Ah...the sun is shining the birds are chirping, spring is in the air!
And after being cooped up inside all winter, the kids are ready to go outside and play! With the beautiful weather and outside play, a topic may come up…the deaf child sign, does it work?

You’ve seen those yellow signs scattered in your own city—perhaps on your own street announcing that your deaf child lives nearby. Parents often advocate for the cautionary sign when a child is a tiny being, not yet imagining the day when an older child has his or her own opinions about such a sign. Hands & Voices is often asked about this topic, so we sought reliable information and feedback from parents across North America to learn more.

Parents of older children may be surprised to learn that not all transportation/traffic agencies will put the signs up in today’s world. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) publishes The Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD), which specifies which signs and by what standards traffic signs, road surface markings and signals are designed, installed and used. The manual included a change in their policies for warning signs such as the deaf child sign, “slow, children playing” and similar warnings in the 2003 revision and again in late 2009: “The use of warning signs should be kept to a minimum as the unnecessary use of warning signs tends to breed disrespect for all signs.” The MUTCD is used by state and local agencies as well as private construction firms to ensure that the traffic control devices they use conform to the national standard.

Anecdotal complaints against the yellow signs abound: they do not slow traffic, go virtually unnoticed by drivers, put children at risk for predators, give parents and children a false sense of security, are a waste of taxpayer funds and invade a child’s privacy. Local governments can continue to put up signs despite the policy of the FHWA if they so choose. Fort Collins, Colorado and Wichita, Kansas have brochures and memos stating that they will not. Fort Collins’ memo goes as far as to state “It has been proven that Deaf Child signs do not increase traffic safety or reduce speeds in any way.” As noted, Fort Collins cannot point to the source of this claim. Some locales charge families for the signs, such as the city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Parents will get some obnoxious responses from some offices, such as “It’s not like the driver will know which child is deaf, anyway.” Obviously, it’s not okay to hit hearing children, either.

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No parents of d/hh children believed that the sign would protect them on its own or was any kind of substitute for supervision while playing outside. All agreed that all children had to be taught safety rules and continually have them reinforced.

Some locations still issue deaf child signs if a family requests them. Look up your city or county department of transportation to find out who to contact. As noted, some areas will charge the family for the signs. If a deaf child sign is not possible in a particular area, citizens (and preferably the neighborhood as a whole) can still request traffic studies, speed limit signs, speed awareness monitors (those signs that digitally flash a driver’s speed back to them and warn when over the limit) and speed bumps/curbs to slow traffic. Playground and pedestrian crossing signs are still permitted, and maybe helpful. Roundabouts and extending sidewalks into the crosswalk are other additions to neighborhoods that do slow traffic.

With careful parenting and teaching, deaf and hard of hearing children should be at no more risk for accidents with passing motor vehicles than hearing children. As Maddie’s mom, I am glad we had the sign, but it’s time for it to come down now that she is older and definitely is safer on her bike, skateboard, or playing volleyball in the nearby park. Knowing what I know now, I don’t know if I would pursue the sign if we time travelled back to the day when she was two years old. The best drivers don’t need the signs. Will the worst drivers change their driving habits for a little yellow sign in your neighborhood? I wish I could tell you that they would.

Sara Kennedy, Colorado Hands & Voices

http://www.handsandvoices.org/articles/education/advocacy/14-1  streetsign.htm
WI Families for Hands & Voices has created a team for the walk. Go to the above website and choose the Milwaukee Walk and search for Team Name: WI Families for Hands & Voices to join or donate to our team. We hope you will join us as we raise money for this worthy cause. We are an alliance group meaning 40% of all the money we raise will come back to our organization to help Wisconsin families.
I have recently heard about the Kanso, what can you tell us about it?

This is fairly new technology from Cochlear America, having just been approved by the FDA in September 2017. Unlike most hearing aids and current cochlear implant sound processors that are worn on the ear, this new cochlear processor features a single on/off button with no cables so it is easy to use. It is worn on the user’s head with nothing behind the ear, adding greater comfort for those with glasses, and it can be easily hidden under or blended within a user’s hair. The Kanso Sound Processor will be available in eight colors, allowing the device to blend in with a wide range of hair colors. Commercial availability for Kanso is expected in Fall 2016 in the United States. In March 2017, the Kanso Sound Processor will be available as an upgrade for current recipients with the following internal cochlear implants: CI512, CI522, CI532, CI24(RE)CA, CI422, CI24RE(ST), N24, and Hybrid L24.

WI Hands & Voices hosted a wonderful Moms Brunch in the Madison area on January 29. In attendance were an amazing group of Moms of kids with hearing loss, from infancy to adulthood ... we all learned from one another. We even had some Grandmas attend too! We each brought a dish to pass and shared a meal together, along with great conversations about our awesome kids!

Feel free to join us at an upcoming event ... the networking is so worth it:

**Moms Brunch**
April 2, 2017, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

**Summer Picnic**
July 23, 2017, 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

We hope to see you there!!

Laurie Nelson, WI H&V Board Member and Proud Parent
Insider tip: "258" means "very interesting."

If a Deaf person ever jokingly signs to you the numbers "2, 5, 8" what they mean is "very interesting." The two comes from the initialized English sign for VERY. (The English sign VERY uses a "V" as the handshape and uses a position, palm orientation, and movement similar to the sign "BIG." Which is to say, the Signed English sign "VERY" is an initialized version of the ASL sign "BIG.") ASL doesn't use the sign "VERY," rather ASL uses exaggerated movement, body language, and facial expression to indicate the idea of "very."
Hands & Voices is looking for families/professionals/consumers from all over the state to serve on our board. Your application will be considered and voted upon by acting Board members. This is typically a two-year term. We are asking for a commitment from those wishing to serve as Board members to minimally include:

1. An understanding of and adherence to our mission statement. It states as follows:
   “Wisconsin Families for Hands & Voices is dedicated to supporting families with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing without a bias around communication modes or methodology. We are parent-driven, non-profit organization providing families with the resources, networks, and information they need to improve communication access and educational outcomes for their children. Our outreach activities, parent/professional collaboration, and advocacy efforts are focused on enabling Deaf and Hard of Hearing children to reach their highest potential.”

2. Attendance at regularly meetings (three quarterly board meetings per year), which may be held at different locations in the state. Must notify president if unable to attend. A participation of at least 2 board meetings a year is required.

3. Participation on subcommittees, at least one per year as needed.

If you or someone you know is interested, please contact Kristy at kristy200224@yahoo.com to get an application. Thank you from your Hands & Voices Board.