

Meeting minutes: Newborn Hearing Screening Advisory Committee

DATE: MAY 20, 2026

MINUTES PREPARED BY: ANNIKKA STRONG

LOCATION: LUTHERAN SOCIAL SERVICE OF MINNESOTA

Attendance

Present: Ingrid Aasan, Anne Barlow, Darcia Dierking, Kathleen Geraghty, Hannah Herd, Tina Huang, Joscelyn Martin, Abby Meyer, Jess Moen, Gloria Nathanson, Jessica Novak, Sara Oberg, Garrett Petrie (interim MDE deaf and hard of hearing representative designee), Cat Tamminga Flores, Katie Warne, Jay Wyant, Colleen Vitzthum

Absent: Terry Wilding, Kirsten Coverstone, Danelle Gournaris, Joan Boddicker, Calla Kevan, Emily Smith-Lundberg

Minutes

Welcome and announcements

- Jay Wyant called the meeting to order.
- February meeting minutes approved by Committee without any changes. Cat Tamminga motioned to approve. Joscelyn Martin seconded.
- Jay shared that there are four open positions on the committee and asked committee members to encourage eligible professionals to apply.

Language matters: Communicating common EHDI terms with parents – Elena Miranda and Lee Vang

- Lee and Elena shared their experiences as Minnesota Hands & Voices (MNH&V) Parent Guides and explaining new terms to families, such as early intervention.
- Lee's journey began with her son who has hearing loss. She aims to help families feel comfortable within the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) system. Lee discussed how words translate from English to Hmong and how sometimes the words carry sensitivity in the Hmong community. She also shared talking tips for discussing early intervention with families.
- Elena also has a son with hearing loss. She discussed connecting with families and leaving bias behind when meeting with them. She said how every experience with family visits is different based on the family. She also shared how MNH&V hosts events for families to

explore, connect and have fun together. Elena also shared tips for building connections, trust, and respect.

- Elena Lee shared the book *Beginnings* “Understanding Your Child’s Hearing Loss” is helpful for discussions at family visits.
- Elena also shared the importance of quality interpreters for families who do not speak English.
- Elena also shared the importance of taking time with families and making them feel like they have a voice and a say in their child’s journey.

EHDI family story – Ashley

- Ashley shared her son’s hearing journey. He was born a healthy baby and passed his hearing screening. When he was just a few months old, he was diagnosed with bacterial meningitis and eventually diagnosed as profoundly deaf. The family was flooded with information from the hospital and specialists. Because meningitis continues to damage the cochlea, the family had to make a decision quickly to get cochlear implants. Her son received cochlear implants at four months of age. When the implants were turned on, he heard sound for the first time in two months and lit up and smiled.
- Between the meningitis and hearing loss, he had many medical visits and it felt like a lot. The family connected with MN Hands & Voices, early intervention, and virtual speech therapy.
- When her son was almost two years old, a man stopped them at the grocery store and shared that his son also had cochlear implants. He told Ashley about Northern Voices school and their spoken language program for deaf and hard of hearing children.
- Ashley’s son enrolled at Northern Voices a month later and his language has developed quickly.
- A committee member asked what Ashley would have liked to hear from providers early on in her family’s journey. Ashley shared that in the hospital a provider came in and told them that they were making progress, even if they couldn’t see it and it was slow progress.
- A committee member asked what has been the most helpful in understanding their family’s choices with all the resources they received. Ashley shared that time to digest the resources has been helpful and knowing that she has the resources in her back pocket when she is ready for them. She also mentioned that hearing stories of what others went through and being persistent has been helpful.

National EHDI Conference share out and poster discussion – All committee members

- Minnesota Department of Health's (MDH) posters from the 2026 National EHDI Conference were available for review.
- It was the 25th annual conference and hosted in Jacksonville, Florida in March 2026.
- There was a good delegation from Minnesota (MN), although some individuals were not able to attend after their flights were cancelled due to a blizzard.
- Committee members who attended shared their favorite sessions.

Information sharing with families – Darcia Dierking

- Darcia shared work that MDH has been doing that aligns with the Collaborative Plan's strategic priority #1: Provide resources for families from identification through transition.
- Darcia provided an overview of the binder of resources that MDH sends to families after their child is identified as deaf or hard of hearing.
- Darcia also shared a website review project. MDH reviewed data to see which webpages and PDFs were receiving the most views. She also shared an exercise the EHDI team did where they searched for resources imagining the process a new parent might use, like searching in google or Chat GPT. Most search results showed accurate information. It could be helpful if other EHDI-focused organizations in MN used a similar review process and we could cross reference websites to ensure accurate data is still showing up in web searches.

ASTra program overview – Anne Barlow

- Anne shared an overview of the ASTra program at MNH&V. ASTra stands for advocacy, support, and training. ASTra is a deaf and hard of hearing educational support program that provides support and materials for parents. Through the program, parents meet with trained ASTra advocates and learn about the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) law, early intervention and other education related topics.
- MNH&V piloted the program in 2014. Several of their staff are now trained as ASTra advocates.
- There are two levels of ASTra support/training.
 - Level 1 – training for parents and professionals.
 - Level 2 – training only for professionals who are ASTra advocates and will be working with parents. Training covers how to coach parents and how parents can advocate in a collaborative way.
- MNH&V is currently the only agency in Minnesota to provide this kind of education and coaching for parents specific to children who are deaf and hard of hearing for free and from the parent perspective. MHV&V continues to partner with PACER for parent support.

Part C federal reporting follow-up – Cat Tamminga Flores

- Cat responded to questions that had come up during her presentation on Part C federal reporting at the February advisory committee meeting. MN is a leader in data sharing between Part C and EHDI. She highlighted the MN Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System as a good source of MN data. Early childhood outcomes reporting to the federal Office of Special Education Programs are not disability specific. Families receive an outcome survey at the time of Part C exit and about 13% were returned in federal fiscal year 2024 (reported in February 2026), which is an improvement from last year.

Partner updates and closing

- Partners shared updates including upcoming events and projects recently completed.
- Jay adjourned the meeting.

Action items

- None.

Decisions made

- None.

Next meeting

Date: August 19, 2026

Time: 1-3pm

Location: Virtual on Zoom

Agenda items: Submit proposed agenda items to health.ehdi@state.mn.us.

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06/29/2026

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