

Language & Learning

Getting Started With Early Intervention

Additional Services

In addition to the services of your infant/family specialist, there are several services of other professionals you may need to call upon for you and your baby. Some of the related services that your baby needs can be found through your school district. However, schools are not usually responsible for providing medical care or hearing aids.

Your infant/family specialist can usually help you ask important questions as you look for the best audiologist or pediatrician. In many cities, a few of these professionals have experience with babies who are deaf or hard of hearing. They have worked with parents and children, and understand the questions and concerns you may have. They know how to provide appropriate treatment because they understand the effects of hearing loss on very young children.

If you do not live in an area with experienced professionals, then you and your infant/family specialist can become the advocates for your baby. You can help doctors and other professionals learn the skills they need.

Services Coordination

Your services coordinator becomes a central point of contact between you and the school program and/or other professionals. If you desire this service, this professional will work with you to identify and meet the baby's needs by coordinating both formal and informal supports. Sometimes many professionals become involved in your team. It can be overwhelming to keep up with all the contacts to keep things running smoothly. The services coordinator can assist with this and many other needs. More detailed information may be found at <http://answers4families.org/ifspweb/coordination.html>.

Audiology

Your audiologist will fit and monitor your baby's hearing aids. You will need the audiologist to check your baby's hearing regularly to be sure that the level of hearing stays the same and the hearing aids are functioning properly. Very small babies are hard to test, and getting reliable results may require a number of sessions.

Medical Services

Every baby needs a pediatrician or a family practice doctor. Some kinds of hearing loss occur with other medical issues. Doctors and geneticists can help you find or rule out other possible problems. You may be referred to an ear specialist, called an otolaryngologist or ENT.

Occupational or Physical Therapy

Sometimes the cause of hearing loss is also the cause of motor or balance problems. Many young children benefit from early OT or PT therapy.

Sign Language Classes or Teaching Materials

Parents who have decided to add signed language to their baby's communication options need to find a way to learn to sign as quickly as possible. Sign language lessons for parents of young children can be offered in classes, or on videotape (such as the Sign With Me program found on the Boys Town Press Web site (www.boystown.org/btpress)). Meeting deaf adults or participating in programs such as the Shared Reading Program through the Laurent Clerc Center at Gallaudet University (<http://clerccenter.gallaudet.edu>) are other exciting ways to help the whole family become comfortable with signing.