

September 12, 2017

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

This is a special year for you and your child. You are preparing for Kindergarten and it is a very exciting and important time for your family. Congratulations!

Kindergarten is a year full of fun and adventure; however, it is around this time when parents are often faced with making tough decisions for their child who is deaf or hard of hearing. As children transition from preschool into Kindergarten, some parents may find it scary and stressful as well as exciting and new. This is not a transition that takes place overnight. It takes months of planning and working with your early intervention team of professionals to determine your child's needs, classroom supports and what school placement will be most appropriate for them and their learning style. Starting this process now and becoming involved in a program such as PEER can help ensure you have the information you need to make informed choices and that your child is set up for the most successful transition possible.

The PEER program, developed by BC Family Hearing Resource Centre, is designed to educate parents about how to effectively advocate for their child's specific needs **as related to hearing loss** in school settings. PEER is delivered by highly trained staff including certified teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, speech and language pathologists, an AV therapist and our family support parents. **PEER is available to our local families & our outreach families.** PEER teaches parents about the challenges deaf and hard of hearing children face in school settings. These challenges present themselves in many ways and research shows that children with hearing loss are at risk for social, emotional and academic difficulties. PEER can help families recognize signs and symptoms of these issues and help alleviate any potential fears about entering Kindergarten. PEER also provides an opportunity for parents to ask questions and engage in discussion with staff and other parents (past and present) who are also experiencing or who have already experienced this journey.

The PEER program consists of **6 evening sessions**, once a month that are approximately 1.5 hours in length. These evening sessions are held at our Centre in Surrey and on line (via "Go to Meeting") **for those who live in Outreach communities or for those living too far to travel to Surrey.** If you need to participate in the monthly PEER sessions via "Go to Meeting", please let us know when you call or email to register.



At the end of the 6 evening monthly parent sessions, you are invited to join us, at our Centre, for our **3-day PEER** taking place on **April 19th, 20th, and 21st, 2018**. This is a chance for all of the parents, who have been participating in the PEER evening sessions (local & outreach), to meet in person and to have the opportunity, through panels, to hear from and ask questions of, parents, hard of hearing youth and/or young adults and hearing professionals providing equipment and support to your child. Parents will also learn about the supports available to your family as you leave your early intervention years. **3-day PEER** also offers a classroom experience **for children who will be going into mainstream classrooms without the need for one-on-one support** and parents will have the opportunity to observe their child in an accessible classroom setting as their child gets to know other children who have hearing loss and use hearing aids, FM, and cochlear implants. You will see firsthand how the children are being encouraged to take responsibility for their own equipment and listening checks, are taught to advocate for themselves in challenging listening situations, and are encouraged to become the “Boss of their Hearing Loss”!

The monthly evening sessions and the April three day workshops are filled with information and ideas that are designed to support you as you begin this journey with your child. Your child’s formal educational career is about to start which means your job as their first and most important teacher and advocate is more important than ever!

If you require further information, please contact Cathy Luther at the phone number below or email her at cluther@bcfamilyhearing.com.

The **registration deadline** for the PEER evening sessions is **September 30th**. Please complete the registration by clicking on this link: <https://goo.gl/iKR5SU>

There is no fee for our BCFHRC clients for this program; however, there will be a \$30 fee for the PEER binder.

We are looking forward to working with you and your child during this extraordinary time in your family’s life.

Sincerely,

Cathy Luther (Family Support Parent) & Zara Gauthier (Speech & Language Pathologist)

35 years of making futures bright



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