

# Meeting Minutes

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening, Tracking, and Intervention Advisory Board Meeting  
October 22, 2024, 3:00pm, via Zoom

**Members Present via Zoom:** Dr. Rachel Glade, Dr. Charles Bower, Dr. Tammy Vanover, and Una Carroll

**Guests Present:** Dr. Sarah Labuda, Brian Nichols, Mandy Jay, Reginald Rogers, Tracy Pate, Trina Marty, Deborah Reagan, Elaine Boland, Dr. Gretchen Cobb, Charlene Spencer, Teresa Hendrix, Christi Roderique, Dr. Charia Hall, Jotis, Lee, Isabella Criswell, Michelle Alvarez, Tara Bowling, Miriam Stafford, Taylor Johnson (Interpreter), Armondo Bilancione (Interpreter), Kim Scott, Christie Birdsong, Nidhi Patel, Cydney Crawford, Traci Massery and Tyria White.

**Call to Order:** Meeting called to order by Chair Dr. Rachel Glade 3:05 pm.

**Roll Call, Determination of Quorum:** Dr. Rachel Glade opened the meeting, and initiated introductions by Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Advisory Board members and guests present.

**Approval of April 2024 Minutes:** The minutes from the April 2024 meeting were emailed and approved without any objections.

## **Old Business:**

### • **Member appointment updates:**

- Per the Governor's office liaison, the Infant Hearing Program (IHP) reported the Governor's office confirmed they received applications for the Speech Language Pathologist from Miriam Stafford, Audiologist application from Natalie Benefield, and ADH Audiologist application from Dr. Tammy Vanover. In addition, they received an application for the ACH Audiologist replacement for Heidi Lightle from Isabella Catron. The governor's office is working to include the UNHS board appointments in the next announcement, but no date has been set.

### • **Board of Examiners Request:**

- Dr. Rachel Glade reached out to the Arkansas Board of Examiners in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology in reference to adding a question to their renewal application to identify providers that are serving Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) children. The Board of Examiners is willing to investigate adding a question during the next renewal cycle in May/June. They will discuss the update with IT to see how the question can be added to the application.

### • **Strategic Framework – STAR:**

- During the June 24, 2024, meeting attendees completed an assessment activity to determine areas of the EHDI system that was performing effectively and opportunities for improvement. The strategic framework, *Supporting, Tracking and Training in Arkansas – STAR for children with a Hearing Condition*, was drafted to assist the board in advising the EHDI program in serving DHH children and their families. The following three objectives were proposed for the framework:
  - **Support:** Develop a language acquisition plan to build the state's capacity to collect and analyze language acquisition outcome data for children. Strategies as follows:
    - Perform a needs assessment or survey to identify current methods and/or language assessments currently documented by early intervention providers.
    - Develop protocol outlining how language assessments will be conducted, analyzed, and reported.
    - Create and disseminate resources to increase the awareness of the importance of collecting language acquisition outcome data for Deaf or Hard of Hearing children.
  - **Tracking:** Assess state progress towards recommended EHDI outcomes, 31% of infants that do not pass the screening with a completed diagnostic evaluation by 3 months of age and 69% of Deaf or Hard of Hearing infants enrolled in early intervention by 2029.
    - Conduct a data analysis to identify trends and gaps for children who become lost to follow-up after not passing the final screening.
    - Reduce the number of infants without documentation of confirmatory diagnosis following a diagnosis of conductive loss.

- Publish and disseminate fact sheets, reports, newsletters and other materials.
- **Training:** Strengthen the state’s infrastructure to coordinate services across the statewide system for children at risk for or identified with a hearing condition.
  - Increase provider education regarding EHDI best practices for children to support screening by 1 month of age; diagnostic evaluation by 3 months of age for children that do not pass the screening and enrollment in early intervention by 6 months of age if identified with a hearing condition.
  - Develop interdisciplinary training modules for working with families with a hearing condition.
  - Educate early intervention providers about the importance of providing a language rich environment.

Attendees were given the opportunity to share feedback. The following items were discussed:

- This will be a long-term project.
- The objectives align with current national EHDI program objectives. Technical Assistance opportunities will be offered by CDC and HRSA in addition to collaborating with other states that are currently addressing these objectives.
- Representatives from Part C and B are invited to all board meeting and will be included in this effort.
- Language rich environment will promote early access to language no matter which communication method the family chooses.
- The framework should include a mechanism for prenatal education for parents and providers.
- An activity of the support objective will include identifying providers that are doing language assessments on DHH children.
- Overall, great objectives and plans.

Dr. Rachel Glade asked for everyone to email Kim or Tyria for additional comments or concerns by November 1<sup>st</sup>, and a special board meeting will be scheduled before the end of the year to vote to approve the framework.

### **New Business:**

- **AR School for the Deaf (ASD) Update:**

- Dr. Gretchen Cobb provided the following Statewide Services update:
  - Hired a new Developmental Therapist, Dana Darr. She replaced Angela Jones who retired in August.
  - Nicole Wash is the new Superintendent.
  - Statewide Services is currently serving a total of 26 birth to three-year-old families, 19 have an IFSP, 5 are in the process of establishing IFSP, and 2 are at an Early Intervention Developmental Treatment Center.
  - Statewide Services is serving families with children ages 3 to 5 years old.
  - Since August, Statewide Services has provided four classroom consults for K-12 statewide.
  - ASD High School enrollment is 33, Middle School enrollment is 20, and Lower School enrollment is 53, including early childhood.

Dr. Gretchen Cobb also stated that Dr. Jeff Adams who is over Special Education Services ADE coordinated a landscape map event and members of the School for the Deaf, School for the Blind and Arkansas Children’s EARS Program came together to create a strategic plan identifying all available services. Dr. Cobb will report back to the board with updates.

- **AR Hands & Voice Update:**

- Mandy Jay provided the following updates:
  - In April 2024, Arkansas Hands & Voices started a new process to better serve families and quickly connecting them to Guides.
  - There were three (3) events held so far this year with a total of 143 individuals in attendance.
    - Tasting at Twilight will take place October 24, 2024, where Kim Scott will receive the Nan Ellen East Spirit of Advocacy award.
    - Winter Wonderland will take place December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024, in NW Arkansas.

- **Member Nominations:**

- The IHP reported four (4) board positions have terms expiring January 14, 2025: Arkansas Children’s Audiologist, Pediatrician, Neonatologist or ENT Physician, Deaf or Hard of Hearing Adult and Parent of Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child. An application is already pending approval for the Arkansas Children’s Audiologist. The following nominations were approved by the board:

- Pediatrician, Neonatologist or ENT Physician – Dr. Rober Saadi to replace Dr. Charles Bower
- Deaf or Hard of Hearing Adult – Danna Crook, reappointment
- Parent of Deaf or Hard of Hearing Child – Una Carrol, reappointment

**Upcoming Dates and Special Announcements:**

Dr. Rachel Glade reminded attendees that the Universal Newborn Hearing Screening, Tracking, and Intervention Advisory Board's webpage is available at [Universal Newborn Hearing, Screening, Tracking and Intervention Advisory Board - Arkansas Department of Health](#). Approved advisory board meeting minutes will be posted to the webpage.

Kim stated that the AAP EHDI Provider Education Center requested that EHDI Coordinator's share the provider needs assessment survey and key informant interview to assist in determining which mentorship programs, and chapter grants will be available resources as well as educational training modules. This survey or key informant interview is for any PCP, Pediatric Subspecialist, Audiologist, Speech-Language Pathologist, Early Intervention Service Coordinators, or Providers of Instruction. Responses will be accepted until October 28, 2024.

Kim also mentioned that the IHP is looking to start a Language Acquisition Workgroup to address some of the questions presented under the support objective of the STAR framework. Interested participants should contact Kim to be included in the workgroup.

Dr. Rachel Glade stated that she will be starting her new board position for the American Special Language Hearing Association in January 2025. She thanked everyone for allowing her to Chair the UNHS Advisory Board this year, and she has submitted her resignation to the UNHS Advisory Board. She will continue to support the boards efforts as a non-voting attendee.

Next Meeting, April 22, 2025, 3 pm – via Zoom.

Meeting adjourned at 4:14 p.m.