

Language & Learning

Building Our Support Team

Setting Up Community Support

Other parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing can be a wonderful source of support. The specialist coming into your home can put you in contact with those families within your school district. Experienced parents can listen with understanding and give you helpful ideas. New parents can share your immediate experiences and tell you about their own.

When you know other parents, you have a chance to bring your baby together with other babies and toddlers who communicate and learn in similar ways. Of course you want your child to have all kinds of friends, and when some of them are deaf or hard of hearing, your baby can develop a wide range of social skills.

Many of the places where your family visits will be happy to make changes to accommodate your baby, and later your child. Often, you will be the person who helps the family doctor understand your child's special needs. Not all pediatricians have first hand experience with patients with hearing loss, but most doctors are willing to learn. If you attend a church, mosque, or synagogue, you can encourage the staff and congregation to get acquainted with your baby to become a part of his spiritual growth. If you live in a small community and know your grocer, your librarian, and your mail carrier (people who will often see you and your baby), start early to make them a part of your deaf or hard of hearing baby's life, just as you would your hearing children.

Children in your neighborhood may, as they get older, join T-ball or soccer teams, go to dance class, begin scouting, or take music lessons. Many deaf and hard of hearing children will do the same. Some cities have classes and troops and teams that are meant for deaf or hard of hearing children. Some have mixed groups, and some provide an interpreter to allow a single signing child to participate. As your baby grows, notice things that interest your child and encourage participation in social activities, from Mommy and Me playgroups to the soccer team.

Many larger communities also have support services that you can explore and experience while your baby is still young. For example, where there is an active Deaf community, a cochlear implant club or a branch of Hearing Loss Association of America (shhh.org), local movies often may be captioned to supplement hearing devices. These groups may have social gatherings that include families. The more ties you and your family build between your baby and the community, the more support you will have as your baby grows.

For more ideas about finding support from other parents and your community, look at the Parent to Parent section of this website.