

# Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf

## Executive Summary

### Community Partner

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### Student Consulting Team

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## Background

The Western Pennsylvania School for the Deaf is a school specializing in teaching deaf and hard-of-hearing children and has a subsidiary program called Choices for Children (CFC). CFC is an early intervention program for hard-of-hearing/deaf children under the age of 3 that operates in all parts of Pennsylvania except for counties without a contract with WPSD. The intervention program is a mature program distinct from WPSD with over 30 years of history. It operates through both teletherapy and in-person visitations, where therapists work with a family and their newborn and teaches them how to best care for their child.

## Project Description

### Project Opportunity

CFC does not have a strong online presence. Without an online presence, it makes it difficult for CFC to distribute informational resources and materials to assist parents in coaching and supporting their deaf or hard-of-hearing infant. Currently, CFC has one page in the WPSD website that provides a mere couple of paragraphs of information. Not only is this not enough information, but because it is located within WPSD's website, many parents are overwhelmed with information that is largely irrelevant to them. Furthermore, information online about deaf and hard-of-hearing children is scattered, unreliable, and untimely. Providing reliable information about CFC and deaf and hard-of-hearing children will allow CFC to better serve and support those families.

### Project Vision

The project vision is to build a website separate from the WPSD that will provide families with information regarding deaf or hard-of-hearing infants and toddlers. Thus, the team is delivering a standalone, accessible, and responsive website for CFC and integrating it into WPSD's current website infrastructure. By creating this website, CFC will be able to successfully assuage concerns from parents all over Pennsylvania who are unsure of how to support their child. In support of the UN's sustainability goals, this project will help reduce inequalities, promote health, and provide quality education.

## Project Outcomes

The outcome of this project is an enhanced online presence for CFC and an information portal for users of the CFC program providing a multitude of useful resources. Another important outcome includes training provided to a staff member of the Choices for Children program on Wordpress administration, specifically in updating the website, creating additional posts, and adding more resources. A manual and video were also created to help guide the staff member after project hand-off. Therapists were made aware of the website and encouraged to use it as a supplement to their sessions with parents.

## Project Deliverables

The deliverables include a functional, responsive, and accessible Wordpress website hosted on the community partner's website at <http://choicesforchildren.us> with thorough documentation of the plug-ins and product versions to support future development. The community partners will also receive a technical manual and video detailing how to make posts and how to use Google Analytics to improve SEO visibility as well as full access to user testing transcripts, agendas, slide decks, and notes taken during community partner meetings.

## Recommendations

The team recommends uploading additional resources and adding a portal for therapists to upload personalized resources for parents in order to increase the site's robustness and usefulness. Furthermore, adding a platform for parents to communicate and get to know other deaf and hard-of-hearing community members is recommended. Another round of user testing with a diverse set of parents should be done to get a better sense of the usability of the website and to ascertain whether changes are needed for the resources page in particular and the website overall. The team also recommends moving to a premium site so more accessible WordPress plug-ins can be used and overall accessibility of the website can be improved.

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## Student Consulting Team

**Alex Chen** served as documentation and technical lead. He is a junior studying Information Systems and Robotics. He intends to work in the robotics industry to innovate better solutions with automation.

**Ankita Kundu** served as team lead. She is a junior studying Information Systems and Human-Computer Interaction. She aspires to work as a product manager in a social impact sector.

**Lily Huang** served as design lead and community partner liaison. She is a junior studying Information Systems and Human-Computer Interaction. She is pursuing a future career in product management with an interest in sustainability.