

THE WISCONSIN COMMUNICATOR



HANDS &
VOICES

Wisconsin H&V
Website

Check out the new Wisconsin Families for Hands & Voices website. It can be found at www.handsandvoiceswi.org.

You can find resources located in Wisconsin, upcoming events and learn more about current programs like the Parent Match Program and Distant Pals.

Let us know what you think!

Want To Help?

If you are looking for a way to become involved and help improve things for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families in WI drop us a line.

We are always looking for people to volunteer their time and talents. Some possible ideas are serving on the H&V Board, event planning, fund raising and marketing.

So whether you have a lot of time or just little, whether you know how you would like to be involved or not please contact us at 920-437-7370 or hand-sandvoiceswi@yahoo.com. We would love to discuss the possibilities

HA & CI LEGISLATION UPDATE ACTION NEEDED NOW!!

Currently, there is legislation being proposed in the Assembly and the Senate that would require insurance companies to cover the cost of cochlear implants and hearing aids for children under 11 years of age. The Assembly version of the bill (AB 133) was referred to the Committee on Insurance, and the Senate version of the bill (SB 88) was referred to the Committee on Transportation, Tourism, and Insurance. The next step is for the Committee Chairs to put the bills on the agenda for a public hearing, and for all of us to come to testify! Without a hearing, this bill is not likely to go anywhere, so it is important that we all ask for a hearing on these bills and that we come and testify why this bill is critical for children who are deaf and hard of hearing in Wisconsin. So please take the following actions.

Action Steps:

1) Contact the members of the Assembly Committee on Insurance and ask by phone or in writing for a public hearing to be scheduled on Assembly Bill 133. Contact information for committee members can be found at: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/leginfo/CommPages/IndividualCommittees.aspx?committee=Insurance&house=Assembly>

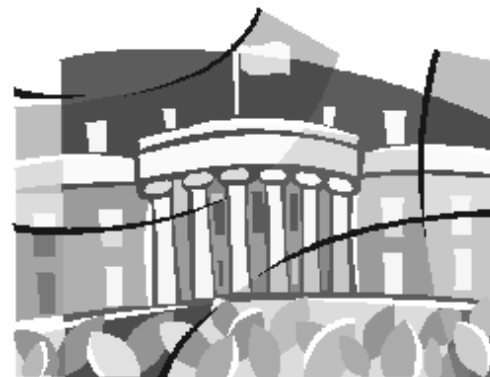
2) Contact the members of the Senate Committee on Transportation, Tourism and Insurance, and ask by phone or in writing for a public hearing to be scheduled on Senate Bill 88. Contact information for committee members can be found at: <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/leginfo/CommPages/IndividualCommittees.aspx?committee=Transportation,%20Tourism%20and%20Insurance&house=Senate>

3) Contact your legislators and let them know that you are interested in having a hearing on these bills. To find out who represents you, see the following link. <http://waml.legis.state.wi.us/>

Are you unsure what to say to committee members about this legislation? You can share a personal story or see the back page of this newsletter for a sample letter.

The more people that the legislators receive requests from the more likely they will hold a hearing. So please ask your family, friends, and neighbors to contact their legislators. They often have intimate knowledge on how this issue has impacted your family.

If you would like to see a copy of either bill you can find them at:
<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2007/data/AB133hst.html>
<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/2007/data/SB88hst.html>



WI Families for Hands & Voices

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We are on the web!
www.handsandvoiceswi.org

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Parent Support and Advocacy for Children who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Our Mission:

Wisconsin Families for Hands & Voices is dedicated to supporting families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology. We are a parent-driven, non-profit organization providing families with the resources, networks, and information they need to improve communication access and educational outcomes for their children.

Our outreach activities, parent/professional collaboration, and advocacy efforts are focused on enabling Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to reach their highest potential.

INTRODUCTION LETTER BY NEW BOARD MEMBER MICHELLE KIHNTOPF

I am so excited to be on the board for Hands and Voices I don't even know where to start! My name is Michelle Kihntopf I have been married to my wonderful Husband Michael for just about 14 years. Five years ago we were blessed to welcome our first daughter Michaela into the world. Just four years later little sister Maia has made our family complete. Michaela was identified at birth with a unilateral moderate hearing loss in her right ear and has benefited from her hearing aid. Around the age of three Michaela's hearing test showed that she had a progressive loss and that her hearing was getting worse. She was fitted with new more powerful hearing aids for both ears. Michaela is very bright little girl who loves to read. She is excelling in school and loves to play with her little sister. Maia loves to try and keep up to her sister. I hope to bring my knowledge of working in early childhood and my many experiences to the Hands and Voices board. I have had the opportunity to meet many deaf and hard of hearing people from all over the US and Canada. I have always had the utmost respect for their stories and communication choices.

SAMPLE LETTER TO LEGISLATORS

Dear _____:

I am writing to you today to give you my thoughts on the proposed legislation (insert AB 133 or SB88) for hearing aids and cochlear implants to be covered by insurance companies for children under 11 years old. The ability to hear impacts a child's development and acquisition of spoken language. Hearing aids and cochlear implants are critical interventions to assuring that children who are deaf or hard of hearing have access to spoken language.

This legislation has been referred to the Assembly Committee on Insurance and the Senate Committee on Transportation, Tourism and Insurance. I would like to request committee hearings on these bills so that our voices can be heard on this very important bill, and encourage that you support this legislation so that children who are deaf and hard of hearing get the necessary intervention for their growth and development.

Sincerely,
[your name]