

### Deaf Children & Young Juveniles Up to the Age of 14.

There is a significant separation between the deaf and hearing communities. Though the 'hard of hearing' communities can experience less separation from the general populace in work and recreation, the truly deaf individuals can frequently experience extreme isolation in general, and from the rest of the non-deaf community especially (EWCDHH). This also tends to mean limited resources and opportunities at many levels, especially with recreation-related events for non-hearing children (WSODHH).

There is an ongoing battle between different factions of the deaf and hard of hearing communities about 'integration' versus 'separate but equal' approaches. Those in the integration camp believe that deaf children shouldn't focus as much on sign language, but instead should focus on learning to read lips, and to speak, in order to communicate with the hearing community, and many avoid interacting with the deaf culture communities (Humphries, T., Padden, C., & O'Rourke, T.J. pp.1-13). Additionally, for those that can benefit from cochlear implants, these members are strong advocates for their use. Those on the other side of the debate feel strongly that a child is being 'taken away' from the deaf community, if taught to lip-read and speak, rather than signing (DeafWeb 2007).

These debates have led to several splits between the deaf, hard of hearing, and hearing communities. Unfortunately, in this battle of beliefs by the adults, the deaf children are missing out on opportunities from both communities. It may well be that there is benefit in integrating aspects of both approaches (DeafWeb 2007).

Children should be taught sign language in parallel to lip reading and signing. They should be included in BOTH the hearing and non-hearing community circles of events and activities. There are a number of studies indicating how much it helps children to learn a *second* language in their early formative years (DeafWeb 2007). This makes for a strong argument for teaching both ASL/SEE and English simultaneously. There are also studies that indicate that learning *sign* language in general helps increase cognitive and coordinative abilities, and other characteristics of development (Humphries, T., Padden, C., & O'Rourke, T.J. pp.1-13).

The focus of this program guide will be on the developmental and coping skills mechanisms through recreational (and even musical) activities, for deaf and hard of hearing children. The goal is to ascertain recreational activities that can help improve their chances of physical, intellectual and social developmental opportunities through both the hearing and non-hearing communities.

The need that may exist is that there is considerable social isolation for many deaf and hard of hearing children, causing a reduction in many of the typical childhood growth experiences both physically as well as socially.

Humphries, T., Padden, C., & O'Rourke, T.J. (2003, March). Introduction. *A Basic Course In American Sign Language Second Edition*, 13<sup>th</sup> Printing. pp. 1-13.

Eastern Washington Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (EWCDHH). (n.d.). Retrieved January 16th, 2007, from <http://www.ewcdhh.org>

Washington State Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (WSODHH) . (n.d.). Retrieved January 17th, 2007, from <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/hrsa/odhh/>

DeafWeb Washington. (n.d.). Retrieved January 17th, 2007, from <http://www.deafweb.org>