

Hearing loss is the most common birth defect—you are not alone!

- About 1 of every 1,000 babies is born deaf.
- Another 5 babies in 1,000 are born with permanent hearing loss in one or both ears.

It is possible to help prevent language delays if your baby's hearing loss is found in the first months of life and you get help as soon as possible. You will discover that you and your family play the most important role in helping your child learn. We want all children to get off to a good start.

What is Early Steps?

Early Steps helps families of children age birth to 36 months who have special needs. Working early with children helps them learn and develop. Early Steps provides families with ways to help their child so they are ready to learn when they enter school. There is minimal or no cost to families for Early Steps services. There is also no family income restriction. Local Early Steps offices are located throughout Florida. To find the nearest Early Steps call us toll-free at 1-800-654-4440.



It's not about hearing loss—it's about communication.

**Early Steps,
Children's Medical Services**

4052 Bald Cypress Way, Bin A06
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1707
1-800-654-4440

For more information about Early Steps, go to www.cms-kids.com and click on the Families tab. On our CMS-Kids website you can find specific information about services for young children with hearing loss and download a Florida Resource Guide for Families of Young Children with Hearing Loss.



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**Help for Families of Infants and Toddlers
with Hearing Loss**



Is my child's hearing loss serious?

Yes, all hearing loss is serious! Any permanent hearing loss in one or both ears can affect learning.

Language is caught, not taught.

- Babies learn language from the people in their lives.
- Children learn to speak by hearing words. Hearing loss gets in the way of a baby learning—or catching—spoken language.
- Speech and language are two different things.
- Speech is about the sounds that are combined to make words.
- Language is how someone uses words to express thoughts.
- Every hearing loss is different and every child learns differently.
- A child will learn language if he hears it or sees it signed throughout each day.
- There is no single way to communicate that is best for all children, but all children need to learn to use language.

What is a Hearing Specialist?

A Hearing Specialist is a person trained to work with young children with hearing loss. They help families understand how to help their baby with hearing loss “catch language.”

- Early Steps helps families of children with hearing loss help their children learn language.
- Early Steps has people trained in the needs of children with hearing loss.

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How does Early Intervention help families?

1. Works with families of infants with hearing loss to help them understand how they can prevent language delays
2. Provides families with information and emotional support
3. Provides intervention services where the child lives and plays
4. Helps families understand that communicating with their child will make the biggest difference in his/her learning language
5. Supports families as they learn to communicate effectively with their child throughout each day
6. Provides unbiased information to families to help them learn about different ways to communicate with their child and the service providers available
7. Supports parents as they help their child wear hearing aids or cochlear implants during all waking hours
8. Monitors language development every 6 months to see how quickly the child is learning
9. Smoothly transitions to appropriate services and school programs
10. Empowers families to advocate for services to meet their child's needs based on high expectations

How does it work?

Early Steps office has SHINE (Serving Hearing Impaired Newborns Effectively) service coordinators who will help you get started. A plan will be developed with you based on your child's needs and your main concerns. The Early Steps team, including your family and a hearing specialist, decide together what help is needed. You are guided as you help your child learn language. Early Steps offers information about all the ways you can learn to communicate with your child. Choices made about how to communicate are yours. These choices can change as you discover how your baby learns best.

How can Early Steps services help your family?

- Helps you understand your child's hearing loss
- Shows you ways to help your child develop
- Teaches you about hearing aids and cochlear implants
- Coaches you on your child's language growth every day during daily play, feeding, and bathing
- Teaches you different strategies to help your child learn to communicate—by listening, signing or both
- Checks your child's progress in learning language to be sure he is on target

