

August 8, 2019

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

It's time to start thinking about kindergarten! The process for transition into kindergarten may look different for each family, depending on your child's needs. Starting this process now can help ensure you have the information you need to make informed choices, and your child is set up for the most successful transition possible. Specialized group education opportunities such as the **PEER program at BC Family Hearing Resource Centre** can provide valuable information and support throughout this process. *Note: Deaf Children's Society also offers a kindergarten transition program, with a slightly different focus. Your Early Interventionist can give you more detailed information and help you decide which program is the best match for your child and family.*

The information presented in PEER is designed for families of deaf and hard of hearing children who will be attending a mainstream kindergarten classroom without one-on-one support. Over the past four years you have likely had many conversations with your early intervention team and others about educational options for your child, including public schools, independent schools and specialized programs. During the PEER program we will discuss these various options.

The PEER program is designed to educate parents about how to effectively advocate for their child's specific communication and access needs in mainstream school settings. PEER is delivered by our Early Interventionists and Family Support Parents. PEER teaches parents about the challenges deaf and hard-of-hearing children face in mainstream 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, so they know when to take action. PEER also provides an opportunity for parents to ask questions and engage in discussion with staff and other parents who are also experiencing this journey.

PEER consists of two components - a parent component and a children's classroom component. **PEER is available to both local & outreach families.** The parent component of PEER (**Parent Empowerment and Educational Readiness**) consists of:

- **Eight evening parent sessions** that are about 1.5 hours in length. Sessions are accessible to all. They run from October 2019 to April 2020, with a final session in October 2020 after your child has started Kindergarten. Parents must take part in all of these sessions if they want to register for the three-day workshop and children's classroom component in May. Catch up on a session will be possible if missed.
- **A three-day workshop on April 30th, May 1st & 2nd, 2020**
- **An Education Fair later in May 2020**

The topics for parent evenings are attached. The agenda for the 3-day workshop in April/May will be provided closer to the date. Across those three days, we aim to have speakers and panels address topics which include: equipment, support in a mainstream setting, parent support and advocacy, personal experience of hard of hearing/deaf young adults in mainstream settings, and self-esteem in hard of hearing/deaf children. You will also have an opportunity

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to meet directly with representatives from different educational settings at the Education Fair following the 3-day workshop.

The children's component of PEER (**Preschoolers' Esteem & Emotional Readiness**) occurs in conjunction with the 3-day workshop in April/May. The children's classroom is intended for children who will be attending a mainstream classroom **without one on one support**. It's also important to note that the classroom uses **spoken language only**, as the goal is to simulate **access** for a hard of hearing child in a mainstream kindergarten classroom where instruction is through spoken language.

The classroom focuses on:

- identity, while building self-esteem and confidence
- responsibility and independence with hearing equipment
- self-advocacy in challenging listening situations
- making social connections

Please note - the parent component may apply to a broader range of families, so some parents may participate in the parent component even if their children do not attend the classroom component.

The monthly evening sessions and the April/May three-day workshop 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 Jen Gow at 604-584-2827 or jgow@bcfamilyhearing.com. The toll free number for out-of-town families is 1-877-584-2827.

The **registration deadline** for the PEER evening sessions is **September 30th**, however we strongly urge you to register as soon as possible. Please complete the registration by clicking on this link: <http://bit.ly/2JnUqqa>

There is no program fee for our BCFHRC clients, although there is a \$45 fee for the PEER binder, which is due at registration.

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

Sincerely,

Jen Gow
Family Support Parent

Zara Gauthier
Speech & Language Pathologist

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