

Summary of Questions and Responses from 9/1/2016 Applicant Technical Assistance Webinar for HRSA-17-061: Family Leadership in Language and Learning (FL3)

What information is expected to be collected in the family needs assessment?

The information to be collected for the needs assessment is expected to be evidence-based and is expected to allow you to develop the required materials and resources to carry out the activities for your proposed project. Refer to page two (2) of the FOA.

Is it possible for two organizations to submit an application as equal partners?

Yes, two organizations may submit a single application, as partners. More than one application received by either or all parties will deem your application nonresponsive.

The field of deaf education is full of claims and counter-claims about how to best achieve “language acquisition and literacy in deaf and hard of hearing children.” Heated debates about these issues have gone back and forth for over 100 years. Is it realistic to expect the awardee to resolve these debates in the first 6 months of the cooperative agreement? How should we deal with issues where there is not sufficient “evidence,” but an abundance of very strong opinions and anecdotal information?

We do not expect a resolution, but a thorough analysis of the status of the field and current, evidence-based research findings. We expect to increase knowledge within the EHDI field of current evidence and its application amongst all parties.

Less than 15% of children identified by EHDI programs have bilateral severe to profound hearing loss, but almost all of the examples in the FOA are focused on improving services to these children (e.g., expanding Deaf Mentor programs, using qualified deaf adults to teach American Sign Language, developing a guide to understanding deafness and Deaf Culture, unconscious bias about deafness, language deprivation, supporting visual access to communication, etc.). Is the FL3 supposed to be helping families of all children who are deaf or hard of hearing, or is the focus supposed to be primarily on supporting families who choose to communicate with their children using ASL or another visual language?

The FL3 program’s intent is to focus on supporting *all* families of children that are deaf or hard of hearing regardless of the infant or child’s communication modality.

The objectives of the Funding Opportunity Announcement (FOA) (page 1) say that “100% of state/territory EHDI systems will develop partnerships with identified statewide, family based organizations or programs that provide family-to-family support to families of deaf or hard of hearing children identified through newborn screening by the end of the three-year project period.” Do these “family based organizations” have to work exclusively with children who are DHH and their families or would organizations like Family Voices (which already exist in most, if not all states) be appropriate for meeting this objective?

The “family-based organization” must provide family to family support to families/parents/caregivers of deaf or hard of hearing newborns, infants and children.

The grantee is supposed to develop a “culturally sensitive communications campaign for families of deaf and hard of hearing infants/children on the importance of language development and acquisition and risks of language deprivation” (FOA page 3). Does MCHB expect this campaign to also target families of children with unilateral, and mild to moderate hearing loss since these children make up the majority of children who are identified by EHDI programs as DHH?

Yes. This program will target and serve *all* children that are deaf or hard of hearing, regardless of hearing status or communication modality.

The FOA (page 1) defines a Deaf Mentor program specifically as providing families support for interacting with their child using ASL and effective visual communication strategies, and to guide understanding of deafness and Deaf Culture. Gallaudet University reports that more than 90% of children who are DHH have hearing parents, and CDCs 2013 data says that more than 75% of children identified by EHDI programs have unilateral losses or bilateral losses <56 dB. Can the applicant submit a proposal for supporting Deaf mentorship opportunities in the application in order to meet the needs of all families across communication/language and degree of hearing loss spectrum?

Yes, the applicant can submit a proposal for supporting Deaf Mentorship opportunities to meet the needs of all families across the communication modality and hearing status spectrums. To reiterate, one of the program objectives is to increase by 30% from baseline the number of families who are offered support by Deaf Mentors by the end of the three-year project period. Deaf Mentor programs benefit *all* deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.

The wording in the FOA makes it sound like MCHB has abandoned their commitment to family choice with regard to serving children who are DHH. Instead, the focus seems to be on Deaf culture and American Sign Language. Is that your intent?

The focus of this program is to ensure that *all* deaf and hard of hearing children have full access to language for typical language acquisition and development, literacy, cognitive, and social-emotional development.

The FOA (page 2-3) requires a grant recipient to “summarize the latest evidence-based research findings around “Tools and materials for families to structure home environments and family activities to support continuous, visual access to communication and environmental information.” Examples in the FOA pertain primarily to children with bilateral severe to profound hearing loss (CDC data indicates this is about 15% of children identified through EHDI programs). Is it appropriate to also include evidence-based research findings that assist families in structuring home environments and activities for the significant number of children who may also need auditory access?

Yes, inclusion of evidence-based research findings may include those that assist families in structuring home environments and activities for children who may also need auditory access. However, the primary focus of this program is to ensure that a deaf or hard of hearing child has optimal *visual* access to communication for language acquisition and development.

To ensure that fact based research will be the basis of this grant proposal, this means we will need to include all children of all needs-- to offer them opportunities, including ASL

and other modalities.. To be able to provide access to various modalities, can there be collaborators in this grant as "Co-Pis"?

No, there may only be one "Principle Investigator" or "Project Director" for the program.

You mentioned organization chart- are you expecting certain types of organizations to apply?

It is standard practice for HRSA grant programs to request an organizational chart as part of an application. Refer to the Eligibility section within the FOA for organizations eligible to apply.