



**Presentation Title: Possible Beings: DHH Children and the Right to Communication**

**Keynote Presenter: Kristin Snoddon, Ph.D**

**Abstract:**

This presentation discusses the right to communication for DHH children with a focus on the recent case of *Carter Churchill v. Newfoundland and Labrador English School District*. Carter is a deaf child with cerebral palsy who uses American Sign Language as a first language. At seven months of age, he received bilateral cochlear implants. However, only auditory-verbal therapy (AVT) was made available as a language development service option. This situation is true of many other early intervention service contexts worldwide where cochlear implants and AVT have become the standard of care for DHH children. Carter's parents filed a human rights complaint alleging that he experienced discrimination on the basis of disability in the delivery of early intervention and educational services. This was due to the failure of educational authorities to accommodate Carter's sign language needs. On March 1, 2023 the Human Rights Commission of Newfoundland and Labrador's Board of Inquiry decision was released that found the school district failed to provide reasonable accommodation and discriminated against Carter during the first four years of his education. However, this decision stops short of meeting the right to communication for all DHH children. For this right to be enacted, there is a need for relational linguistic continuity wherein deaf children and their families can access human relations and interactions in sign language with a robust and enduring community of sign language users. Collaboration between FCEI professionals, parents, and deaf communities is therefore essential.