



# Setting Language in Motion: Family Supports and Early Intervention for Babies Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

## Tips for Ensuring Early Access to Language

Early identification and early intervention are critical components to supporting language development in babies who are identified as deaf or hard of hearing.

### The 1-3-6 Rule

All babies who are identified or referred by 1 month of age should receive a diagnostic follow-up by 3 months of age. All babies who are then identified as deaf or hard of hearing should receive appropriate intervention initiated by 6 months of age.

All babies who are identified by 3 months of age, and with whom intervention has started by 6 months of age, demonstrate the potential to develop better language and, eventually, better reading comprehension.

### Effective Communication

With early diagnosis and early intervention to ensure access to language, parents and providers can and should expect language acquisition that more reasonably parallels milestones for babies without hearing loss.

### The Importance of Language Stimulation

The implication of delayed access to language is the possible forfeit not only of language acquisition but of brain development. Delayed language access can lead to detrimental effects on cognitive growth, satisfactory social connections, and academic achievement.

There is an array of communication and language options available; there is no one choice or path that a family must follow. Observation of how the child is accessing language and periodic assessments are critical. With appropriate and accessible

language, the expectation should be that the

### MODULE ONE

Early Identification:  
Newborn/Infant Hearing  
Screening and Evaluation  
and the Importance of  
Ensuring Early Access to  
Language

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child's language competencies should be on par with peers.

### The Use of Sign Language and Visual Supports

The use of sign language provides a platform for communicative interaction using symbolic language. This language can provide a bridge for meaningful translation to language competency, whether in sign or spoken language. Sign language can also remain the primary language for interaction and learning. Visual supports to language can begin immediately, even prior to the establishment of consistent auditory access. This is critical to the development of neural development and priming the brain for language learning that is so important in the first year of life.

### Language Competency

The goal for every child should be for language competency. This can occur through early identification, early intervention,

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consistent and accessible language stimulation, and family support.

### **Child-Led, NOT Device-Driven**

Through periodic observation and assessment of the child's demonstrated preferences and emerging competencies, decisions can be made as to whether there is a need to change course or modality. Consideration should be given to modifying interventions and support as well as to communication modalities according to demonstrated progress and competencies of the developing child.

### **Effective Early Identification**

Effective early intervention comprises early access to sign language and support for the acquisition of language as well as early amplification and support for the acquisition of spoken language. These steps will prevent language deprivation and delays as long as there is assurance of language stimulation through accessible modalities.

### **For Additional Resources**

Please refer to the Module 1 video for more tips and information as well as for additional resources. Also, visit our websites at [www.bostonchildrenshospital.org/dhhp](http://www.bostonchildrenshospital.org/dhhp) and <http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>.