

What Families Need to Know

Communication is Key

Your child has been diagnosed with a unilateral hearing loss (deaf or hard of hearing in one ear). For most children, this means it will be harder to hear and understand where sounds come from. Children with hearing loss in one ear can benefit from early intervention to promote speech and language development.

The Louisiana Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program will connect you to early intervention providers who will help you form your child's early intervention team. This team will create a plan to work with you and your family to support your child's communication skills, and to keep development on track.

It's Important to Act Fast!

The first 3 years of life are the most important for learning how to communicate. Your child's brain is 50% developed by age 1, and 80% developed by age 3. Children use sights and sounds to learn language and communication skills. Even a child who is deaf or hard of hearing in one ear may need extra help with this. Your family can benefit from early intervention even if your child is only a couple of months old! The goal of early intervention is to help your child develop the speech and language skills needed to start school. They should be enrolled in services as soon as possible (within 1 month of diagnosis).

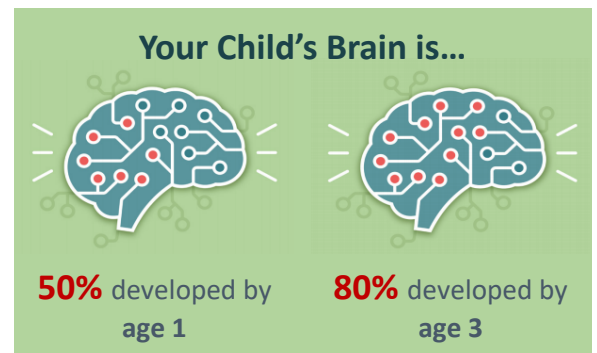


Image from Iowa Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

Why Unilateral Hearing Loss Needs to Be Addressed

Unilateral hearing loss is different for every child. Some children may be able to hear sounds that others cannot. Some things to consider include...

- **It will be harder to hear.** Your child only has full hearing in one ear, so sounds are harder to hear and are not heard as clearly.
- **It can be hard to understand where sounds are coming from.** Many children who are deaf or hard of hearing in one ear find it difficult to understand which direction a sound is coming from.
- **Language development may be affected.** Children learn to speak by saying what they hear. If a child does not hear speech clearly, it may be more difficult for them to develop clear speech.
- **Some sounds may be harder to hear than others.** Soft voices and sounds may be more difficult for a child to understand.

Hearing Devices

Hearing devices may help some children who are deaf or hard of hearing in one ear, but every case is different. Please ask your child's audiologist for more information about the following devices and if they would work for your child.

- **Hearing Aid:** a small device that goes in or behind the ear to make sounds louder.
- **Bone Conduction Hearing Aid:** a device that makes sounds louder through bone vibration.
- **FM System:** a device that makes a speaker's voice louder and helps block out background noise.





How You Can Help Your Child

Below are a few things you can do to make it easier for your child to hear when you are trying to talk to them.

- Reduce the amount of other noises around them or move to a quiet place.
- Move them closer to you or the sound you want them to hear so their full hearing ear is close to the sound.
- Move down to their level to talk directly to them.
- Make sure you get your child's attention before you start to speak.
- Pause at the end of sentences to allow more time for them to understand what you are saying.
- Because your child only has full hearing in one ear, it is important to treat fluid or ear infections as soon as possible. Regular appointments with your child's doctor can help identify these early.

What's Next?

Within the 1st week of finding out your child's diagnosis, you'll hear from Margaret Berry, EHD Early Intervention Coordinator (504-343-1901) to explain the following programs and coordinate referrals. These programs will help you form your early intervention team. They can help provide services, create a plan of action, and offer emotional support.

Hands and Voices Guide by Your Side (GBYS)

LAHandsandVoices.org/guide-by-your-side

GBYS will provide family-to-family support from a trained parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child. Your Guide is there to provide emotional support and share their experiences about the challenges and joys of raising a child who is deaf or hard of hearing.

EarlySteps

ldh.la.gov/EarlySteps

EarlySteps is an early intervention program with a variety of home and community-based supports and services available to families of children up to age 3. Their staff can assess your child's communication development at no cost to you. This will help identify your child and family's needs and create a plan to fulfill those needs through resources and services such as speech therapy, special instruction, family service coordination and more.

Learn More!

Continue to learn and seek out resources so you can make the best decisions for your family. Your decisions may change as you learn new information, and your child may need new tools and services as they progress. Topics to look into include types of hearing loss, types of hearing devices, communication options, and language development.

- Baby Hearing | BabyHearing.org
- Supporting Success for Children with Hearing Loss | SuccessForKidsWithHearingLoss.com
- American Speech Language Hearing Association | ASHA.org/Public/Hearing/Unilateral-Hearing-Loss-in-Children

8/2021



HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Contact the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHD) program at 504-568-5028 or email us at laehdi@la.gov. For more information, visit us online at ldh.la.gov/ehdi

