

Module 6: Promoting Communication in the Home

Section: The Child with Access to Sound: Tips for Caregivers

The Child who has Access to Sound – Tips for Caregivers

- Encourage vocal play and babbling
- Encourage the exploration of sounds
- Take a “sound tour” of home or neighborhood
- Make a sound experience book
- Help the child learn to monitor her own loudness level
- Identify and label sounds in the environment

Activity 6.6: Providing Ideas to Support a Child’s Listening and Spoken Language Communication at Home

A. Review the following points for consideration related to facilitating listening and spoken language:

- **The role of assessment and monitoring.** Refer to Activity 6.4 to review key points to share with caregivers about using assessment and monitoring to determine appropriate expectations and strategies to use to facilitate a child’s listening and spoken language communication.
- **The term “hearing age.”** Families may learn the commonly used term “hearing age,” which refers to when a child is first provided access to sound with a hearing aid or a cochlear implant (e.g., a 2-year-old child’s hearing age would be 1 after having a cochlear implant for one year). Regardless of “hearing age,” it is important that families understand that each child is unique in his or her awareness levels and understanding abilities.
- **The important connection between amplification use and listening and spoken language outcomes.** It is essential that families see the relationship between their child consistently wearing functioning hearing aids and/or cochlear implants and listening and spoken language outcomes. Some families may not always make this connection. See Activities 3.2 and 3.3 for techniques and strategies to support families in maintaining functioning amplification.

The importance of repetition. Hearing babies “hear” something repeatedly for quite some time before they begin to understand and then imitate it; this is also true for deaf babies. It is therefore important to continue to expose children to spoken language, as it will take some time before you see a response. Over time, with this repetitive language use, you will begin to see comprehension and then language use occurring.

B. Strategies for consideration in natural play:

- Incorporate the early sound milestones that children develop, sometimes referred to as “Early Learning to Listen Sounds.” These might be sound effects, animal and vehicle sounds, sounds associated with familiar objects (e.g., “mmm” with ice cream, “go” with vehicles). For more information about these sounds and how to incorporate them into daily routines: <http://hearingfirst.org/blog/2016/01/19/new-take-learning-to-listen-sounds>.
- Encourage vocalization during play by creating routines that allow for vocal turn taking (e.g., Ready, set, ... GO; on stairs – up, up, up ...____; simple songs; books with repetitive phrases). Once the routine is established, you can pause and wait to see if the child will ‘fill in’ with a sound/word.
- When reading books, change voice intonation to represent different characters in a story (e.g., low, loud voice for Papa Bear in *The Three Bears*), or add sound effects from the story (e.g., bird tweeting, horn beeping). Even if a child does not understand the words, he or she may gain information and enjoyment from these features.
- During natural play and reading, provide a child with the spoken word for objects (e.g., ball, book, car) and functional words (e.g., stop, more, bye-bye). It is also helpful for a child to see a caregiver’s face and mouth so he or she can begin to make associations that language appears on the face and lips.
- Create a book (paper or electronic) of familiar sounds. If possible, take short video-clips of everyday sounds (e.g., doorbell, phone, hair dryer, car) that you can look through together and begin making connections between the sounds and their sources. Another way of supporting this connection is to take sound walks around the house or the neighborhood to point out the sounds that are part of the child’s everyday world.
- Include simple, repetitive songs in the child’s daily routine to create opportunities for encouraging listening and vocalization. Simple songs and finger play engage children, and the melody supports auditory attention. Make song play part of everyday routines, like bath time or bedtime.

C. Utilize published guides and websites to provide a framework for the development of listening, speech, and spoken language skills. While various guides may propose a full program to follow, it is not necessary to fully use any one guide. There may be helpful hints and activities to gather from various guides. Skill development does not need to follow a cookbook approach. Some examples include:

- [Learn to Talk Around the Clock](#)
- [Hear at Home](#)
- [The Communication Corner: Young Children and Families \(Cochlear Corporation\)](#)
- [The Listening Room \(Advanced Bionics\)](#)
- [SoundScape: The MED-EL Program for Interactive Listening Activities](#)
- [Listening Fun with Music and Song \(MED-EL\)](#)

Additional Resources:

- [Spoken Language Habilitation: Considerations, Strategies, and Resources \(Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, Info to Go\)](#)
- [Factor 4: Early fitting of amplification and ongoing monitoring of its effectiveness is integral to selecting communication strategies to facilitate language development. \(Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center, Early Intervention Network: Supporting Linguistic Competence for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing\)](#)
- [Hearing First](#)
- [Listening and Spoken Language Development \(The Knowledge Center, AG Bell Association\)](#)

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