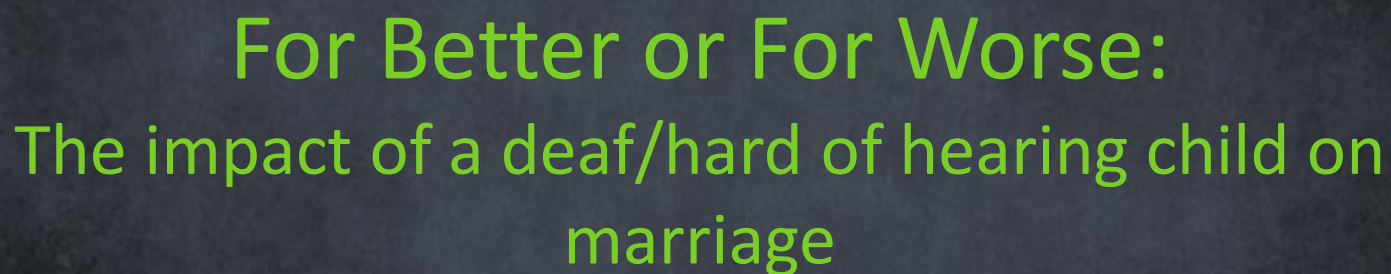





# **EHDI Conference Jacksonville, FL**



**For Better or For Worse:  
The impact of a deaf/hard of hearing child on  
marriage**



**Stephanie Olson and Helen Cotton Leiser**

# Disclaimer

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1. When we refer to “marriage” that encompasses all formats of a partnership!
2. We are not experts in the field! We are parents and/or have a lot of experience working with parents and wanting to begin a conversation on this tough dynamic.

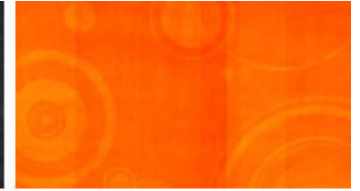
# Today's Objectives

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- Discuss the factors that can lead to marital/partnership stress
- Where (if at all) does Early Intervention fit into the picture
- Identify helpful strategies for professionals and families

# Scary Statistics

## For Better or for Worse-the need to do it differently



### Are the statistics true?

- Definitive statistics on the divorce rate of couples with children with disabilities is not readily available.
- Often assumed-general consensus that it is some what higher
- A child's disability does have a large impact, but it is not predetermined whether this will be detrimental, beneficial, or result in a mixture of effects.
- There is no doubt that the marriage is more complicated.
- Families learn to adapt to meet the needs of the child with special needs.
- Families may be required to develop even better skills than other families may need to have .

### Is there a need to share this information ?

- What happens when professionals share the information?
- Professionals tend to share the negative impact.
- Parents have reported that their marriage has grown even stronger
- “Overall, you can think of a child with a disability as amplifying what occurs in a more typical family and marriage. Closeness may be stronger, divisions greater, anger intensified, sadness deeper, parenting decisions weightier and happy times more exhilarating.”

Married with Special Needs Children Introduction viii

# Ways in which a Marriage can be Impacted

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- Finances
- Self-esteem-pride, guilt, grief
- Sexuality
- Spirituality
- Social life
- Future planning
- Parenting style
- Recreation
- Balance/time
- Pride
- Guilt

# The roles that we carry:

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*“Let us now set forth one of the fundamental truths about marriage; the wife is in charge of everything.”* Bill Cosby

Gender

Competence

Family background/upbringing

Ownership-it's okay to have one parent take the lead

Gatekeeper

Are you the therapist or the parent?

# We are not alone

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- The value of parent to parent support:

First father: “My son can’t be a man with those hearing aids.”

Second father: “It’s gonna be hard to be man if he doesn’t understand what's going on around him.”

- The perspective of: “*when it works*”

This needs to be recognized by professionals and families

- Sense of normalcy

# Strategies for Families

- Communicate-just like any other relationship
- Basic fairness and distribution of responsibilities
- Ask for help
- You are not **doomed**
- Acknowledge and be okay with each of you handling the situation differently

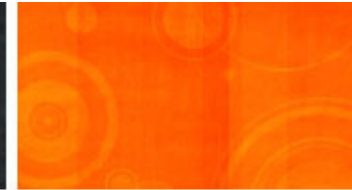


# Early Intervention... Is there a Fit?

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- El is meant to support the family
- Home visits
- Increased awareness and understanding of family structure
- Checklist: Colorado Home Intervention Program –use this as a way for the family to seek outside support/discussion
- What do you think?

# Family Needs Survey by D. Baily and R.Simeonsson 1990 Adapted for the Colorado Home Intervention Program 2002.



**FAMILY NEEDS INTERVIEW**  
for Families of Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

**DIRECTIONS TO THE FACILITATOR:**  
Many families of young children who are deaf or hard of hearing need additional information and/or support to enable them to make the best decisions regarding their child's early intervention services. Listed below are some of the needs frequently identified by these families. This interview should be used with the family to identify areas where the CHIP program may be able to provide these additional supports. Support may take several different forms including printed materials, videotapes, web resources, referrals to other agencies, connections to other parents, and discussion. Some questions may be adequately addressed through information shared during this interview process.

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Person being interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to Child: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

TOPICS	NO	YES	NOT AT THIS TIME	DATE INFORMATION PROVIDED
<b>General Information: Would you like information in any of the following areas?</b>				
1. General growth and development				
2. Playing or talking with my child				
3. Teaching my child				
4. Handling my child's behavior				
<b>Information - Hearing &amp; Hearing Loss: Would you like information in any of the following areas?</b>				
5. Normal hearing & how the ear works				
6. Cause of my child's hearing loss				
7. Hearing aids and how they will help my child				
8. Cochlear implants and other types of hearing devices				
9. Keeping the hearing aid(s) on				
<b>Communication: Would you like information in any of the following areas?</b>				
10. Teaching my child to listen				
11. Hearing loss and the affect on my child's ability to learn to talk				
12. Language development				
13. Sign language				
14. How my child will communicate				
15. How I can communicate with my child				
<b>Services &amp; Educational Resources: Would you like information in any of the following areas?</b>				
16. Special services available for my child				
17. Communication accessible activities and programs in my community				
18. Special services available in my local school district				
19. Ideas to more effectively communicate with my child's teacher or therapist				

OVER →

TOPICS	NO	YES	NOT AT THIS TIME	DATE INFORMATION PROVIDED
20. Ideas to manage time regarding my child's hearing needs & therapies				
21. Other conditions my child may have				
<b>Family &amp; Social Support: Would support in any of the following areas assist you in meeting the needs of your family and child?</b>				
22. Talking with someone in my family, or a friend, about my concerns				
23. Opportunities to meet with other parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing				
24. Opportunities to meet deaf and hard of hearing adults				
25. Information about parent support groups				
26. Help with our family's, or extended family's, acceptance and understanding of the hearing loss				
27. Meet with a counselor who specializes in hearing loss issues				
28. Meet with a counselor regarding family issues				
29. Explaining my child's hearing problem to others				
30. Help with sibling issues				
<b>Do you need assistance in any of the following areas? These issues and concerns may need to be referred to the case manager (CO-Hear Coordinator) or other resources in the community.</b>				
1. Help locating good baby-sitters for my child				
2. Help locating a day care program for my child				
3. Help locating therapists or other specialists				
4. Help with transportation				
5. Funding for hearing aids				
6. Funding for therapy				
7. Funding for child care/respite care				
8. Funding for other special equipment my child needs				
9. Resources for food, housing, medical care, clothing, or transportation				

Please list other topics or information that the family would like to receive or discuss:

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Source: From "The Family Needs Survey" by D. Baily and R. Simeonsson, 1990. Adapted for the Colorado Home Intervention Program, January, 2002.

# Strategies for Professionals

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- Eye contact-eye level
- State the positive “The sounds that you are making as you hold your son are just what he needs.”
- Allow each parent different ways to communicate with their child for daily routines
- Accept the parents differences as they go through appointments
- Two sets of information, business cards
- Acknowledge difficulties

# Resources

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Marshak, Laura., Seligman, Milton., and Prezant, Fran. (1999) *Disability and the family Life Cycle-Recognizing and Treating Developmental Challenges*

Published by Basic Books

Marshak, Laura., Pollock Prezant, Fran., (2007) *Married with Special Needs Children-A Couples Guide to Keeping Connected* Woodbine House

Stritof , Sheri & Bob. *The Impact of a Disabled Child on Your Marriage*

Family Needs Survey by D. Baily and R.Simeonsson

1990 *Adapted for the Colorado Home Intervention Program* 2002.

For Better or For Worse Keeping Relationships Strong while Parenting Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children by Sue E. Ouellette, LMFT, LCPC

[http://www.handsandvoices.org/articles/fam\\_perspectives/V10-2\\_betterworse.htm](http://www.handsandvoices.org/articles/fam_perspectives/V10-2_betterworse.htm)

Thank you!!

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