

# Parent Education Pages

## Family Support



The Joint Committee on Infant Hearing (JCIH) has representatives from Pediatrics, Otology, Speech Language Pathology, Audiology, Deaf Education and State Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs. JCIH published a position statement in 2019 that provides guidance on the roles and responsibilities of the providers you may encounter on your journey with your newly identified child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH).

### What is Family Support?

Family support is any contact that helps families by providing them with information, understanding, or resources. Family well-being and adjustment to the diagnosis are key goals of family support.

### Who Provides Family Support?

Providers, parents with children who have a hearing loss, adults who are deaf/hard of hearing, family members, friends, and other community members can provide support and information to families. It is important that support and information is presented in an easily-understood manner and whenever possible, in the family's preferred language.

### What Does Support Look Like?

Support can be provided informally (e.g., family, community, friends) and formally (e.g., support groups, parent-to-parent contacts, meeting deaf or hard of hearing adults, websites, and national organizations).

### Why Does a Family Need Support?

When a family prepares to make a decision they will want to gather information from a variety of sources and individuals. Talking with others and learning about their experiences helps a family cope with feelings while gathering information and suggestions to make a decision that works for their family.

### Infant Mental Health

Infant mental health focuses on the relationship between parents and infants and the effect it has on positive social, emotional, behavioral and cognitive development of infants. Connecting with and learning from other support systems such as other families who have children with a hearing loss can provide a sense of well-being, knowledge and empowerment. The supported families will then be able to focus on building emotionally stable relationships with their, child laying the foundation for lifelong health and well-being.

### Guidelines

The information shared here is simplified language of the guidelines set forth by the JCIH. The guidelines were written for professionals and families to set standards of care for children through the hearing screening, diagnosis and early intervention process. Parents should consider these overall recommendations and timelines may vary based on family circumstances.



[Infant Mental Health](#)



[Connect to Family Support](#)



[Learning from DHH Adults](#)



[Learn about Family Support](#)

### How Does Family Support Help?

Families will learn many new concepts and technical information very early in the process, and they often need to make a number of decisions (e.g., about amplification, communication, etc). Informed decision-making is an ongoing process that requires a family to consider new knowledge, information, experiences, language assessment results, and their personal family goals and values as they make decisions. A family can work with service providers and their family support network to gain the necessary knowledge, information, clarity, and experiences that support fully-informed decisions. Things that may impact a family's decisions include their child's unique strengths and abilities, their family's value and belief system, social circumstances, cultural influences, and personal comfort level in making choices on behalf of the child.

### Meeting Others

When children meet other children and adults who have a hearing loss, it can reduce fears and loneliness by making connections with others who are like them. Hearing about experiences from deaf/hard of hearing (DHH) adults can provide suggestions and insight to parents on how to encourage, lead, and respond to their child's needs especially in situations that may be more challenging.

### Language Development

Children who have a hearing loss are at risk of delayed language development. It is important that children have exposure to language models at the earliest possible age to ensure optimal cognitive, emotional, and educational development. Appropriately trained providers should be knowledgeable and supportive of the language and communication choices a family makes. Meeting other parents who are raising a child who has a hearing loss can provide encouragement and practical tips for language development.

### The Role of the EHDI Program

Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) Programs work to ensure that families of babies and children who are deaf or hard of hearing (DHH) receive appropriate and timely services. These services include hearing screening, diagnosis, early intervention (EI) and parent-to-parent support, provided through coordinated systems of care.

The EHDI system is family-centered with access to information about all resources and programs for intervention, support and counseling regarding the child's educational and communication/language needs.

EHDI programs follow the JCIH benchmarks of 1-3-6: hearing screening no later than one month of age, diagnosis no later than 3 months of age, and Early Intervention and parent support by 6 months of age.