

## **Abstract: Aiming High: Helping Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Who Have Additional Disabilities Reach Their Full Potential**

A large percentage of children who are deaf or hard of hearing in early intervention services have additional disabilities, yet very few early intervention specialists received specific training that equips them with the ability to help families who are raising children who are “deaf plus”. As a result, many providers resist working with these children who have more complex needs, and they are often at a loss as to how they can support families as they face the many challenges that often come with raising a child who is deaf plus. Early interventionists also tend to immediately lower their expectations of a child as soon as they learn of the child’s additional disabilities. In reality, while these children have additional challenges, they also have an admirable longing to connect with others and a desire to experience life and all that it has to offer them. Our task is to help each child find the path to learning that best fits his or her unique abilities, and to make every effort to better understand the many complex emotions that parents are feeling and help them develop a new dream for who and what their child could become. In this session participants will learn some simple strategies for how to more effectively work with children who are deaf or hard of hearing who have additional disabilities and will be given ideas for how to more successfully support their families.