

What Families Need to Know

Communication is Key

Your child has been diagnosed as deaf or hard of hearing. You may feel overwhelmed or scared right now, but you're not alone. The Louisiana Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program is here to help guide you through this process and let you know what's to come.

EHDI will link you to providers that will help create a plan for your family. This group of providers will be your early intervention team. The partnership between you and your team will focus on meeting everyone in your family's needs (siblings, grandparents, etc.) so that your baby can communicate and bond with as many people as possible. The plan will include services and resources that will help your baby learn language and communication skills to keep their 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. Deaf and hard of hearing babies may need extra help with this. If children don't begin to develop language skills during this period, it will be much harder for them to learn. The sooner a deaf or hard of hearing child starts early intervention, the better their language and communication skills can be. They should be enrolled in services as soon as possible (within 1 month of diagnosis). The decisions you make may change as your child grows, so choose what you think is best for your child now.

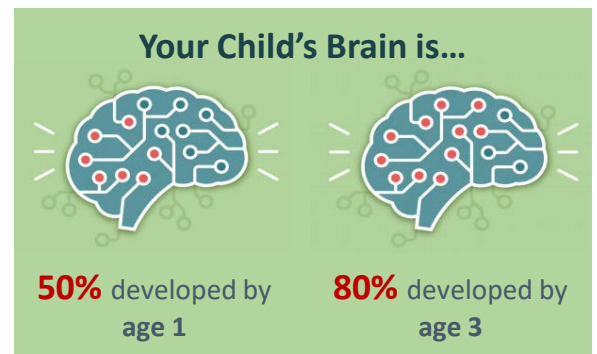


Image from Iowa Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

Understand Your Options

There are many options when it comes to communication choices for your child. These can be combined or changed as you learn more about what works best for your family. Here are a few to think about:



- **Listening and Spoken Language (LSL):** teaches a child spoken language through listening using hearing devices and special instruction
- **American Sign Language (ASL):** a formal system of sign language used in the US
- **Cued Speech:** uses handshapes, placement of hands, and lip reading to visually show the different sounds of spoken language
- **Total Communication:** a combination of gestures, spoken language, signed language, and lip reading

Hearing Devices

- **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
- **Cochlear Implant:** a device that provides sound for those who don't benefit from a hearing aid
- **FM System:** a device that makes a speaker's voice louder and helps block out background noise



It's Okay to Make Changes

What works for your child today may not work tomorrow. Work with your early intervention team to figure out what's best for your child as they grow. Don't be afraid to try other communication options to keep your baby on track.



Learn With Your Child

Babies learn from the people they spend the most time with. What your deaf or hard of hearing baby learns will be very similar to what a hearing baby learns. You may need to learn a signing system or create pictures with your child as they learn new words. Remember that you are your child's first and most important teacher.

Want to start learning now?



There are multiple online resources for learning different communication options such as American Sign Language (ASL), listening and spoken language, and cued speech. Visit our *Additional Resources* page on ldh.la.gov/ehdi to start learning!

What's Next?

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

Parent Pupil Education Program (PPEP)

lalsd.org/outreach | 225-202-4947

PPEP is an early intervention service for families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Through home/community visits, they provide guidance and support for communication access and language development to help you better understand your child's hearing loss.

Hands and Voices Guide by Your Side (GBYS)

LAHandsandVoices.org/guide-by-your-side | 337-515-5774

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 | 225-342-0095

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 will help you 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 Society for Deaf Children | DeafChildren.org

12/2019



HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

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

