

Dear Parent,



My name is Tabitha Belhorn. I am the Parent Mentor at the Ohio School for the Deaf. I am also the mother of a 5 year old deaf daughter and a 3 year old hearing son. I am a part of the Center for Outreach Services (COS), where our mission is to provide unbiased support to all parents throughout the state. For the past 2 years, I have worked hard to provide other parents of deaf and hard of hearing children with educational and emotional support. However, I have encountered various kinds of roadblocks and I feel that I could do a more effective job of providing parents and families with these services. So, now I need your help to overcome these barriers.

**You have been recognized as a parent who is a leader and advocate for your child and in your community.**

Therefore, I would like to extend the offer for you to apply to attend the First Summit for Families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children. During this summit, parents will be asked to provide feedback on the Center's current programs and activities and on statewide family support and programs for deaf and hard of hearing children and make recommendations for future programs at the Center. The information collected at this conference will be critical to the success of future programs at the COS and will provide the Ohio Department of Education with information that supports the need for events and services for *your* deaf or hard of hearing child! *There will be no charge for parents who are chosen to participate in the event.* The COS will be covering the cost of travel, food, and hotel for participating families.

Any parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child may apply to attend the summit. Due to the nature of the summit, only 10-15 families will be invited to join the summit. We are seeking parents from all walks of life, including hearing status, cultural background, economic status, communication modes and methodologies. As a parent myself, I encourage you to apply and have an opportunity to express your experiences and needs as a parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child. **This is your opportunity to be heard!**

The First Summit for Families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children will be held on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 24<sup>th</sup>, and 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007 in Central Ohio. Beth Sonnenstrahl Benedict, Ph.D. an Associate Professor for the Department of Communication Studies at Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C will be facilitating the summit. Her work has focused on family involvement in schools with deaf and hard of hearing children, early childhood education, advocacy, early communication and partnerships between deaf and hearing professionals. Also, she is the mother of two deaf children.

After all applications have been submitted, they will be reviewed and the COS will select families to participate. If you are selected to attend, you will be notified via a phone call. If your application is not selected you will receive a letter in the mail. If you are not selected, but are interested in participating, there will be another Parent Summit in the fall of 2007.

**Applications must to be returned to the Center for Outreach Services by February 16, 2007.** Please remember, all parents who attend the summit will make a vital contribution to services and support provided for all families with deaf and hard-of-hearing children throughout our state. As a parent, I myself want to feel that I am contributing to the success of my child's education and future. For this reason, *I again urge you to take this opportunity and make the most of it for your child's education!* If you have any questions or need more information, please feel free to contact me.

With Sincere Thanks,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tabitha Belhorn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the beginning.

Tabitha Belhorn  
Parent Mentor, Ohio School for the Deaf  
[parentmentor@osd.oh.gov](mailto:parentmentor@osd.oh.gov)  
1-800-866-3966