

Module 1: Early Identification: Newborn Infant Hearing Screening and Evaluation; The Importance of Ensuring Early Access to Language

Section: Early Identification



Activity 1.1: Supporting Families in Monitoring Their Child's Early Audiological and Medical Appointments

- A. Early interventionists often begin to work with families while they are in the process of confirming that a child is deaf or hard of hearing. Families may need support in understanding the purpose of the array of appointments that may be scheduled, becoming familiar with what will happen during these appointments, and the meaning of the results. Discuss the following with the family:
- Inquire about upcoming appointments with the pediatrician/primary health care provider, audiologist, ENT physician, etc.
 - Ask if the parents are aware of the next steps in follow-up.
 - Ask if there are possible obstacles for families with follow-up appointments (e.g., scheduling, transportation, location of the center, child care for siblings).
 - Discuss if there is a second point of contact (e.g., relative, friend) for family support or to attend appointments.
 - Encourage the family to set up a binder to organize testing, reports, and recommended follow-up.

- B. Support family members as they process the information they are receiving:
- Support families in understanding the news that their child has been referred for more tests to determine if he or she is indeed deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Be sensitive to families who may be going through a roller coaster ride of emotions with each follow-up appointment as they face the heightened possibility that maybe this time their child will be identified as deaf or hard of hearing.
 - Guide the family away from the concept of a test to pass or fail and instead encourage them to see it as an evaluation to gather more information to guide next steps.
- C. Introduce the family to other parents who have gone through the screening and identification process who may be able to provide some insights into the early stages of identifying that they have a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Contact your state school for the deaf or your early intervention state coordinator.
- D. Introduce the family to a deaf or hard of hearing adult who may be able to discuss his or her family's journey finding out he or she had a child who was deaf or hard of hearing. Have this individual focus on the importance of follow-up appointments and identifying the child as deaf or hard of hearing as soon as possible. Have this individual stress the importance of bringing accessible language to the child as early as possible to prevent language delay. Contact your state school for the deaf or your early intervention state coordinator:
- Personal example: As a deaf/hard of hearing partner working in an audiology program in a hospital, I have shared with families that I was not identified until I was almost 3 years old. For me, that meant that I had almost three years without consistent and accessible language. While we recognize that the hearing screening and follow-up appointments may be hard for some families, our goal is to identify challenges in hearing as soon as possible to find opportunities for families to give their child as much access as possible to language.

Additional Resource:

- Hands & Voices DVD, *Loss & Found: What to Do If Your Baby Didn't Pass the Newborn Hearing Screening*. See the Hands & Voices website for an order form: www.handsandvoices.org/resources/products.htm.

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