

**Supporting Parent to Parent Framework for
Parents and Carers of Deaf and Hard of
Hearing children in Western Australia**



Who are we?

The West Australian Foundation for Deaf Children (Inc) is one of the State's oldest charities. It was established in 1896 to improve the lives and education of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Western Australia. The Foundation has a long and rich history of supporting deaf education in Western Australia.

Our purpose is to make a difference to the lives of deaf children and their families, from cradle to career.

We aim to promote and support education, life skills and learning opportunities for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and young adults. The Foundation achieves this through:

- Advocacy on behalf of the children, their parents, other carers and their families.
- Providing information and support.
- Fostering training and development.
- Providing resources.



P: (08) 9385 3557

E: admin@wafdc.org.au

W: www.wafdc.org.au



Government of **Western Australia**
Department of **Communities**
Disability Services

This project is a NDIS Information, Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) initiative

Introduction

The West Australian Foundation for Deaf Children (Inc) has created this framework that is intended to serve as a support and guide in establishing a Peer Parent Information and Support Network for Deaf and hard of hearing children and young people in Western Australia.

The project focused primarily on families whose children were newly diagnosed with a hearing loss or at a developmental stage (e.g. transition to school from early intervention or transition from primary school to high school) regardless of the severity/type of hearing loss OR eligibility for NDIS services. It attempted to identify the types of information, community and specialist services needed for parents/carers to make *informed* decisions and; link mainstream services (education, health and community groups) with the Peer Parent Information and Support Network.

This project is the activation of longer-term program delivery and support for families through the WA foundation for Deaf Children and the Peer Mentoring Network. This framework is not conclusive and will be further developed as the Parent Network develops.

The Parent Network has been developed using principles of community development and the conceptual framework of parent to parent support for parents with children who are Deaf or hard of hearing.¹

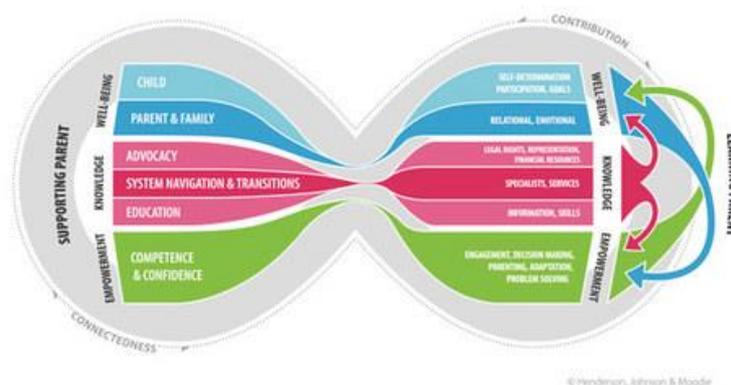


Figure 1 A conceptual framework of parent- to- parent support for parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing¹

The constructs and components of the conceptual framework are represented visually with supporting and learning parents on either side of a helix. The components being:

- well-being: parent, family and child;
- knowledge: advocacy, system navigation and education; and
- empowerment: confidence and competence.

¹ Henderson RJ, Johnson AM, and Moodie ST. Revised conceptual framework of Parent-to- parent support for parents with children who are Deaf or hard of hearing: A modified Delphi study. American Journal of Audiology 2016. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27249168>

WAFDC Parent to Parent Network Framework

Vision of project

Parents/carers of Deaf and hard of hearing children and young people have support from other parents of Deaf and hard of hearing children in WA to:

- Provide clear, independent, accurate and unbiased information to families of DHH children/young adults to make decisions and choices that positively influence the goals of their child and;
- Connect families of DHH children/young adults with appropriate mainstream and specialist services.

Outcomes

- Establish a peer parenting information and support network (Parent Network)
- Improve access to parent to parent support and connection (Parent Network)
- Provide training and information to parents (Parent Mentor) to help them make better decisions about their current and future situations (Information resources)
- Increase parent/family participation in activities and services (Family Network)
- Link learning parents with experienced parents who have lived a similar journey (link parents to Parent Mentors)

Principles

- Objective and fair
- Unbiased
- Nonjudgmental
- Parent directed

This framework describes the strategies and activities used by the WA Foundation for Deaf Children to implement a Peer Parenting Information and Support Network for parents/carers of Deaf and hard of hearing children. The strategies and activities may be used by any organisation/individual wishing to provide a similar support network.

Coordinator and Supporting Organisation

The supporting organisation and coordinator work collaboratively with other professionals, services, organisations and community members to deliver this program.

- The Coordinator has experience and expertise in navigating the system that supports families
- The Coordinator is accountable to the supporting organisation for the implementation of the program to develop a Parent Network of Supporting and Learning Parents and link families to mainstream and specialist services.

Parent Network

The Parent Network is a network of parents/carers/grandparents/family members of DHH children who can connect with other parents following a similar journey through the Deaf and hard of hearing pathway as themselves. Parents are invited to information sessions designed to improve their knowledge and ability to make informed decisions regarding their child's hearing loss; provide the skills to self-advocate; learn parenting skills; or to learn from professionals.

Share information

- Talk to each other
- Learn about information and supports available

Learn together

- Actively participate in Parent Network meetings
- Direct and participate in workshops and training sessions

Provide mutual support

- Support each other
- Develop relationships
- Attend, direct and participate in Family Network activities

Develop personal connections

- Participate in social events together
- Engage in community activities together

Identify challenges, gaps and plan for improvements

- Share stories and experiences
- Direct and influence activities and supports for parents and families

Supporting Parents - Parent Mentors

Supporting Parent: A coaching, nurturing and encouraging individual who has the lived experiences of parenting a child with hearing loss. ¹ In this program the supporting parent is called a Parent Mentor.

Parent mentors are parents/carers/grandparents/family members who can support other parents on a similar journey. Parent mentors are volunteers who have been trained to mentor others.

Parent Mentor Qualities/ Skills:

- Parent/Carer of D/HH child or young adult
- Willingness to participate and share experience as a volunteer, commit time to role development and peer support
- Have diverse experience, service experiences, cultural and language backgrounds
- Different ages of children
- Different language and communication modalities
- Different cultural communities or D/HH adults with lived experience

Parent Mentor Information and Support:

- Unbiased, informed decision making
- Respect for choices in decision making for families including language, technology, communication modality, or education setting
- Knowledge of boundaries as mentor - training, trust and type of support
- Knowledge of local and regional resources
- Assist families with system navigation, unbiased practical manner
- Communicate effectively with other parents and coordinator

Parent Mentors Training:

- Parents undergo training to develop skills, expectations and limits of role
- Attend one day peer mentoring workshop and quarterly parent network meetings
- Role of peer mentor
- Qualities of peer mentor
- Communication and perceptions
- Confidentiality
- Ongoing and up to date understanding and information of services and supports available to families
- Annual half a day service provider information session from specialist services
- Improve knowledge of resources, systems and services
- How to share positive experiences from their family's journey to explain their story

Learning Parents

Learning Parent: A parent new to or inexperienced in a situation of raising a child who is DHH or may be experiencing a transition in the child or family's life. ¹

Learning Parents are linked with Parent Mentors at the request of the Learning Parent.

- At no cost
- Regardless of culture, language, communication modality or type of hearing loss

Family Network

The Family Network is a network of families who can meet other families with DHH children. The supporting organisation will:

- Host events/activities where families can *connect* with other DHH families
 - Market opportunities for families to connect with other DHH families
 - Assist families to make connections with experts in DHH services/organisations/community members
- Host *information* sessions and activities for all parents/families of DHH children
 - Annual information sharing event. Professionals, parents and students have an opportunity to share their journey in an open forum
 - Disseminate information to parents about learning opportunities via newsletter and social media

Families are invited to fun events to meet other families who are on a similar journey. The events are informed and directed by Parent Mentors. The events are held in a relaxed setting to improve connection between families. Events and activities include picnics, camps, knowledge-sharing forums (D.E.A.F Express) and signing programs (Signing for Families). All events and activities are Auslan Interpreted.

Information Resources

Information resources are identified and developed in consultation with the Parent Mentors to:

- Raise awareness of the Parent Network
- Raise awareness of Peer Mentors and opportunities to support other parents
- Provide information about the availability of parent to parent support through social media and websites
- Provide unbiased information and support to parents

The following resources have been developed in the delivery of this program:

Opening Doors – An information and resource guide for families with children who are Deaf and hard of hearing

Promotional information cards – Promotional material to advertise Parent Mentors and Parent Network opportunities

Social media closed groups for families of Deaf and hard of hearing children only. Parent mentors actively participate and support other parents

Online Parent Mentor information videos

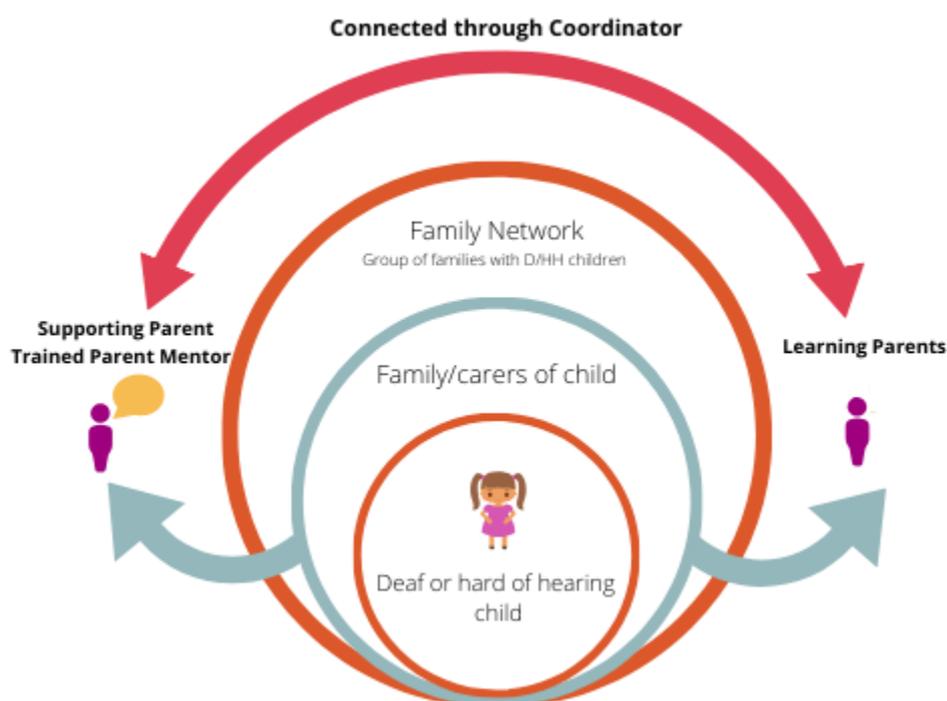


Figure 2 WAFDC Parent to Parent Framework

Referrals

A referral pathway needs to be established for new parents to connect to the Family and Parent Networks. Parents can self-refer or be referred by other service providers to the networks.

The supporting organisation will:

- Build collaborations with service providers/organisations/community members offering support to families
- Accept direct referrals from service providers or from individuals themselves to join the networks
- Develop an intake procedure to manage new referrals and offer parent to parent support to all families
- Build relationships with families and service providers/organisations/community members supporting DHH children to improve referral pathways and disseminate relevant information about services and supports
- Connect Parent Mentors with other parents seeking support
- Invite families to Family Network events/activities

Program: Supporting Parent to Parent

A peer parenting information and support network will be established in WA for parents/carers of Deaf and hard of hearing children to:

- Provide clear, independent, accurate and unbiased information to families of DHH children/young adults to make decisions and choice that positively influence the goals of their child and ;
- Connect families of DHH children/young adults with appropriate mainstream and specialist services.

Inputs (What we invest)	Outputs (What we do and who we do it to)		Outcomes – Impact The incremental events/changes that occur as a result of the outputs		
	Activities	Participation	Short	Medium	Long
Funding secured Project Coordination Training costs Activities and events costs Network specialist services Equipment and resources	Appoint Coordinator Recruit and train Supporting Parents Link and connect Families to Family Network Develop and implement Supporting Parent Framework - Establish referral system - Needs and Resource Assessment - Develop information resources - Marketing & awareness campaign Link Supporting Parent with Learning Parent Host events and activities for families Host information and training events for parents to improve their knowledge	DHH families CALD community and other service providers Other interested community members	Supporting Parents recruited to the network - Mentor Training - Knowledge of service providers - Knowledge of system navigation Parents recruited as Supporting Parents Learning parents connected with supporting parents Referrals from mainstream service providers to the Network Families linked to Family Network	Peer Parenting and Support Network established Development of Supporting Parent to Parent Framework/Resources Ongoing referral and support Supporting friendships and relationships formed in Family Network Improve access to parent to parent support and connection	Improved knowledge of services and support Improved self-advocacy Improved competence and confidence in decision making Improved engagement in broader community

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the following people and resources which have informed this Parent to Parent Support Framework:

- All parents for their invaluable insight and honesty
- All organisations who contributed to this project
- Connect Groups
- The evidence based conceptual framework of parent to parent support for parents of children who are deaf and hard of hearing (Henderson RJ, Johnson AM, and Moodie ST. Revised conceptual framework of Parent-to- parent support for parents with children who are Deaf or hard of hearing: A modified Delphi study. American Journal of Audiology 2016.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27249168>
- Hands and Voices – Family leadership in language and learning (FL3) <http://www.gpodhh.org/site/user-assets/Fam-Fam-support-guidelines-8-30-2018.pdf>