

What Are the Communication Considerations for Parents of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Children?

Deafness or hearing impairment affects not only a child who is deaf or has a hearing loss, but also the child's family, friends, and teachers. For hundreds of years, people have debated the best ways to develop communication skills and provide education for deaf and hard-of-hearing children.

Here are a few points upon which scientific and health professionals, educators, and experienced parents commonly agree:

- 1. The earlier that deafness or hearing loss is identified, the better the chances a child will acquire language, whether spoken or signed.** A hearing screening can be an important indicator of deafness or hearing loss in a child. For this reason, all infants should be screened while still in the hospital or within the first month of life. Children who do not pass their screening need to go for a follow-up examination. The follow-up examination includes precise audiological testing that confirms the extent and type of hearing loss. It also allows parents, health professionals, and teachers to determine the best intervention strategy for the child. The term "intervention" refers to the different steps that families can take to overcome communication barriers caused by a hearing loss. When intervention is introduced early, the child can take advantage of the unique window of opportunity during the first few years of life when a child acquires language, whether spoken or signed.
- 2. Each child is unique.** It is important to understand the full nature and extent of a child's hearing loss or deafness. It also is important to understand how each family member and caregiver will communicate with the child. Get to know the services that are provided in your community for children in preschool and elementary school.
- 3. Optimizing residual hearing may be advantageous.** Children may benefit from hearing aids or cochlear implants. This is a decision that you should discuss with your child's healthcare providers and other professionals who work with deaf children and language development.
- 4. Exploring the options and, if possible, working with professionals in teams can be beneficial.** Your child may visit a pediatrician, an otolaryngologist (ear, nose, and throat doctor), an



audiologist (hearing specialist), and a **speech-language pathologist** (specialist in speech and language disorders). Some otolaryngologists and audiologists are specially trained to work with infants and children. They are referred to as pediatric otolaryngologists and pediatric audiologists. Ask each professional to inform other professionals who work with your child about your child's visits. Coordinated care can be a help to you and your child. Many parents find it useful to include educational and social service professionals on the team.

5. Parents should interact often with a deaf or hard-of-hearing infant.

All of the caregivers in your child's life should interact with him or her as much as possible. You can do this by holding, facing, smiling at, and responding to your infant from the very beginning. Children need love, encouragement, and care from their families and caregivers.

6. Teachers who are experienced in working with deaf and hard-of-hearing children can help parents understand how to improve long-term outcomes for a child. Talk to your child's teachers. Get to know the educational system your child will be entering and the services it provides for children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

7. Organizations and federal agencies can provide helpful information to families of deaf or hard-of-hearing children. Consult the following resources and see what information they can provide. Several offer differing perspectives on the best way to develop the skills and talents of your deaf or hard-of-hearing child. Many of these Web sites are updated frequently, so you may want to bookmark them on your Web browser.

Where can I find more information?

Other organizations you can contact for more information about this topic follow:

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

3417 Volta Place, NW

Washington, DC 20007-2778

Voice: (202) 337-5220

Toll-free Voice: (866) 337-5220

TTY: (202) 337-5221

Fax: (202) 337-8314

E-mail: info@agbell.org

Internet: www.agbell.org

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FACT SHEET

AG Bell publications or Web sites for parents of children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing:

- *Facts About Hearing Loss in Children*
www.agbell.org/docs/FAHL.pdf
- *Something To Talk About: Spoken Language Approaches for Children With Hearing Loss*
www.agbell.org/docs/something.pdf
- *Speech and Hearing Checklist*
www.agbell.org/docs/SHchecklist.pdf
- *So Your Child Has a Hearing Loss: Next Steps for Parents*
www.agbell.org/docs/soyourchild.pdf

American Academy of Audiology
11730 Plaza America Drive, Suite 300
Reston, VA 20190
Voice/TTY: (703) 790-8466
Toll-free Voice: (800) 222-2336
Fax: (703) 790-8631
E-mail: info@audiology.org
Internet: www.audiology.org
www.audiologynow.org

**American Academy of Otolaryngology—
Head and Neck Surgery**
One Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314-3357
Voice: (703) 836-4444
TTY: (703) 519-1585
Fax: (703) 638-5100
E-mail: webmaster@entnet.org
Internet: www.entnet.org

AAO-HNS publications or Web sites for parents of children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing:

- *Hearing Health Center*
www.entnet.org/healthinfo/hearing/hearing_health.cfm

American Academy of Pediatrics
141 Northwest Point Blvd.
Elk Grove Village, IL 60007-1098
Voice: (847) 434-4000
Fax: (847) 434-8000
E-mail: kidsdocs@aap.org
Internet: www.aap.org

American Society for Deaf Children
3820 Hartzdale Drive
Camp Hill, PA 17011
Voice: (717) 703-0073
Toll-free Voice: (866) 895-4206
TTY: (717) 703-0073
E-mail: ASDC4U@aol.com
Internet: www.deafchildren.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
10801 Rockville Pike
Rockville, MD 20852
Voice: (301) 897-5700
Toll-free Voice: (800) 638-8255
TTY: (301) 897-0157
Fax: (301) 571-0457
E-mail: actioncenter@asha.org
Internet: www.asha.org

ASHA publications or Web sites for parents of children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing:

- *How Hearing and Balance Work*
www.asha.org/public/hearing/anatomy/

BEGINNINGS for Parents of Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Inc.
P.O. Box 17646
Raleigh, NC 27619
Voice/TTY: (919) 850-2746
Toll-free Voice: (800) 541-4327 (In-state only)
TTY: (919) 850-2746
Fax: (919) 850-2804
E-mail: info@ncbegin.org
Internet: www.ncbegin.org

■ For more information, contact:

NIDCD Information Clearinghouse
1 Communication Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20892-3456

1-800-241-1044
1-800-241-1055 (TTY)
E-mail: niddcinfo@nidcd.nih.gov
Internet: www.nidcd.nih.gov

The NIDCD Information Clearinghouse
is a service of the
National Institute on Deafness and Other
Communication Disorders

Boys Town National Research Hospital

555 North 30th Street
Omaha, NE 68131
Voice: (402) 498-6511
TTY: (402) 498-6543
Fax: (402) 452-5027
E-mail: moeller@boystown.org
Internet: www.boystownhospital.org
www.babyhearing.org
www.audiciondelbebe.org

Boys Town publications or Web sites for parents of children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing:

- *Boys Town Pediatrics*
www.boystownpediatrics.org

**Clearinghouse on Disability Information,
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative
Services**

550 12th Street, SW, Room 5133
Washington, DC 20004
Voice: (202) 245-7303
TTY: (202) 205-5637
Fax: (202) 245-7636
Internet: [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/
index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/index.html)

**Conference of Educational Administrators of
Schools and Programs for the Deaf**

P.O. Box 1778
St. Augustine, FL 32085-1778
Voice/TTY: (904) 810-5200
Fax: (904) 810-5525
E-mail: nationaloffice@ceasd.org
Internet: www.ceasd.org

Council for Exceptional Children

1110 North Glebe Road, Suite 300
Arlington, VA 22201
Voice: (703) 620-3660
Toll-free Voice: (800) 224-6830
Toll-free TTY: (866) 915-5000
Fax: (703) 264-9494
E-mail: service@cec.sped.org
Internet: www.cec.sped.org

Council of American Instructors of the Deaf

P.O. Box 377
Bedford, TX 76095-0377
Voice/TTY: (817) 354-8414
E-mail: caid@swbell.net
Internet: www.caid.org

Council on Education of the Deaf

Gallaudet University
P.O. Box 2094
800 Florida Avenue, NE
Washington, DC 20002
Fax: (202) 651-5749
E-mail: roz.rosen@gallaudet.edu
Internet: www.deafed.net

**Early Hearing Detection and Intervention
Program**

National Center on Birth Defects and
Developmental Disabilities
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Mail Stop E-88
1600 Clifton Road
Atlanta, GA 30333
Voice/TTY: (404) 498-3032
Toll-free Voice: (888) 232-4636
Fax: (404) 498-3060
E-mail: ehdi@cdc.gov
Internet: www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/ehdi

FACT SHEET

**Gallaudet University and the Laurent Clerc
National Deaf Education Center**

Circulation and Inventory
800 Florida Avenue, NE
KDES PAS-6
Washington, DC 20002
Voice/TTY: (202) 651-5051
Fax: (202) 651-5708
E-mail: clearinghouse.infotogo@gallaudet.edu
Internet: <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu/infotogo>

**Harvard Medical School Center for Hereditary
Deafness**

Laboratory for Molecular Medicine
65 Landsdowne Street
Cambridge, MA 02139
Voice: (617) 768-8291
Fax: (617) 768-8513
E-mail: hearing@hms.harvard.edu
Internet: <http://hearing.harvard.edu>

**Harvard Medical School Center for Hereditary
Deafness publications or Web sites for parents
of children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing:**

- *Understanding the Genetics of Deafness: A Guide for Patients and Families*
<http://hearing.harvard.edu/info/GeneticDeafnessBookletV2.pdf>

National Association of the Deaf

814 Thayer Avenue, Suite 250
Silver Spring, MD 20910-4500
Voice: (301) 587-1788
TTY: (301) 587-1789
Fax: (301) 587-1791
Internet: www.nad.org

**National Association of State Directors of
Special Education, Inc.**

1800 Diagonal Road, Suite 320
Alexandria, VA 22314
Voice: (703) 519-3800
TTY: (703) 519-7008
Fax: (703) 519-3808
Internet: www.nasdse.org

**National Black Association for Speech-
Language and Hearing**

P.O. Box 61328
Charleston, SC 29419
Voice: (843) 574-6441
Fax: (843) 820-5026
E-mail: nbaslh2@aol.com
Internet: www.nbaslh.org

National Cued Speech Association

23970 Hermitage Road
Cleveland, OH 44122
Voice: (216) 292-6213
Toll-free Voice/TTY: (800) 459-3529
Fax: Call for number
E-mail: info@cuedspeech.org
Internet: www.cuedspeech.org

**National Institute on Disability and
Rehabilitation Research, Office of Special
Education and Rehabilitation Services**

550 12th Street, SW, Room 6056
Washington, DC 20024-6122
Voice: (202) 245-7549
Fax: (202) 245-7630
E-mail: Steven.Tingus@ed.gov
Internet: www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/nidrr/index.html

■ For more information, contact:

NIDCD Information Clearinghouse
1 Communication Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20892-3456

1-800-241-1044
1-800-241-1055 (TTY)
E-mail: nidcdinfo@nidcd.nih.gov
Internet: www.nidcd.nih.gov

The NIDCD Information Clearinghouse
is a service of the
National Institute on Deafness and Other
Communication Disorders

**Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP)
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative
Services**

550 12th Street, SW, Room 4109

Washington, DC 20202-2600

Voice: (202) 245-7426

Fax: (202) 245-7616

Internet: [www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/
osep/index.html](http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html)

**OSEP publications or Web sites for parents of
children who are deaf or hard-of-hearing:**

- *Parent Training and Information Centers and
Community Parent Resource Centers*
www.taalliance.org

NIH Pub. No. 00-4393

Contact information updated November 2006

