

December 2024



# South Dakota Services for the Deaf



## Sensory Studio Event in Sioux Falls

SDSD Outreach Consultants Laura and Erica hosted an event at the Sensory Studio for their birth-to-five families. Parents and caregivers had the opportunity to connect and share experiences, while the kids enjoyed playtime in a fun and engaging environment. Bringing children who are deaf and hard of hearing and their families together is important for building a strong support network and fostering early language and social development. These connections help families feel empowered, ensuring that every child has access to the resources and community they need to thrive. A big thank you to the SDSD Foundation for supporting this meaningful event!

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## FM Verifications in Brookings

Dr. Kristine Miller and Outreach consultant Julie Delfs did FM verifications for the Brookings School District. A pediatric audiologist needs to perform FM verification because it ensures that a child's FM system (used to improve hearing in noisy environments like a classroom) is delivering the correct sound level and quality directly to their devices, maximizing the benefit they receive from the technology and allowing them to fully participate in classroom activities without being hindered by background noise. This verification is crucial for students's speech and language development and overall access to the classroom environment. Dr. Miller and Julie's collaborative efforts made sure this happened for the students in Brookings.



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## Signing Saturdays in Spearfish

We had a great turn out at our five week Signing Saturday series here in Spearfish. Thank you to the Jitter Joint for hosting and for the collaboration from SD Deaf Resources and Outreach Program. The kids and families had a blast learning sign and practiced what we learned in a fun interactive way. We had 77 participants for this series, and we look forward to our spring 2025 series. Our goal is to build a community of signers for our friends that use ASL to communicate.

## Outreach Professional Development

The SDSD Outreach Consultants participated in a valuable professional development training during Fall 2024, enhancing their skills and knowledge to better serve deaf and hard of hearing students. The training included software sessions, CAPD training with Dr. Marni Johnson, a discussion with Meaghan Neuberger from SD Hands & Voices, and CPR certification. A highlight of the event was the motivational speaker presentation, which provided inspiration and renewed focus for our work. This training also served as a great opportunity for team building, allowing consultants—who are spread out across South Dakota—to connect in person. Strengthening our skills and relationships ensures we continue providing high-quality support to the families and students we serve.



## Family Bowling Even in Rapid City

SDSD Outreach hosted a Halloween Bowling Party on Friday, October 25th at Meadowood Lanes in Rapid City for West River SDSD clients and their families. Consultants Kerry Ruth, Nina Ringstmeyer, Shawna Goldhammer, and Denika Boomsma enjoyed a night of bowling and pizza with families, courtesy of the SDSD Foundation. Deaf Mentors and ASL interpreters also attended this fun, annual event.





## SDSD Partners with USD

South Dakota Services for the Deaf (SDSD) Outreach Consultants assisted in the University of South Dakota (USD) Speech and Hearing Outreach Clinic in Rapid City on October 24th and 25th. West River families were given the opportunity to have their child's cochlear implant and osseointegrated device services provided closer to home. SDSD Outreach Consultants partnered with Rapid City Area Schools (RCAS) and the USD Scottish Rite Speech and Hearing Clinic. Evaluations were performed at the RCAS Jefferson Building. Special thanks to Julie Hintgen, RCAS Educational Audiologist, and Dr. Keyra Comer, Director of Special Services, for providing a location for this clinic. Dr. Jessica Messersmith, with three audiology students, and Dr. Mandy Williams, with three speech-language pathology (SLP) students, saw 15 kids for audiology and speech appointments. Various services were provided: cochlear implant programming appointments, osseointegrated device programming appointments, consultation/evaluation appointments, communication support, and language evaluations. The six graduate students from the University of South Dakota participated in the outreach clinic as a part of their doctoral and master's programs. The next cochlear implant outreach clinic is scheduled for the Spring of 2025.



## Signing Santa in Spearfish & Sioux Falls

Signing Santa made his rounds to Spearfish and Sioux Falls and the event brought holiday magic to children who are deaf and hard of hearing and their families. The event included taking pictures with Santa, decorating holiday cookies, and enjoying festive arts and crafts. The highlight of the event was Santa signing a story, captivating the children as they watched in awe. Seeing Santa communicate in their language made the experience truly special and inclusive for all. Even students who did not know sign language loved seeing Santa and learning some signs. It was a joyful and memorable event, bringing families together to share in the spirit of the season!





## Microtia Awareness Day

West River Consultants, our Audiologist, and families celebrated Microtia Awareness Day playing together at Run Wild. National Microtia Awareness Day is on November 9th and we stand together to raise awareness about Microtia, a condition where the outer ear does not fully develop. It affects many individuals, but it does not define them.

Our SDSD team had a great time honoring children who have Microtia and/or wear BAHA devices. Let's continue to celebrate the strength, resilience, and unique beauty of those living with Microtia. Every ear tells a story, and every story deserves to be heard.



## Family Sign Language Classes in Brandon

Outreach Consultant Katie Janssen and Interpreter Chloe Mayo host ongoing sign language classes for parents of children who are deaf and hard of hearing at Buddies & Co coffee shop in Brandon. These classes provide families with the opportunity to build their sign language skills, helping them enhance communication with their children in meaningful ways. Beyond language learning, the sessions foster a supportive community where parents can connect, share experiences, and learn from one another. Families look forward to each gathering, not only to expand their vocabulary but also to build lasting relationships with others on a similar journey. These classes are an invaluable resource, empowering parents to create more inclusive and accessible environments for their children.



## Presentation at Dakota Wesleyan University

Mindy Childs' first introduction to students with hearing difficulties was as a case manager for a student with Cochlear Implants. Because of this, she has developed an understanding of accommodations and modifications specific to hearing differences by having an SDSD outreach consultant on their multidisciplinary team. Mrs. Childs, now a professor at Dakota Wesleyan University, finds it essential that the next generation of teachers have the basic knowledge of hearing differences before entering the classroom. These future teachers student-teach in South Dakota. SDSD serves nearly 700 students with hearing differences, so the likelihood of having a student who uses some hearing equipment in their classroom is high. That said, Laura Scholten and Jodi Schnider were tasked with presenting Hearing Differences 101 to 12 future elementary education teachers. We appreciate the opportunity to provide this experience for them!





# SDSD Numbers

## Audiology Numbers

# of children screened by SDSD's Mobile Lab = 18,808

# of referrals for follow up = 600

# of sites visited by SDSD's Mobile Lab and audiology outreach services = 151

# of SDSD Full Diagnostic Evaluations in Sioux Falls and Rapid City Clinics = 290

*The table to the right details audiology services provided to South Dakota children from July 1, 2024, through December 31, 2024, at SDSD's Sioux Falls Clinic, Rapid City Clinic, and via the mobile lab.*

## OUTREACH NUMBERS

**# of Children Currently Being Served by SDSD Outreach Consultants:**

**698**

In-services and guest lectures are provided by members of the SDSD Outreach and Audiology teams as an extension of support for children with varied hearing levels. These in-services relate to varied hearing status and its educational impact, technical assistance and orientation with hearing aids, cochlear implants, FM/DM systems, sound field systems, and/or interpreters, or educational strategies and materials that may benefit SDSD clients. The information to the right details trainings provided by SDSD staff July 1, 2024 through December 31, 2024.

**# OF INSERVICES AND TRAININGS:**

**93**

**# OF SOUTH DAKOTANS EDUCATED:**

**1,326**