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QUESTIONS PARENTS OFTEN ASK

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Your Journey Begins

When your child is first identified as being Deaf or Hard of Hearing, you may feel a variety of emotions. Some parents are frightened, sad, and even angry, while other parents may immediately embrace their child's uniqueness and feel a sense of joy. Every family's journey raising a Deaf or Hard of Hearing child is different. However, we all have questions about where to begin.

- How will my child learn a language?
- Does my child have other special needs?
- Will my child ever get married?
- What did I do to cause this?
- Does this mean my baby will never talk?
- Will my child have to go to a special school?
- Do I have to learn sign language?
- My child only has one ear with a hearing loss. Does my child really need support?
- Which educational program is best for my child?
- We have other children. How will they communicate with their Deaf sibling?
- Will my child outgrow this?
- If we have more children, will they be Deaf too?
- My child has a mild hearing loss. Does my child need hearing aids?

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Take the time to think about what it means to have a Deaf child. Put your questions, thoughts, and ideas down on paper. There are many resources available to answer your questions, such as other parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, Deaf adults, your Early Start teacher, and your audiologist, as well as the Internet. Try sharing your thoughts with many different people from different backgrounds, to gain a well-rounded wealth of knowledge. However, always keep in mind some people will share their opinions, while others may have research and facts.

Only YOU know what's best for your child

Often, we find that parents are so overwhelmed with information they forget to ask even the most basic questions, but by asking questions and seeking answers you will gain a sense of control and empowerment.

Questions you may want to ask your audiologist:

- What kind of sounds can my child hear?
- How can I support my child's speech as well as her signing skills?
- How often should we test our son's hearing?
- What's the difference between a cochlear implant and hearing aids?
- How do we know the hearing aids are working?
- What can I do at home to help my child listen and speak?
- How do I read an audiogram?
- Where can I learn more about cochlear implants?
- How do I keep my child from pulling the hearing aids out?

Questions you may want to ask other parents of Deaf and Hard of Hearing children:

- How do I find other Deaf friends for my child?
- How did you learn ASL?
- When did you stop crying?
- Where did you find support?
- How did you explain that your child is Deaf or Hard of Hearing to your family?
- What do you do when someone is staring at your child's hearing aid or cochlear implant?
- When did you tell your child he is Deaf?
- Can our child play sports?
- How do you read a bedtime story?
- What do I tell people when they ask me why my child's ears look different?
- How did you come to accept the deafness?

Questions you may want to ask your Early Start teacher:

- How will you help us learn sign language?
- How can I meet other parents like me?
- What happens when my child turns three?
- Where can I find funding for hearing aids?
- What services do you provide?
- How should our family participate in Early Start?
- What are our options for schools?
- What does “mainstream” mean?
- What is the difference between a total communication program and a speech and listening program?
- Can our babysitter participate in our Early Start program?

Questions you may want to ask Deaf adults:

- What was it like when you were growing up?
- Are you happy with the choices your parents made for you?
- What is it like using a cochlear implant?
- Did you enjoy being in a mainstream program?
- Why did you choose ASL over spoken language?
- What is it like being a student at a School for the Deaf?
- What is Deaf culture?
- How do you communicate with your hearing family?
- What’s the difference between ASL and English?
- How did you learn to read?
- How did you learn to write?
- How did you learn to sign?
- How did you learn to talk?

Remember that being Deaf or Hard of Hearing is different for every individual. Some Deaf people enjoy listening and speaking like their hearing peers, while others choose American Sign Language and Deaf culture as their way of life. As a parent, you can support your child’s happiness and success by being well informed, exploring ALL opportunities, and making connections.



WHAT IF MY BABY HAS OTHER CHALLENGES?

Parent Contributors: Kat Lowrance and Darla Schwehr

When babies are born with challenges it is hard to decide what area of development to focus on. When we look at life and how children learn we know that communication is such an important part of life. Be sure to talk with professionals you have learned to trust and talk with as many other parents as you can find!

The Early Start system in California can be confusing to parents of infants who have other challenges. That is because services for infants and toddlers who have other challenges are provided by two different agencies, regional centers and local educational agencies.

- Regional centers specialize in serving people with developmental disabilities. Regional centers are funded by the Department of Developmental Services.
- Local educational agencies (school districts or county offices of education) have specialists that have knowledge about low incidence disabilities (Deaf or Hard of Hearing, Blind or Visually Impaired, Orthopedically Impaired, or Deaf-Blind). Local educational agencies (LEAs) are funded by the California Department of Education (CDE).

For children who are born Deaf or Hard of Hearing, the most significant predictors of success are age of identification and parental involvement. Identification of infants who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing by six months of age, followed by appropriate Early Start, is the most effective strategy for the development of language in infants and toddlers who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing. Children identified by six months of age, who receive appropriate services, develop language skills matching their hearing peers.

This is true for all Deaf and Hard of Hearing children, including those who have other challenges. (C. Yoshinaga-Itano, 2001)

“It takes a village” is a true saying here. Sometimes Early Start services are provided by the regional center, sometimes by the local educational agency, and sometimes, by both the regional center and the LEA.



Parent Mentors



Offering support to parents is what Parent Links is all about. Each mentor is a parent of a child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing.

- Through email, phone, and mail we are here to help answer the questions that parents may have about raising a child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing.
- Help parents find local connections.
- Parent Mentoring in Spanish and English... Just give us a call.

Exceptional Parents Unlimited

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