

What is Early Intervention???

"Early intervention" means starting a specialized program to help your child right away! We introduce the term since you will hear it used frequently by professionals. Time is of the essence because a child's brain is programmed to learn language during the first three years of life. After this period, it is very difficult to acquire language skills. Therefore, the earlier the intervention starts, the less of the precious three year "window of opportunity" is lost.

Early intervention can take many forms, such as getting children fitted for hearing aids, providing counseling and support for parents and teaching parents how to stimulate speech and language in their child.

One of the first steps may be to get hearing aids for your child. Depending on the degree of your child's loss, hearing aids may ideally enable your baby to hear many sounds. This includes both environmental sounds (for example, the sound of a rattle or a dog barking) and the sounds of speech. Basically, hearing aids work by boosting the intensity (loudness) level of sounds at different frequencies (Pitches). Higher pitch sounds such as /t,p and s/ need a greater loudness boost to be heard than low frequency sounds, such as /a, o and ah/. Hearing aids can be programmed to fit the needs of individual hearing patterns, such as boosting intensity levels for high frequency sounds that your child may not hear at all and less for low frequency sounds that your child may hear better.

Hearing aids do not correct hearing as perfectly as glasses correct vision. Individual sounds may be somewhat distorted. Because hearing aids amplify all sounds, it may still be difficult for your baby to hear and understand speech in noisy situations.

Will My Child Need Early Intervention???

Most children with hearing loss require some degree of educational and habilitative intervention. Any level of loss can create challenges for a child, especially in an academic environment. Even a child with a mild to moderate hearing loss-provided it goes undetected or untreated- has a higher likelihood of repeating a grade than does a child with normal hearing.

In Kentucky, the primary Early Intervention program is called First Steps. Anyone can refer a child for First Steps services by calling (877) 417-8377 or (877) 41STEPS.

