



Educational Resource Center on Deafness
at Texas School for the Deaf

Family Signs Program



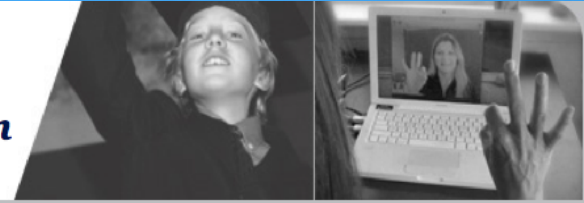
EHDI Conference
February 2011

Presenter:
Lisa Bosson
Coordinator of Family Signs



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Family Signs Program



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www.familysigns.org

Welcome to the *Family Signs* Program *Powered by Skype and ooVoo*

Family Signs is a free sign language instruction program that provides one-on-one classes using computers with a high-speed Internet connection or videophones when available. 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 \(TSD\)](#).

The *Family Signs* Coordinator, [Lisa Bosson](#), oversees the program.

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.

Who are the instructors?

- Advanced sign language students of college/university Deaf Education Programs
- Advanced sign language students of college/university Interpreter Training Programs



"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 *Family Signs*.

▶ What is Family Signs Program?

- Free sign language instruction program providing one-on-one classes using free, downloadable videoconference applications

▶ Who is it for?

- Primarily for parents of deaf and hard-of-hearing children in **Texas**.



What is its purpose?

- + To provide convenient, in-home sign language instruction to improve and strengthen communication between parents and their deaf/hard of hearing children

History of *Family Signs*

- + 04/05 - 1st Pilot / One Family through videophones
- + 05/06 – 2nd Pilot/ *Family Signs* partnership with Sorenson
- + 06/09 Funding Doldrums



09 *Family Signs* Revived

- + New Name = *Family Signs* powered by Skype & ooVoo
- + A coordinator is hired

Changes Included:

- + Use of free videoconference applications
- + Instructors are advanced students from:
 - + Interpreting Training programs (ITP)
 - + Deaf Education programs
- + Webcams loaned to parents & instructors as needed

Instructors

- + Are volunteers
- + Earn either a grade as a part of the course or
- + Earn community service hours for their degree as mandated by program

Primary videoconference applications:

+ Skype



+ ooVoo







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Training provided by coordinator

- + Instructor Registration
- + Use of videoconferencing programs
- + Use of curriculum
- + Appropriate Roles and Boundaries
- + Teaching responsibilities
- + Weekly evaluations

Roles & Boundaries of Instructors

- + Must NOT:
 - + Take on the role of parent advisors
 - + Offer opinions or advice on the value of various signing systems
 - + Offer opinions or advice on educational methodology or placement
- + Must stay only within the content and context of the curriculum/lessons

Primary Curriculum

- + Bravo ASL! as primary curriculum
- + Alternate Curriculum for parents with advanced skills
- + Bravo series available online at the Described and Captioned Media Program.
- + Lesson is 30 minutes weekly. Instructors have additional 30 minute prep.

Last year's info:

- + Classes January 2010 - May 2010
- + Goal to serve 30 parents
 - + served 47 parents & 23 parents were wait listed
- + All teachers were hearing except for one instructor who registered independently (not affiliated with colleges)
- + At least 10 parents were Spanish speaking
- + Parents were from 38 cities/towns

38 Cities/Towns

+ Abilene	Dallas	Laredo	Sherman
+ Addison	Fairfield	McKinney	Spring
+ Amarillo	Fort Worth	Midland	Stafford
+ Arlington	Georgetown	Monahans	Sugarland
+ Austin	Greenville	Nederland	Tomball
+ Baytown	Groves	New Carney	Victoria
+ Canyon	Hereford	Pasadena	Waco
+ Cedar Hill	Houston	San Antonio	Weatherford
+ Corpus Christi	Kingwood	San Marcos	
+ Cypress	Killeen	Seguin	

Disqualified Registrants:

- + Special needs teachers
- + Speech pathologists
- + Regular ed. teacher
- + Teacher needing to learn signs for school
- + College students with communications major
- + Has child with cleft palate
- + Has child with Down's Syndrome
- + Has hearing autistic child
- + Has deaf husband

Successes :

- + Many instructors felt they were contributing to a worthy cause; developed good relationships with parent(s)
- + Good PR for colleges
- + Many parents expressed gratitude for the program
- + Deaf/HoH children as well as hearing siblings wanting to participate with parent or to observe
- + Parents get 1 to 1 instruction; can go at own pace; ask questions
- + Parents can have classes at home on own schedule

Challenges:

- + Need more instructors with Spanish skills
- + Technical problems:
 - + parents lack confidence downloading videoconferencing applications
 - + inconsistencies of video quality
- + Some parents lack literacy for using curriculum
- + Need curriculum for parents with more advanced skills
- + Instructors from ITPs lacking teaching skills
- + Not enough teachers! (not the case now)

Present: Model A

- + 100% Volunteer Instructors from colleges & universities

Challenges of model "A"

- + Technical problems
- + Instructor challenges
- + Starting over each semester
- + Providing training for each semester/year

2011- 12 Proposal for 50/50 Blended Model

Model A

- + Continue volunteer Instructors from reduced number of colleges & universities

Model B

- + 1 paid instructor teaching 2--3 students in one session via multiple windows in Skype and ooVoo

Pros of Model A

- + Have working relationships with Colleges and Universities
- + Gives college students (as FS instructors) experience in working with parents
- + Allows them to earn community service hours/credit

Pros of Model B

- + Hire instructors with teaching experience
- + Instructors remaining with FS
- + Potential for more advanced instructors
- + Potential for cost savings

Possible new model C:

If 2011 evaluations warrant major changes then will:

- + Discontinue colleges
- + Hire coordinator to do publicizing, coordinating and scheduling
- + Hire 3 or 4 part time instructors (each to cover different parts of days)

Continued Challenges for **all** models

+ Parent accountability

+ Technical problems

Other similar programs:

- + Sorenson/Learning Center at Framingham, MA
 - + for Learning Center Families only
- + Family Learning ASL Videophone Program
 - + Serving parents of Northern California of deaf children 0-7 yrs.
 - + January –May
- + Florida School for the Deaf and Blind
 - + 2 paid part-time instructors teach parents across the state

For More Information

+ Contact: familysigns@tsd.state.tx.us

+ www.familysigns.org

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

