



What is Guide By Your Side?

Guide By Your Side (GBYS)™ is a program from Hands & Voices (H&V) that provides emotional support and unbiased information from trained Parent Guides to other families and to the systems that serve them. GBYS is a trademarked program of H&V that is available to authorized H&V chapters and approved agencies via an application process. GBYS has been created to be a flexible program that will meet the unique family support and outreach needs of Connecticut.

How does a GBYS program work?

GBYS programs are grounded in the Hands & Voices values described while being adapted to the particular focus of H&V chapter and state system in which they exist. The Connecticut GBYS program will consist of the following elements:

- Provide timely parent-to-parent support at the time of confirmation of hearing loss.
- Offer specific support and resource dissemination about deafness/hearing loss in addition to general Part C service coordination system and support.
- Reduce the risk of loss to follow up by timely connection of Parent Guides to families with babies who have been diagnosed deaf/hard of hearing.
- Influence and improve the systems designed to serve families and their children who are deaf or hard of hearing by providing a recognized role for GBYS Program Coordinator and/or Guides in early intervention programs and public education at the decision-making levels.
- Assure continuity to families by providing support throughout a child's life, especially at times of transitions; GBYS is not limited to a specific age range.
- Support families through the early intervention years by combining an experienced parent's insight with knowledge of early intervention and educational systems. GBYS programs can also support families with older children and teenagers.
- Provide not only Parent Guides, but trained Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) Guides to families with newly identified babies, young children, or to seasoned parents with teenagers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Exposure to DHH adults can provide families and DHH children/youths with invaluable perspectives that come from personal experience. Emphasis on matching adults with families and kids of like-communication modality is commonly practiced, but not necessarily required.

What kind of specialized knowledge and skills will the GBYS Parent Guides have?

- Experiential knowledge of joys and challenges of raising a DHH child
- Sensitivity to the range of emotional responses that families experience
- Information about early intervention and educational program options
- Specialized parenting skills that emphasize meeting the unique needs of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing
- Unbiased information and presentation of modes or methods of communication
- Local, state, national resources specific to DHH child
- Knowledge of the state EHDI (Early hearing, detection, and intervention) system
- Formalized GBYS training from and on-going affiliation with Hands & Voices