

Module 4: Launching Language and Communication Through Sign

Sections: Use of Signs Pre- and Post-Cochlear Implant

**Activity 4.5: Explaining Considerations About Use of Signing for Children with Cochlear Implants (Both Pre- and Post-Implantation)**

- A. Discuss the following concepts about use of signing, both pre-implantation and post-implantation, that are addressed in Cochlear Implants: Navigating a Forest of Information ... One Tree at a Time:
- Evidence shows that children receiving early cochlear implantation are noted to benefit from access to visual language for establishing early language foundations and transitioning to spoken language post-implantation.
 - With purposeful planning and appropriate supports, spoken language can be nurtured and developed in a signing environment. The use of sign language does not imply exclusion of spoken language.
 - Sign may play an integral role in establishing early language foundations through a child's strong sense of vision while the auditory pathways are developing or provide an ongoing role for a child throughout his or her life. The role may vary from child to child. Some of the ways that sign may be addressed include:
 - **Bilingual development of ASL and spoken English.** Each language is developed and addressed as an independent language. Spoken English is facilitated for both social and academic purposes based on the individual characteristics and goals of each child. (For more information about strategies to address development and use of both ASL and spoken English, referred to as a bimodal bilingual approach, see The "Why" and "How" of an ASL/English Bimodal Bilingual Program in the 2012 issue of *Odyssey* magazine.)

- **Use of sign vocabulary to facilitate early language development before obtaining a cochlear implant.** Children are exposed to sign vocabulary to jumpstart language development before cochlear implantation.
- **Use of sign as a bridge or transition to proficiency in spoken English.** Sign is used with the child before implantation and as a bridge to transitioning to the use of spoken English following implantation. Sign is slowly diminished as the child demonstrates increased proficiency in spoken English.
- **Continued use of sign as a support to spoken English.** An English-based sign system is used in conjunction with spoken English (either via simultaneous communication, sequentially as a support to English, or via an interpreter).

Note: Modified from Moeller, M. P. (2006). Use of sign with children who have cochlear implants: A diverse set of approaches. [Loud & Clear!](#), 2(1), 6-12.

- B. Discuss strategies for families to include to help their child make connections between signed and spoken language:
- Model and expand known signs into spoken language. For example, when a child signs ball, verbalize back, "Yes, that's a ball."
 - Incorporate the use of sequential language or the sandwich technique (e.g., say it-sign it-say it or sign it-say it-sign it).
 - Compare how to communicate a concept in ASL and then English (e.g., "The cat ran up the tree" ... say it in spoken English or spoken English with signed support, then demonstrate what it would look like in ASL).
- C. Document a plan for how and when to utilize sign during the day in the child's natural environment. (See Activity 4.4.)
- Identify times to reduce or eliminate sign use to provide the opportunity to focus on spoken language (e.g., during highly contextual and familiar communication situations).
 - Provide opportunities during the day where sign language is not used and listening strategies are incorporated to promote understanding (e.g., limit choices, highlight key words, repeat the message, provide contextual cues).
 - Determine a plan for the child to obtain individualized auditory and speech habilitation services. (See Navigating a Forest of Information ... One Tree at a Time, [Training the Ear to Listen.](#))
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Activities modified from [Cochlear Implants: Navigating a Forest of Information ... One Tree at a Time.](#)