**The following is a transcript of the conference call presentation “IEP Accommodations for Deaf/Hard of Hearing Students” that took place on December 5, 2018 in Virginia. The transcript was provided to Virginia Hands & Voices by Virginia Relay. Call moderator was Terese Urban. Presenter was Wanda Council**

>> TERI: Hi everyone, this is Teri urban with Virginia Hands & Voices. If you can mute your phones while everyone calls in this morning. Thank you for joining us. We're expecting almost a hundred people to join us this morning. So let's give an opportunity for all of the dings to chime in. >> Karla Murphy. >> OPERATOR: The recording has started. >> TERI: Okay, hello, everyone. Let's go ahead and get started. It's ten o'clock. So this is Teri urban with Virginia Hands & Voices, and thank you so much for joining us this morning. Like I said, we've had almost a hundred people all over the state register for this call. This is amazing. So I'm a little happy it's a virtual call because if I was standing in front of a room right I know of everyone I might be a little nervous. So we ask that you mute your phones when you dial in, please. We know that everyone is very busy and we appreciate you taking the time out of your morning to spebld it with us. Let me just take a quick moment and introduce myself. As I said, my name is Teri urban, I'm the chair of Virginia Hands & Voices, and I'm also the parent of a deaf child who is 8 years old and in third grade. For those who aren't quite familiar with our organization, we recognize a lot of new names that are joining us today. Virginia Hands & Voices is a nonprofit parent driven organization dedicated to supporting children who are deaf and hard of hearing. We are unbiased about communication choices and believe that the choice a family makes is the right choice. So we are very excited to have everyone join us for our second virtual learning opportunity today, which is a focus on IEP accommodations for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. While I have this captive audience I wanted to take a quick moment and encourage everyone to submit or renew your 2019 Virginia Hands & Voices membership application. For those who aren't familiar with our membership application, it's $25 per year for families and deaf adults, $40 for professionals and $50 for organizations. Your membership application ensures that we can continue to do what we do, provide learning opportunities, social events, resources like this throughout the state that directly benefit our deaf and hard of hearing children. And a copy of our membership application can be found on our website, which is VA Hands & Voices.org. So before I turn this over to Wanda, a few house keeping rules. We ask that everyone please keep their phone on mute during the presentation. We know it can be difficult, but please try to save all of your questions for the end of our presentation today. We have allowed for 15 minutes at the end of the call. So you might want to have a pen handy and jot some questions down so you don't forget them, because we absolutely want to be able to get to all of them. We hope everyone by now has received the agenda that was e-mailed out yesterday. I know a few of you e-mailed us this morning, and hopefully I sent all that information to you if you needed it. We want to give a big thank you to the Virginia department for the deaf and hard of hearing and the Virginia relay program to ensure our deaf and hard of hearing participants can join via remote conference captioning available through Hamilton relay. That's may part. I hear people calling in but we're going to move ahead and go forward. So I would like to introduce to you Ms. Wanda Council. She is an education specialist with the Virginia Department of Education. You know we are so excited to have you join us this morning. I'll mute my phone and turn it over to you. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Thank you so much, Teri, and good morning, everyone. I am just so delighted to be able to present information , share information with you this morning. I would like to thank Teri and Virginia Hands & Voices for the opportunity to be with you today. >> Robin Holmesly. >> WANDA COUNCIL: I believe that you may have already received some. >> Resources Virginia. >> WANDA COUNCIL: -- information regarding my background as the person who will be presenting information to you this morning. I am currently in the position of being an education specialist with the Special Education and instructional services office at the Virginia Department of Education. And I just celebrated my fifth year anniversary with VDOE. It's gone by very quickly. I have met many of you I believe that are on the call today at various meetings and trainings and other events throughout that period of time. Prior to my current position at the Virginia Department of Education, I have been able to serve in leadership positions in public schools. I was previously with Newport News public schools as a special ed program supervisor. I also worked as an instructional specialist and a speech and language pathologist for York county. My bachelor's degree is and masters in speech pathology are from Old Dominion and I earned my degree from the George Washington University. Throughout my professional career I have been very fortunate to have worked directly with and also learned from children who are deaf or hard of hearing and their parents (music in background). Teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, interpreters, school based teams and colleagues across Virginia. So I'm again truly excited to have this opportunity to spend time with you this morning. >> TERI: Trying to get rid of. Thanks, Wanda, this is Teri. If everyone can make sure, I want to interrupt, if everyone can make sure their phones are on mute and not on hold. There's some background music playing, and that generally comes from if a phone is put on hold. If everyone can take a quick moment and make sure their phone is muted and not on hold. I'm not sure why. >> WANDA COUNCIL: There we go. Well, maybe not. >> TERI: Okay, let's see here. Again, this is Teri urban. If everyone can take a minute and unmute -- >> OPERATOR: Hi, who are you holding for? >> TERI: Mute their phones again. Okay, looks like we have solved it. Great, thank you. Sorry, Wanda. >> WANDA COUNCIL: That's okay. I am in a conference room in the department of education. Occasionally we have fire drills and other events that occur. Hopefully none of that will occur this morning while I'm meeting with you, and there won't be any other interruptions with regard to that. But today's presentation as I have been invited to speak with you this morning pertains to educational accommodations for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. So I will be primarily providing an overview of some of the educational accommodations that may be appropriate for students who are deaf and hard of hearing as they pertain to communication access or instruction, assessment and the utilization of assistive technology. Throughout the presentation, I will utilize the term deaf and hard of hearing to be inclusive of students who identify with hearing loss as their sole or primary disability, in addition to students with deaf blindness and students with additional disabilities. I may use the term students and children interchangeably. And the focus will be on students who have IEPs and who receive special education services in Virginia schools. As Teri mentioned, we will have time allotted at the end of the presentation for your questions as well. Just to look quickly at some statistical information regarding students in Virginia. In December of 2017, a year ago, the special education child count for Virginia reflected a total of 2,228 students between the ages of 2-22 who are identified under the categories of hearing impairment, including deafness, and who receive special education services. In addition to that, a total of 34 students were reported with deaf blindness as their primary disability. Prior to the December 2017 special education child count information, we also gathered some data in 2016 on the number of students who were actually being served in public schools. And at that time in 2016, approximately 94 percent of the students who are deaf and hard of hearing, ages 6-21, attended regular public schools in Virginia. The information I will be sharing with you and reviewing this morning comes from primarily three sources that I'd like to mention. I won't cite them throughout the presentation, but just wanted to be sure you had the information to refer to as needed. That is the regulations for programs for childrens with disability in Virginia. That is the department posted at the VDOE website that we commonly refer to as the Virginia special education regulations. I'll also refer to the guidelines for working with children who are deaf and hard of hearing in Virginia public schools for the Virginia deaf hard of hearing guidelines. These guidelines are also posted at our website. They are currently being updated and revised and will be posted later this school year when we have completed all of the updates and revisions. The third source of information is a guidance document called the optimizing outcomes for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, educational services guidelines third edition. This was just recently published by the National Association of State Directors of Special Education. That organization is referred to as Nasdy. Those are the primary sources of information I'll be sharing with you. In addition, there is guidance that was issued in November of 2014 from the U.S. Department of Education in the form of a dear colleague letter and frequently asked questions about students with hearing or special disability in public, elementary and secondary schools. Those are the sources I will be providing information from and referencing. There are multiple federal laws which directly impact students with disability, including students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Schools must comply with section 504 of the rehabilitation act of 1973, and we know that is commonly what we refer to as section 504. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act, or ADA, the individuals with disabilities act, IDEA, and the every student succeeds act, which is referred to as ESSA. With regard to students who are in public schools, section 504 and the ADA both prohibit, those laws prohibit schools from excluding, denying benefits to or otherwise discriminating against students with disabilities. In general, this means that schools must provide accommodations when appropriate to give children who are deaf or hard of hearing equitable opportunities to participate in and benefit from school programs. Now again, these laws and the regulations that I'm going to reference and be referring to apply to all students with disabilities but for the purposes of this presentation I'm focusing on students of course who are deaf and hard of hearing. IDEA, the individuals with disabilities act, which again is Virginia disabilities education section 504, require schools to ensure that identified children with disabilities receive a free appropriate public education, FATE is the acronym. And in Virginia, the law for providing FATE applies to identified children who are ages 2-21 inclusive. IDE at the federal level specifies children ages 3-21, but in Virginia we do include two-year-olds in the provision of special education and related services. IDEA specifies the provision of supports and services that are necessary for students to make progress in the general curriculum. ESSA, the Every Student Succeeds Act, which might be the one law that most of you may not be as familiar with, is a general law that applies to all students, not just students with disabilities. And under ESSA, states must develop rigorous academic standards. They must administer assessments that are aligned with those standards. And they must report the outcomes for student performance based on those assessments for specific subgroups, including students with disability. I would like to share with you this morning that Virginia, out of all the states, all the states during the 2017 school year, reported data for the requirements under ESSA, and Virginia out of all 50 states was ranked number one in meeting the requirements of ESSA based on the rigorous academic standards, our alignment of our assessments, and the outcomes that are reported for student performance. This is something that we are certainly very pleased about here at the Department of Education, but it is reflective of the hard work and the dedication that occurs in the schools, with professionals, with parents and families who work with students in order to achieve those outcomes. So as the work is being done, as the information is reported to the Department of Education and we report it to the federal government, we just want to acknowledge that and to thank everyone for those efforts. We are certainly pleased to be number one. With regard to accommodations for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, in 2016 approximately 68 percent of students who are deaf and hard of hearing in Virginia public schools spent at least 80 percent of their school day in general education classrooms. And in order to me requirements of section 504, IDEA and ESSA, it's obvious that with students that with, sorry, with 68 percent of students spending 80 percent or more of the school day in general in classrooms, the appropriate supports and services are necessary in order for students to make progress in the general curriculum. Now, the accommodations that would be appropriate for children who are being served in general education classrooms would also apply to students in other learning environments as well. Within the educational setting, accommodations and modifications may apply to instruction, assessment, and the educational environment. Just to differentiate, sometimes the terms accommodations and modifications are used interchangeably, but I'd like to clarify that accommodations are the types of supports that allow a student to have equitable access to information during instruction and assessment, whereas modifications are supports that actually change or alter the content of the instruction or the information that's being provided to the students. Accommodations and modifications that are provided as part of the instructional and testing assessment process should allow the student equal opportunity to access the curriculum and demonstrate achievement. Accommodations and modifications that are provided solely to enhance performance beyond providing equal access may inadvertently hinder a student's achievement and could decrease their level of independence. The thing that more is better is not necessarily appropriate when we think in terms of providing accommodations and modifications for students. The intent to have lots and lots and lots of supports in place may be necessary, and it has to be considered on an individual basis through an IEP team. Also could apply to students with 504 plans. But we have to consider that the accommodations and modifications that a student might require for access and accessing their learning, accessing the curriculum, we don't want to diminish the student's ability to be as independent as possible. And as students advance from going from preschool all the way up to high school and look at postsecondary education, parents and educators won't to be especially mindful of what that student will actually be required to do independently throughout their educational careers in the public schools and beyond that could also apply to them being able to pursue postsecondary education, other training opportunities, and certainly employment and independent living. Accommodations in general are intended to reduce or even eliminate the effects of a student's disability, but they should not reduce the learning expectations for the student. They should be consistent across classroom instruction, classroom assessment, local assessment and state assessment such as the Virginia SOL. Excuse me. The accommodations should not alter the validity, the score, interpretation, reliability or security of any assessment. The consistency should reflect the fact that if an accommodation is something that a student requires, that they would possibly require it in more than one environment. And when it comes to students participating in any type of assessment, the accommodations that might be provided for that assessment should be those accommodations that the student requires that they are utilizing for instructional purposes, and that they have had experience with prior to participating in any type of assessment or testing. Accommodations may be needed for instruction within the classroom but also for home work. They might be needed within the school environment, for instance, again, the classroom, but also we have to consider accommodations that might be appropriate and required in the lunchroom, in the hallway, resource room, on the playground, during field trips and assemblies, and extracurricular activities. Students with disabilities certainly, and students who are deaf or hard of hearing, certainly participate in sports, clubs, dances, they may attend plays, concerts and other events that are provided to students without disabilities. And in order for them to have access, those accommodations need to be considered for those settings as well. The accommodations that a student requires should be documented, or are required to be documented in the IEP, and they may reflect to areas such as time, scheduling, the setting, the presentation of information, and the student's response including the use of assistive technology and/or accessible materials. For students who are deaf or hard of hearing, accommodations that are essential for effective communication across, sorry, for effective communication access commonly include auxiliary aids, related services, visual and hearing technologies. Of course it's not one size fits all. IEP teams have to consider the individualized needs of the student in determining what accommodations might be needed for a student with regard to communication access. Examples of some types of auxiliary services, related services and technologies include the use of sign language and tactile interpreting, to speech, captioning, text messaging, notetaking, the use of hearing it's, cochlear implants and assistive listening systems such as personal or classroom FM systems. In addition to classroom teachers, teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, educational interpreters, speech language pathologists, educational audiologist and paraprofessionals are some of the integral service providers particularly that should be participating in making those determinations for students who are deaf and hard of hearing. One of the resources are a very valuable actually that we have available in Virginia that many of you who are professionals in the field and have been to some of the trainings we have offered through the opening doors and unlocking potentially institute and other events that have been sponsored through the Virginia school for the deaf and the blind outreach services are familiar with the Virginia Communication Plan for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing. This plan, the communication plan, is a tool that can be used to assist the IEP team during the process of considering the student-specific language and communication needs. The communication plan provides a very systematic process for gathering and reviewing information to determine the types of accommodations, services and supports that are needed to ensure effective communication and equitable access to the general education curriculum The information that is reviewed through the IEP team is recorded and maintained in the student's educational record along with the IEP. The communication plan addresses areas that focus on language and modality, amplification and accommodation, opportunities for direct communication, and academic needs. The plan that we have that has been disseminated previously has been updated, and it will be posted at the Virginia Department of Education website as we post the updated and revised guidelines for working with students who are deaf and hard of hearing in Virginia public schools. So that is a resource that you can also look forward to during the current school year. Regarding supports for students who are deaf and hard of hearing when it comes to personal devices, schools are not required to provide personal devices including eye glasses or hearing aids for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing, unless the IEP team determines that the device is necessary for the child to receive FAPE, a free and appropriate public education. Although the schools may not be required to provide for instance hearing aids for a student, schools must ensure that hearing aids that are worn in school by children who are deaf and hard of hearing are functioning properly. And this includes completing routine checks of the hearing aids and the external components of surgically implanted devices such as cochlear implants. It is recommended that items such as hearing aid batteries, a hearing aid battery tester and an stethoset be available in school for those purposes of making sure that the hearing aids are functioning properly, both as to minimize downtime. It is very common to have school divisions make arrangements with parents with regard to supplying batteries and any other accessories that might be needed for the student's hearing aids or cochlear implants in schools. But if at any time during those routine checks it's determined that a device is not functioning properly, the school has to be able to certainly address that need if they have supplies that could assist, such as batteries that they could use that could be purchased and provided and maintained by the school and used as needed. Parents can certainly provide spare batteries. But it needs to be communicated very clearly as to what the plan is in terms of making sure that during the routine checks, how those issues will be addressed. Because it certainly would be a disruption to a student's instructional time if they are not able to use the devices because they are not functioning appropriately. With regard to testing accommodations, the Virginia Department of Education students with disabilities guidelines for test accommodations document is posted at the VDOE website. This document is a resource for educators and parents regarding the use of special test accommodations for students with disabilities. As I mentioned a little earlier, testing accommodations should not affect the validity, the score interpretation, reliability or security of an assessment, of any assessment, whether it is a statewide assessment or a classroom assessment. The accommodation should be considered separately for each assessment and only provided as required for the student to access the assessment. So a student might need a particular accommodation perhaps in the content area of English and reading. It does not necessarily mean they need the exact same accommodation in the content areas, but considerations by the IEP team need to be given for that, and it should be specified in the IEP just to make sure that there is no possibility that the appropriate accommodations are not provided for the student. Again, students should have experience utilizing the accommodations during daily instruction and completing classroom and homework assignments. Some examples of testing accommodations that may be required for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing might include things such as multiple test sessions, having planned breaks, utilizing their amplification equipment, interpreting, having interpreting or trans lit rating of the test direction, interpreting or trans litter ating of the actual test items, being tested in a separate test location, and special lighting in the room. With regard to interpreting and translitter ating, for the SOL, standards of learning assessment, the interpreter may interpret the test directions, sample items, and questions regarding the mechanics of testing that are directed to and answered by the examiner. For mathematics, science, history, social science and writing assessments, the accommodation may also be provided for test items that are being interpreted or translitter ated directly from the assessment, that's either paper or on line, or for items that are read by the test examiner. Now when we consider the actual reading SOL, students who are deaf or hard of hearing may be considered by school divisions for the interpreting and trans litter ating accommodation on the reading assessment because of the difficulty for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, the difficult they would have most likely with hearing phonemes, which is a part of the decoding process. There is an eligibility criteria for this that must be determined by a diagnostic tool or instrument that has been administered by a qualified professional. Now, the diagnostic tool or instrument administered by a qualified professional my include things such as an audiology evaluation report from an educationalel audiologist which identifies the degree and type of the hearing loss and the resulting effect on the student's auditory discrimination skills for phonemes and sounds. So this might be information that is really available in the student's educational record. As appropriate other information may also be considered from previous or current psycho educational evaluation reports and other diagnostic reading assessments that may be already available within the student's educational records. For the SOL assessment, for the reading assessment, if a student who is deaf or hard of hearing is found eligible for the interpreting-trans litter ating accommodation because his or her hearing impairment severely limits the ability to decode tests, the test would be administered through an interpreter if the student uses sign language as his or her method of communicating. Within the classroom in school setting, students may require visual, signaling and alerting devices for beginning and ending classes, for emergency situations and for safety. Signage, visual graphics and message boards can be useful in providing information such as daily announcements, preferential seating away from noisy equipment such as the air conditioning, the classroom computer, printers, and providing adequate lighting may support the use of interpreters and enhance the student's ability to see and interpret facial expressions, body language, and lip movements. Classrooms with walls and doors typically provide a better acoustic environment for students who are deaf and hard of hearing than open classrooms where you have several classrooms that are together that are partitioned off. There are several resources in Virginia for students to provide resources and information pertaining to deafness and for students who are deaf and hard of hearing that we are very pleased that we collaborate with the Department of Education, collaborates with, and I with like to share those with you right now. And as I send the summary of my notes to Teri, this information will be included. That will also have contact information. One of those resources is the Virginia Hearing Aid Loan Bank, the Hearing Aid Loan Bank, provides hearing aids and FM systems for children Virginia understand age 18 whose hearing loss has been confirmed by an audiologist. Typically the devices are loaned for free up to six months while families and school divisions are waiting for a permanent device to arrive. This resource is very helpful especially in instances where there may need to be a trial period for the student using hearing aids or possibly using an FM system prior to the school division or family purchasing them. The hearing aid loan bank, with the loaner system they have for those devices, can certainly support providing the device for as mentioned up to six months typically, which seems to be a great service for school divisions and families. The Virginia project for children and young adults with deaf blindness provides technical assistance, training, business education, and networking information to families and service providers and children who are deaf-blind or who have dual sensory disabilities. And I do have Julie Durando the project director, her contact information is available. The Technical Assistance Center for children who are deaf and hard of hearing provides training and technical assistance pertaining to students who are deaf and hard of hearing. Assistance is available to local public school divisions as well as early intervention and preschool programs through the Virginia Network of Consultants, for professionals working with children who are deaf and hard of hearing. That program, the Virginia Network of Consultants, or CNOC, is coordinated by Anne Hughes, and Anne is someone well-known throughout our professional community and with families as well. Anne provides technical assistance and coordinates the services for VNOC. The Virginia school for the deaf and blind is located in Stanton. It provides a kindergarten through 12th grade educational day program in addition to outreach services and residential services exclusively for students who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or visually impaired or deaf-blind. The Virginia school for the deaf and blind outreach services assisted providers and local school divisions and families meeting the needs of children across the commonwealth. The admissions policy is available at its website. Debbie Pfeiffer is the director for outreach programs, and she does a wonderful job of providing resources, information and activities across the commonwealth for families, for children who have sensory disabilities. And they do not have to be students who attend the Virginia School For the Deaf and the Blind. The Virginia department for the deaf and hard of hearing provides standards for educational interpreting services and other services to reduce communication barriers between persons who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families and professionals who serve them. Era graph is the director at VDDHH, and VDDHH also supports the assessment program that we have, the Virginia quality assurance screening for educational interpreters in Virginia. The accessible instructional material centers of Virginia, AIM Virginia, has an extensive library. They have developed an extensive library as an alternative system of providing accessible educational media under standards that have been set by federal law to students who meet the federal requirements for disability and who are eligible for accessing educational media through an IEP. The AIM Virginia in conjunction with partnering agencies provides required accessible educational materials to students with an IEP and training for staff at no cost to the school divisions. The described and captioned media program provides free educational media for loan in a wide range of contents areas for all grade levels, and there's a wealth of information provided at their website. I'm looking at the time, and I want to make sure that we do have an opportunity for questions. I have reviewed my notes with you and hope that the information that I have provided has been helpful. Teri, at this time I am, I've completed that part, and I'm ready if there are any questions, I'd be happy to assist with answering them. >> TERI: Okay, great, thank you. So this is Teri urban, thank you, Wanda for sharing your expertise on the IEP accommodations. That was wonderful. We will open up the meeting for questions. We ask if you have a question please take your phone off of mute and identify yourself. First name is just fine. Just so our captioner can accurately capture that information. It's entirely up to you if you want to state whether you're a parent or a professional and which part of the state you're calling from. So with that, do we have any questions for Wanda? >> Hi, this is Katherine ortis. I'm a professional in Stafford, Virginia. >> TERI: Good morning. >> Good morning, thank you, Wanda for all your help this, month. It's been great. >> WANDA COUNCIL: You're certainly welcome. >> I wanted to clarify something that I'm still confused on as I'm a new teacher. And with the assistive listening devices or just assistive devices on the IEP, what exactly does that include? I know that you had touched on it a little bit already, but I'm still kind of confused as I haven't gotten an answer with supervisors here. I want to be sure I'm providing the necessary pieces of the IEP correctly. So using the hearing aids, the FM system, does that all get included under assistive devices? >> WANDA COUNCIL: Yes. Those are items that could be, again, depending on the individualized needs of the student. Not every student needs the exact same thing, okay, so if a student, they may have their own personal hearing aid they might come to school with, or it may be that they come to school, sorry, come to school with their own personal hearing aids. Those aids might be used throughout the day. And again the school division would be, someone at the school would need to do the routine checks of the actual personal hearing aids. If that is the decision that's made between the school and the parent, that the student will use their personal hearing aids. But in addition to that, in some cases the student might use their personal hearing aids, but it may be that the school has purchased an FM system that was selected through an educational audiologist that is compatible to be used with the type of hearing aids that the student has. So there could be a device or assistive listening device or hearing aids provided through the family for the student to wear to school that are used by something that's purchased at the school. It really depends on what the needs are for the student. For some very, very young students, preschool age students, the FM systems and hearing aids can be challenging in terms of students utilizing them. And in some cases there are sound field systems that are determined appropriate. Some schools, depending on the location of the classroom, may have a loop system in the classroom that might be utilized for the student if they are in, say, like a self-contained classroom. So there are a variety of ways this assistive listening devices, assistive technology, can be utilized. And in determining exactly what's needed , it's not everything that could be provided has to be provided for every student, but just determining what would be appropriate to ensure that student has access. Does that answer your question? >> I think so. Thank you so much. >> WANDA COUNCIL: You're very welcome. >> TERI: This is Teri. Does anybody else have any other questions? >> Hi, my name is Liz Churchill, and I have a question for you, Ms Council. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Yes. >> There is an accommodation called a communication facilitator. Could you talk a little bit about that? >> WANDA COUNCIL: Yes. Sure. This communications facilitator, it's actually a service that could be provided through an individual for a student who is deaf and hard of hearing, or a student who may need something beyond what might be, say, provided through an educational interpreter. That individual might be someone who is working with the student in perhaps learning to, it could be that they are learning to utilize sign language but maybe for a younger student is not quite ready for utilizing an interpreter fully, but need to learn, have some instruction in learning how to utilize the service and also in being able to actually receive some remediation and instruction from the same individual. But it could also be for a student who uses listening and spoken language who may have language delays secondary to their hearing loss that may need some additional support in being able to understand what they are actually hearing through the instruction that's being provided say from the classroom teacher. A communication facilitator could be someone who is able to take the information and provide it directly to the student and through oral communication that would allow the student to improve the student's comprehension of what's being provided. Also for a student who might have difficulty communicating, if they use listening and spoken language, could be the person in the sense of interpretation or making sure the student's communication is understood by other people. So there are a variety of ways this a communication facilitator could be utilized. There are not specific qualifications in Virginia for someone who might be hired in the position of communication facilitator. So it would be up you to the local school division to determine what the needs were for that student and to determine what the role of that individual might be. >> Okay. So when you are doing that, how would you add that or how do you qualify that on the IEP? Do you document where the student is missing out in class, or what do you suggest? >> WANDA COUNCIL: Certainly I would suggest in presenting information through an IEP team, you know, if you are the teacher presenting information that you have documentation through the student's performance, observations in the classroom, any assessments, anything that has been observed for the student, and presenting that through an IEP team. But the communication plan, the Virginia Communication Plan that I had referenced earlier is a document that very systematically goes through looking at all of the aspects of communication for a student who is deaf or hard of hearing to help guide IEP team decisions about what supports, services, accommodations the student might need. So this might be a helpful tool for you because it's the type of tool that would have prior to an IEP meeting, you can collect information, collect data to take to the meeting and continue the process of discussion and reviewing it while you're actually participating with your IEP team. So the actual, I will just clarify that, even though the terminology communication facilitator is one that's very commonly used in the field of deafness, if the person, if there was a determination that someone needed to be assigned to serve in that role, the school division might utilize a person whose current job title could be that they are a paraprofessional. It might be an individual who has knowledge, background, experience working with students who are deaf or hard of hearing who might not be a teacher but might be determined to be a person who could provide that type of support for a student. So even if the terminology communication that facilitator, it could be more important to identify what the role is, what the needs are of the student, and then the school division if it's in the IEP, if it says communication facilitator, what's really important, what role will the person serve, what will the responsibilities be with regard to this particular student. >> Thank you so much. >> WANDA COUNCIL: You're very welcome. >> TERI: This is Teri. That was a great question and a great answer. Does anybody else have any questions? We have a couple of minutes left. >> I do. This is Call ie Weaver, and I'm in Linux Virginia as a parent. My question is, I have a little one who will be going into school in a couple of years and is hard of hearing. And what would you suggest as the best way to start the IEP process for her going into kindergarten. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Okay, you mentioned a little one. So under the age of five I'm assuming. >> Yes, she's three. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Three. You mention starting the IEP process. Within the locality where you currently reside, I would suggest that you contact the school division. Typically the director of special education through the school board office, administrative offices, might be the person that you might try to contact, and they may then put you in touch with a supervisor coordinator or some other staff person who is responsible for overseeing the services for students who are deaf and hard of hearing, or for students who are preschool age. You could certainly initiate that process now because in Virginia, students can be found eligible and receive special education services beginning at the age of two. So if your daughter is already three, you may give consideration to whether she might qualify and need some services now before she is in kindergarten. >> She doesn't qualify. They have already looked at that. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Okay. So you're looking at when she enters kindergarten? >> Yes. >> WANDA COUNCIL: And are you thinking that you may want to review, have the process reviewed again? Depending on what direction that you might want to go in, any information that you might have with regard to your daughter's educational records, sorry, medical records, anything pertaining to her hearing loss. Perhaps when you're enrolling her in kindergarten, going to meet with the school teacher to discuss what you know about your daughter, to make sure that they are aware prior to the first day of school of any special accommodations that your daughter might need. Because although the presentation today focused on students who had IEPs, students who might not be eligible and might not have an IEP might need accommodations understand a section 504 plan, which still identifies that there is a disability that the student could possibly need to have some accommodations in place for even if they don't need special education services. And so that information, any information that you have if it's already been reviewed, I would certainly encourage you to review that with her classroom teacher and as early as possible, before the first day of school if there's an opportunity to do that. >> Okay. Thank you. >> WANDA COUNCIL: You're welcome. >> Hi Wanda, my name is Erin, and I'm a teacher for the deaf and hard of hearing in northern Virginia. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Hi, Erin. >> You had mentioned having batteries and battery checkers available. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Uh-huh. >> Really having an additional audiologist available to all deaf and hard of hearing students in the district or in the county. Is that written somewhere, or is that just a practice? >> WANDA COUNCIL: Well, the actual regulatory information pertains to the requirement for the school division to do the routine checking, okay? So that is the requirement. That is in the regulations. It's in the federal IDEA, the federal regulations and in the Virginia regulations as well. The recommendations have to do with having the appropriate tools or equipment on hand in order to do those routine checks. Because if you do not have something to address how were you going to determine that the device is working and to be certain that it is working, then the student, the risk would be that the student could be sitting in a classroom all day with batteries that are not functioning in their hearing aid and not really receiving access. So that responsibility falls on the school division for that routine checking. Now, school divisions have local policies, practices and procedures that may pertain to assistive technology, assistive technology devices, and there may be a certain process that you would have to go through if that were something that were needed in your school division. Every school division does not employ or have a staff educational audiologist, but there may be other individuals in the school who could perform a routine check of a hearing aid and checking an FM system to replace a battery. It doesn't have to be an educational audiologist, doesn't have to be a teacher of the deaf. In some cases other special education teachers, some general education teachers, the nurse, paraprofessionals. Typically there are individuals in the school who can be trained to do and assist with those checks for those devices. And if it's done consistently on a daily basis and there are multiple people who are available who can do it, then it increases the likelihood that at any given time if the teacher is not there, there's someone else who can assist in providing those routine checks and providing the say replacement batteries or troubleshooting or contacting the parent if there were some problems. >> Okay. Excellent. I'm in (inaudible) county so we do have a team of educational audiologist, so we're very lucky for that. I was more or less thinking of the students not in our caseload, in school kind of just hanging out there. So you know, it will keep in my mind that I should reach out to them and check on them more often throughout the year even though they are not on our caseload. >> WANDA COUNCIL: I'm curious, not on your caseload in one sense? >> Not receiving direct support from a teacher or from an educational audiologist. >> WANDA COUNCIL: So if there's no IEP or 504 plan? Is that the circumstance? >> They could have a 504. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Okay. >> But they don't have an assistive listening device. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Got it. Yes. >> Just for -- >> WANDA COUNCIL: Yes, having a 504 plan, even though you're saying they are not on your caseload, students can receive some services through special education or related services. It's not anticipated that they would have the same level of service as a student with an IEP. Something like a routine check of a hearing aid, you know, consulting with staff, those might be some types of services that could be provided say by a teacher of the deaf or someone else in the school building. So yes, there could be other people that are not special educators that might be able to assist with providing those routine checks. >> Okay, great. Thank you very much. >> WANDA COUNCIL: You're welcome. >> TERI: Great, this is Teri urban again. I'm going to interject. This wraps up. We're at eleven o'clock and we took just about every minutes of the 60 that we allowed for. So thank you, everyone. Thank you Wanda for again sharing your expertise with us and willing to answer some questions. I know this is a really important topic to discuss. So we hope everyone found value in this presentation. And please shoot us an e-mail if you have a topic that you would like for us to present on virtually next. This topic came to us from a parents after our first virtual learning opportunity and she was interested in us focusing on this. So we do listen and we want to hear from you. Again thank you everyone for your time. We look forward to connecting again. Have a great afternoon and happy holidays. >> WANDA COUNCIL: Thanks, everyone, thank you, Teri. Happy holidays. >> TERI: Thanks, Wanda! (Session ended at 10:00 central)