

## Module 7: Parenting a Child Who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

### Section: Tips for Parents and Caregivers

#### Tips for Parents and Caregivers

- Maintain involvement in activities
- Decide to focus on the positive life changes you see in your child
- Share your parenting experiences by journaling and mentoring

### Activity 7.4: Supporting Families in Celebrating Their Child and Becoming His or Her Advocates

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- A. Reinforce the importance of including the child who is deaf or hard of hearing in all aspects of the family.
- Emphasize the importance of the deaf or hard of hearing child being an equal member of the family. Discuss considerations related to the importance of family members taking continued responsibility in embracing and supporting their child and being an integral part of their child's life.
  - Emphasize the critical importance of making language and communication accessible to the child at all times. Discuss what role this will have in encouraging language development, incidental learning, and making the child feel like a valued member of the family unit.
  - Encourage the family to treat the child who is deaf or hard of hearing the same as his or her hearing siblings.
  - Include hearing siblings in the early intervention process so they are involved in learning how to communicate and interact with their sibling who is deaf or hard of hearing.
  - Emphasize the important role of the family in promoting their child's success by having high expectations.

- Encourage the family to provide opportunities for their child who is deaf or hard of hearing to interact and connect with relatives and family friends.
  - Focus on having the parent establish a special parent/child activity or hobby to promote a parent/child bond (e.g., planting in the garden together, walking the dog in the park).
- B. Encourage the family to look at the “whole child.”
- Guide the family in looking beyond ears, hearing tests, listening activities, and medical appointments; have them also look at the overall growth and development of the child as a whole child. To guide families in celebrating their child’s milestones in all areas of development, share with families books from the series by [Louise Bates Ames](#) describing expected behaviors at each year of a child’s development (e.g., *Your One Year Old: 12-24 months: Fun-loving and Fussy*).
- C. Encourage family members to take into consideration the perspective of their child who is deaf or hard of hearing.
- Have family members envision and discuss their thoughts about being in a situation from the deaf or hard of hearing child’s perspective (e.g., backyard with children playing, out shopping in the mall, at the swimming pool).
  - Have family members observe a child playing and analyze the child’s active learning process (e.g., what the child did to problem solve and accomplish a task).
  - Incorporate activities based on the interests of the child (e.g., babies tend to love family pictures that include them). Make a personal family board book with family photos, or have the family use the photos stored on their phone to bond and promote language related to family members.
  - Encourage families to see the positive impact their child who is deaf or hard of hearing has had on their life (e.g., they have experienced a new community, learned a new language, made new friends).
  - Encourage families to listen to and follow the lead (and later opinions and thoughts) of their child.
- D. Encourage families to seek support from adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. (See Activity 4.6 for more information about deaf mentors/role models.)

- Share information with families about the benefit of having a deaf mentor or role model as part of the family’s journey with their deaf or hard of hearing child. It is beneficial for families to see how deaf individuals can lead typical, productive lives.
  - Share possible resources to connect the family with the Deaf community to support their learning about Deaf culture and Deaf pride. Help families “break the ice” in making the first step in accessing the Deaf community to meet deaf individuals who may be able to possibly answer questions related to their personal life experiences.
- E. Encourage families to set attainable goals in relation to learning sign language. Some examples include:
- identifying times for silent dinners (e.g., time where only American Sign Language is used for a designated meal time),
  - attending community ASL classes (e.g., library, community college, local school for the deaf), and
  - reviewing online resources teaching functional signs.
- F. Encourage family members to document their journey to assist in processing their thoughts and experiences in raising a child who is deaf or hard of hearing as well as to keep track of their child’s accomplishments and experiences. This documentation can serve as a jumpstart to discussions reflecting on a child’s growth process during early intervention as well as a keepsake to later share with their child when grown. (See Activity 7.2 for more information about journaling.)
- G. Discuss with the family considerations related to having a support team they can trust. Include the following talking points:
- the importance of families having a supportive team—This includes not only professionals (e.g., early interventionists, audiologists, speech-language pathologists) but also a network of others (e.g., friends, other parents, deaf adults) they can connect to and trust in receiving and sharing information related to raising their child.
  - the importance of feeling comfortable with and being understood by their service provider

- the power of parent-to-parent networking—Encourage families to: a) find support groups in which they can share their experiences, b) connect with other families of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (both younger and older), and c) set up playdates with other deaf and/or hard of hearing children.
- H. Provide families with the information and resources necessary to assist them in becoming advocates for their child. Explore what is available in such resources to guide your work with families:

- [Bill of Rights for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children](#)
- [The Hands & Voices Advocacy, Support, and Training \(ASTra\) Program](#)
- [Advocating for Your Deaf Child's Education](#)

**Additional Resources:**

- [Positive Parenting: Boys Town National Research Hospital](#)
  - [Aussie Deaf Kids](#)
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