student's record. That is a very quick review of the communication plan. Again, you can access this at the DOE website or again through the guidelines document that we have. So Teri, I am going to pause there. I have gone through the Power Point and I know that there were some questions sent ahead of time. I'm looking at our time. I know we wanted to make sure we were done within an hour. So I will just leave it up to you as to whether or not you want to look at the questions that might be in the chat or if you want me to go from the questions that were sent prior with the registration. >> TERI URBAN: Sure. Thank you. This is Teri. That was wonderful, Wanda. Thank you so much. I was getting a private message through the chat box that when you were presenting about the plan, you weren't, we weren't seeing the will page that you were talking about. It was stuck on the first page. But that's why I shared the link with everyone. I didn't stop you because it seemed like when you were scrolling through your presentation, that's when the audio was getting a little garbled. So I kind of made the executive decision so we could hear you clearly and see you clearly and then access the document on our own if we needed. That was wonderful. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Thank you. >> TERI URBAN: Absolutely. You did a great job. For those who did submit questions ahead of time, thank you very much. I think that Wanda did a wonderful job at addressing a few of those. There was a few and it was more of a common thread with parents. And that was kind of: What do you do when you get to an IEP meeting and the team's version is different than the parent's version? Or the parent input is not aligned with the staff input? That was kind of a common thread, mostly from the parents who are joining us today. Could you speak a little bit about that? >> WANDA COUNCIL: Absolutely. Thank you I'm happy, thank you for bringing that up. This happened, it even happens with other parts of IEPs with students with other disabilities. Sometimes there are different opinions about students' skills an strengths and needs and so forth. So my thought about that is that that might be an opportunity for the team to look at what is being discussed and what the differences are. You know, if there's a difference in thinking where are the student skills. You might think, one person might think they are proficient. Another person might think they are emerging and what the reasons are. That's a good opportunity to stop and look at gathering some data. Sometimes the data can be gathered through observations. Sometimes there may be an assessment that can be administered to gather more information that you can use to come back together and kind of compare and say, you know, look at that, to use that as a basis for maybe making a determines one way or another. If it is a matter of choice, you know, the parent, say the choice for the child might be to use ASL. The school team in trying to support the parent and the family in using ASL, if they are not seeing or collecting data to show take the student is making progress and that it is effective for the student. I know that sometimes that can present an issue. And again, it would be an opportunity to look at the information and try to understand what the reasons are for supporting it one way or another. And gathering data. Because you can always come back. You can gather data. You can try something. You can agree, the team can agree to try what is being recommended for a period of time. Gather data. Come back, let's look at it again. But it has to be based on information that has been gathered through some type of data, is what I would say is probably your best opportunity for being able to get everyone together. IEP meetings and IEP teams are supposed to reach consensus. It is not voting one way or another. It is reaching consensus. I think that is a good way to support that process. >> TERI URBAN: Great. To piggyback on that there was a private message that was just sent to me asking: Do parents get the Virginia communication plan ahead of time? Is it just a verbal conversation that happens between the teacher of the deaf and the parents? >> WANDA COUNCIL: Okay. It could happen in a variety of ways. I would suggest -- I know we have quite a few teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing and other professionals on. My suggestion is to follow what you would do when you develop an IEP. How do you get information from the parent in general in developing an IEP? Not just for the communication plan. If you are going to -- you know, we have to make sure that parental concerns are taken into consideration. So there may be a school, there may be a team, there may be a teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing who calls the parent and talks with the parent. It would be helpful for the parent to see the dowrntle have access, understand what is going to be discussed and gather information that way. So when you come to the meeting you have had part of that conversation. Or it could be that you, the parent might want to write some notes and bring it to the meeting. It could be done in a variety of ways. There is no one set way that you have to consider meeting the needs of the family. Whether the parents are going to be able to participate or they can't participate in the meeting, how you might be able to get that information. >> TERI URBAN: Wonderful. Before we wrap up, we have another question that someone noticed on the form much of the assistive technology is related to hearing. Has the team considered adding AAC tools on there? Augmentive communication tools? We have quite a few students using those. To be included, the comment says. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Certainly. Again this form will be updated again as we get feedback from people and continue to look at it and make sure it is a useful tool. There is space on the form where you can go and add any information. As I mentioned, the form can be modified in any way that is needed. Is there something that is not reflective or relevant for a student and you want to put something more about AAC, alternative augmentive communication devices, you can do that. It was intended to capture all of that. Thank you for bringing that up. >> TERI URBAN: Perfect. Well, this is Teri again. It is 5:00 o'clock. We are at the top of the hour. We don't want to keep anyone any longer on this beautiful days. We have the interpreter and captioners who have been working working with us. We will be creating a post evaluation survey and sending it out in the next couple days. Even an eye out for that. As Wanda mentioned and I put in the chat, this presentation is recorded. Wanda is more than willing to let us host it for the world to view. We will be putting it on the website along with the copy of the Power Point information which has her contact information in there. She mentioned all of the clickable links to all of those local resources. Looking ahead, we have two events on the books. If I can put a plug in for those very quickly. We have a virtual panel for fathers of deaf and hard of hearing children coming up. This is the first time we've done an event specifically for fathers. We wish it could be in person but it is virtual. It is April 13, 7:30 p.m. We have a virtual meet the author, Valerie James Abbott who is releasing a book. We are so excited about that. We are going to be hosting a virtual meet the author event at the end of May. All details and registration information can be found on the website, VA hands and voices.com. Again, a huge thank you to Wanda for agreeing to present to our audience on this very important topic. Thank you, Gianina for hosting with me. Thank you to Lauren, our interpreter and Karen our captioner. Thank you everyone for joining us and supporting Virginia hands and voices. Thank you and we hope to see you soon. (Chorus of thank you and goodbye.) (The webinar concluded.) (Captioner signing off.)