

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

Section: Communication and Language Milestones



Activity 1.9: Guiding Families in Understanding Concepts Related to Language Accessibility

A. Discuss the following considerations related to developing communication and language milestones:

- Early interactions are critically important for the development of language, cognitive, and social skills. When babies are young, the most important learning takes place in the context of their interactions with others. Face-to-face interaction and providing information within a baby's visual field are critical to supporting language and communication development.
- Access is the key to developing communication. It is important to understand that access doesn't just include formal visual (American Sign Language) and verbal language but all aspects of communication (e.g., informal gestures, facial expression, body posture, tone of voice). Using any and all means of expression to support communication and encourage interaction is important for all babies and especially so for those who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- It is never too early to start language and communication intervention. Babies are exposed to language and communication attempts from birth. It is vitally important to provide all children with the support they need to acquire language and enjoy successful reciprocal interactions with others.

B. Highlight the following concepts regarding early language and communication development:

- Children who are deaf or hard of hearing develop communication through a hierarchy of skill development.
- There are developmental milestones for both American Sign Language and spoken language that should be taken into consideration, and there is a critical window of development for each. See [Communication Language Milestones](#).
- Discuss the importance of determining where the child is on the continuum of communication skills and then focusing on realistic next steps. This can provide families with increased awareness of what to expect.
- Early interaction in an accessible manner provides the foundation for future communication.
- For more information about early language and communication, see [Maximizing Language Acquisition: ASL and Spoken English](#) (Clerc Center webcast).

C. For families who speak a language other than English:

- It is important to provide information on communication development in the family's native language whenever possible.
- When discussing stages of development, it is helpful to be able to leave a handout that all family members can read and use to understand next steps for their child.

Additional Resource:

- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, [How Does Your Child Hear and Talk?](#)

Developed with [Meg Osgood](#)