

Language & Learning

Getting Started With Early Intervention

When to Start Early Intervention

The answer to the question “When?” is “Now!” The earlier a baby starts to listen and the earlier there is language in the baby’s environment, the sooner language, speech, and listening can develop. You might wonder why services are needed for a young infant. Babies benefit in brain development from early stimulation and parents benefit from support early intervention provides.

When we assess babies, we don’t ask them to take tests. Infant/family specialists observe your baby, and ask you about signs of development, and help you look for progress. Together you look for growing eye contact and use of gestures from your baby in response to your voice and/or signs. There are checklists of developmental milestones that you can update every week, or every month, or every few months. There are games that infant/family specialists play that are really tests of your baby’s growth and development. This is called ongoing assessment.

Babies change so rapidly in their first months and years that we cannot wait a year to see if they are making progress. This is why we do ongoing assessments. We need to describe the changes every day. At the beginning of infant/family services, one of the most important results of assessment is information about how your baby likes to learn and communicate. Many babies respond well to hearing aids and/or cochlear implants and are able to learn clearly by listening; other babies learn just as fast through their eyes. If we pay attention to what they do, and how they respond to us, we will know how to encourage their communication. That decision is very important, and it needs to be based on ongoing assessment. Later, as we continue to observe, we can make new decisions based on new information.