

Using Videophones for Early Family Sign Language Instruction

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How VRS Works



VRS Equipment - Primary Functions

- Deaf-to-hearing videophone calls using VRS interpreter services
- Deaf-to-deaf videophone calls



Why VRS?

- Up to 5 times faster than TTY relay calls
- Real-time conversations - no need to take turns
- Fewer hang-ups - from the hearing person
- Ability to express emotional content
- Expands telephone use to younger children and students with minimal language skills

Video Relay Service (VRS) Project at TSD

- Implement VRS equipment & training
 - Currently 150 stations operating
 - Goal = Campus wide VRS access
- Several vendors provide TSD with equipment and support
- TSD/ERCOD provides VRS training and assistance for interested regional day school programs and other educational programs.

Project's Origins

- Experimenting with using the equipment for educational purposes
 - Better home-school connection
 - Services to homebound students
 - Providing outreach to families in remote areas



Pilot Outreach Program



...began as a
result of a
Family
Workshop at
TSD...



...which often leaves them begging for more.

From Mom's Journal...

“Being at the school opened my eyes to the true potential that my little boy had. It lit a fire in me that drove me to want to get him every and any resource available for him.”

so Mom gives us a call...

The Right Time & Place...

ERCOD at TSD had...

- Videophones in place
- David Coco - VRS Demonstration Project Coordinator and videophone enthusiast and technical expert
- Diana Poeppelmeyer - Former Parent Infant Teacher in Outreach Department

Pilot Project Team

- Pilot Project Family
 - Dad
 - Mom
 - Hearing child, 4 years old
 - Deaf child, 12 months old
- Educational Resource Center on Deafness (at TSD)
 - Diana Poeppelmeyer - Sign Instructor
 - David Coco - Technology advisor
- Early Intervention Service Coordinator
- Regional Day School for the Deaf Program Supervisor

Pilot had 3 Trial Applications:

- Sign Instruction for Parents
- Sign Instruction for Hearing Sibling
- Parent to Parent Support

Parent Sign Instruction

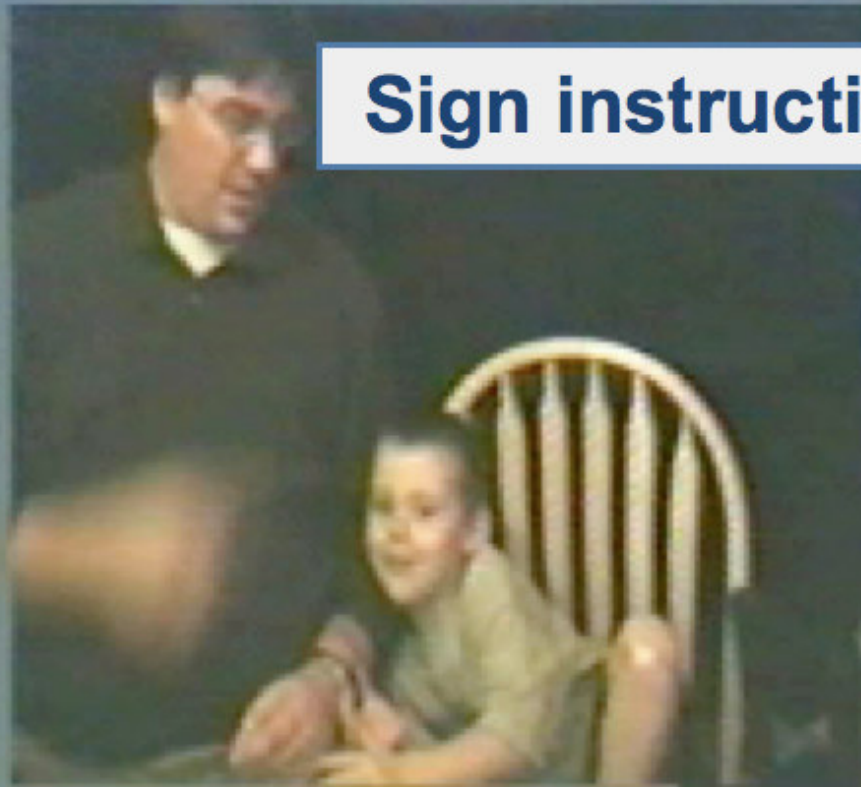


Cancel



Sent fps: 25 Received fps: 24
Sent bps: 228 K Received bps: 228 K
Packet loss: 0%

Sign instruction for Hearing Sibling



Cancel



Sent fps: 24 Received fps: 24
Sent bps: 225 K Received bps: 228 K
Packet loss: 0%

Parent to Parent Support



Cancel



Sent fps: 25 Received fps: 25
Sent bps: 229 K Received bps: 229 K
Packet loss: 0%

The Pilot Project Evolves...



and changes from
Remote ASL Instruction Project
(RASLIP)

to a new name...

“ Family Signs ”

Family Signs Program

Families

Educational Resource
Center on Deafness

Sorenson

- Can View *Bravo ASL!* Videos on loan or by viewing streaming videos from Described & Captioned Media Program
- Request a different curriculum if needed
- Purchase of instructional materials is optional
- Family members are the students

Family Signs Program

Families

**Educational Resource
Center on Deafness**

Sorenson

The Educational Resource Center
on Deafness provides project
coordination and monitoring

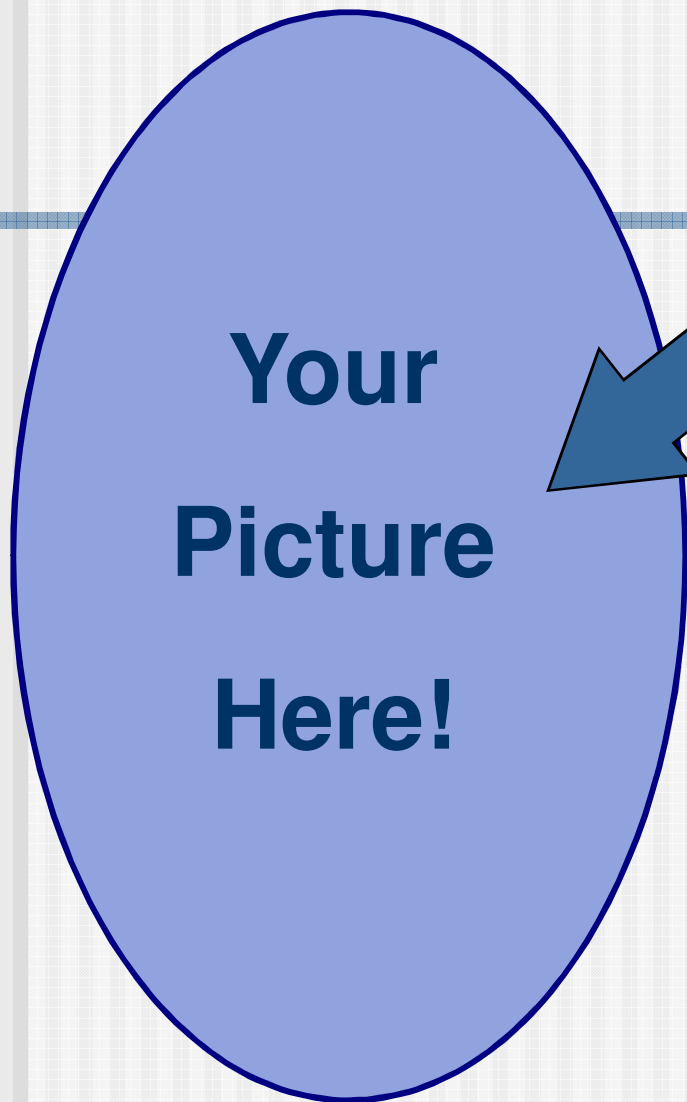
Family Signs Program

Families

**Educational Resource
Center on Deafness**

Sorenson

- Sorenson Interpreters are the Sign Instructors
- Sorenson provides equipment to families
- Sorenson works with ERCOD toward project improvement



**Your
Picture
Here!**

I WANT YOU!



**TO HELP MY FAMILY
LEARN SIGN LANGUAGE**
INSTRUCTORS NEEDED FOR THE TSD REMOTE ASL INSTRUCTION
PROJECT FOR FAMILIES. YOU WILL PROVIDE SIGN LANGUAGE
INSTRUCTION VIA VIDEOPHONE. OPEN TO ALL INTERPRETERS.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE.
CONTACT DIANA POEPELMEYER AT 800-332-3873
DIANA.POEPELMEYER@TSD.STATE.TX.US

Phase 2 Pilot Project Team

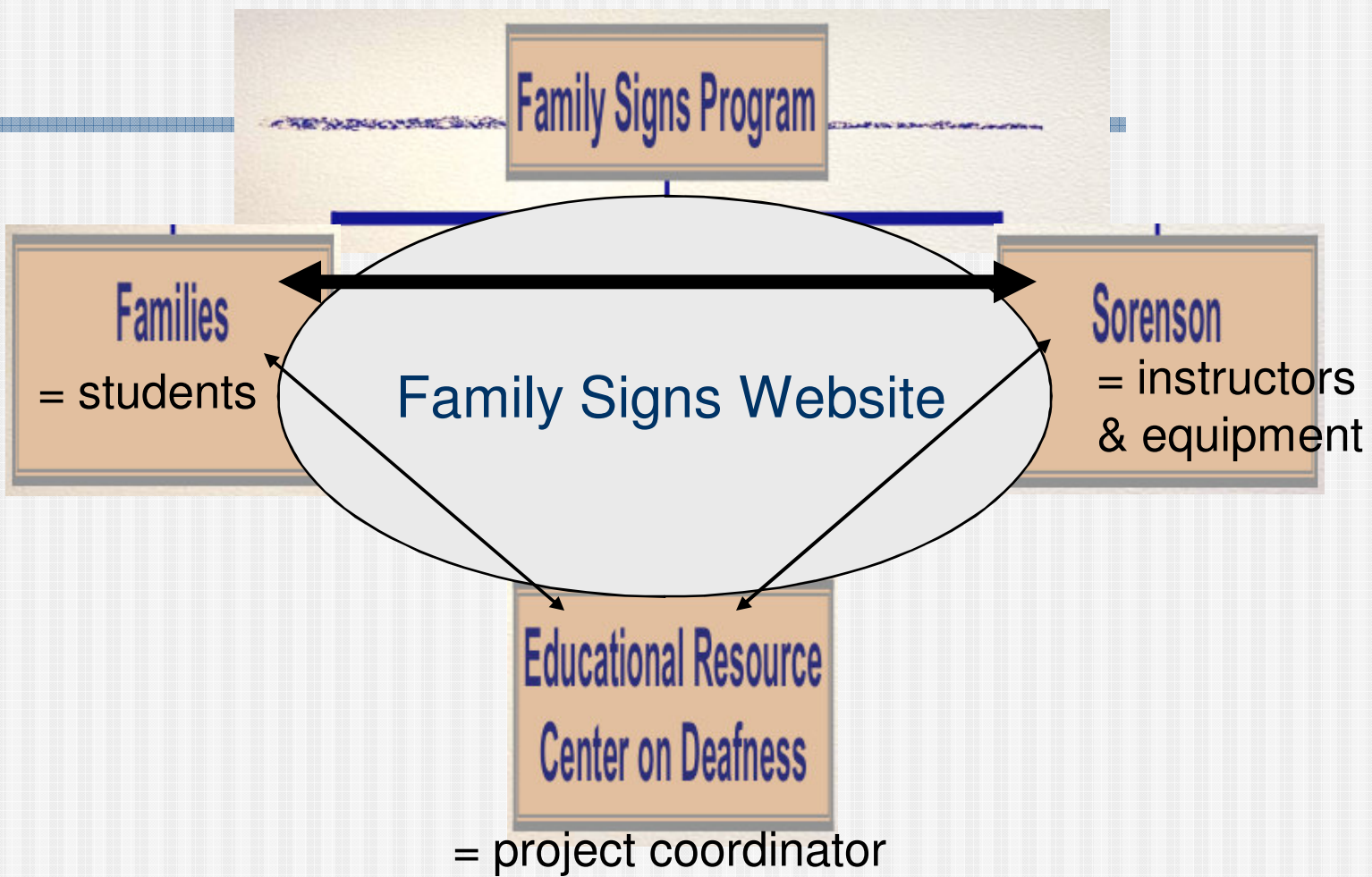
- Pilot Project Family
- Sorenson Interpreters
- Sorenson
- Educational Resource Center on Deafness
- Early Intervention Service Coordinator
- Regional Day School for the Deaf Program Supervisor
or other educational service provider

Proceed with Caution

Instructors must stay only within the content and context of the Bravo ASL! Series

Instructors must NOT

- take on the role of parent advisors
- offer opinions on the value of various signing options, educational methodology or placement
- offer advice to the parent on communication preferences





Educational Resource Center on Deafness
at Texas School for the Deaf
Family Signs Program



Home
Program Overview
Contact Us

Students

Student Information

Register for the Program

Login to Your Account

Instructors

Instructor Information

Register for the Program

Login to Your Account

Sponsored By

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Welcome to the *Family Signs* Program

Family Signs is a free sign language instruction program that provides one-on-one classes using videophones with a high-speed Internet connection. This program is intended for parents of deaf children who want to improve their sign language skills but do not have easy access to traditional sign language classes. *Family Signs* is coordinated by the [Educational Resource Center on Deafness \(ERCOD\)](#) at [Texas School for the Deaf \(TSD\)](#) and sponsored by [Sorenson Communications](#).



Who can participate?

If you are a parent or guardian of a deaf or hard of hearing child and you reside in Texas you are eligible for this program. We encourage you to visit the [Program Overview](#) and [Student Information](#) pages for more information about the program.

"I felt that the whole family was being taken into consideration for the first time ... That was a major breakthrough for us!"

— comment from a parent of a deaf child who participated in the pilot project for

www.familysigns.org

Family Signs is a Work in Progress

Pilot Projects are meant to:

- Refine the process
- Work out the kinks
- Report results
- Gather feedback

Work in Progress

- Sign Instructors are a part of a **Yahoo Discussion Group** to share ideas, concerns, and successes.
- A contact person (we chose a parent) works part time to communicate with parents

Work in Progress

- 30 Families on board in phase 2
- We have a long waiting list
- Reality of the VRS market has brought us to a fork in the road

Work in Progress

- Exploring new models of service delivery
 - Seeking grants to buy equipment outright and distributing to families on a lender basis
 - Working with multiple VRS providers
 - Packaging FamilySigns in a larger framework

Current Status

- FamilySigns is currently on hold due to:
 - Changes in FCC regulations
 - Changes in VRS marketing strategies

Making it work...

- Low incidence disability requires consolidated but nationally accessible resources
- The equipment, the infrastructure exist
- The market has changed significantly
- The challenge is putting it all together

Possibilities

- FamilySigns morphs to FamilySupport
 - FamilySupport includes
 - Parent mentoring
 - Deaf and Hard of Hearing Mentoring
 - FamilySigns
 - FamilyCues
- Go National
 - Collaborate with a family driven organization
 - Collaborate with multiple videophone makers

Possibilities

New models of service delivery

Fee for service

Creative collaborations

Contact Information:

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