

Language & Learning

Decisions... Decisions

Information Gathering

Each time you prepare to make a decision, you will want to gather information. Many of your sources will be the same each time.

The professionals that you consult will vary, depending on the decision. For amplification questions, your doctors and audiologists will have many answers for you, or better yet, several choices to present. If you are trying to find a communication approach to use at the beginning of your baby's language development, then your infant/family specialist probably has the best methods for helping you get information. The title of the professional helping you is not always as important as the experience that professional has with the question you are asking. A speech language pathologist who happens to have years of work in aural habilitation (helping hard-of-hearing and deaf children develop language and/or speech) may know more about communication techniques than a first year teacher of the deaf who did student teaching with high school students. Both may know information that you can use, however.

One of the most helpful sources of information can be other parents. As you talk with other parents, however, look carefully at the similarities between your children. Parents can be very supportive of each other, and know things that no one else can possibly know, but they can also be protective of the choices that they made. If your children have different needs, then your choices may be different.

Hard of Hearing adults and Deaf adults can help parents by sharing personal experiences. Both groups have associations parents can find on the internet (Self Help for Hard of Hearing - www.hearingloss.org, Alexander Bell Association www.agbell.org, National Association of the Deaf - www.nad.org). Individual mentors for parents and children may be available as well. Like parents and professionals, the opinions of Deaf and Hard of Hearing adults may be influenced by their own experiences.

There are now several catalogues that specialize in books, videotapes, and materials that might help parents trying to learn about hearing loss. Alexander Bell Association, Butte Publications, Dawn Signs Press, and Gallaudet Bookstore are examples. They have 800 telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and websites.

Parents who like to search the Internet will find an abundance of sites, such as this one. Some sources are carefully researched, and some reflect opinions. Opinion based Internet sources may or may not have accurate information, but you will find many points of view.