

## Hearing Loss in Children

### Supporting Deaf Children During COVID-19

Thousands of babies are born deaf or hard of hearing in the United States each year. It's important that they are identified early and receive appropriate support services in a timely manner. Learn how two Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs are providing essential services to these children and their families during [COVID-19](#).



About 1 in 500 babies in the United States are born deaf or hard of hearing (DHH). When identified at birth, babies who are DHH can begin intervention early and are more likely to achieve language, cognitive and social development on par with typically developing peers.<sup>1</sup>

Every state has an Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program that works to ensure that babies who are DHH are diagnosed early and receive the services they need on time.

Amid the concerns and changes that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic, EHDI programs are finding creative and successful ways to use technology to provide access to the resources and services needed by the children and families they serve. These efforts are helping children to achieve their full potential in language, cognitive, and social development and keeping their families informed during this time. Here are just a few examples of how programs are adapting and succeeding.

### Utah's Sound Beginnings Program Moves Online

As a result of moving all of their educational services for children from birth to 6 years of age who are DHH to an on-line format, teachers at the [Sound Beginnings program in Utah](#) [🔗](#) are using [tele-intervention](#) [🔗](#) to help infants and children who use hearing technology to develop listening and spoken language skills. They also help parents learn strategies for working with their child to develop spoken language within their natural home environment. With the COVID-19 pandemic and parents spending more time at home, Sound Beginnings is now working with more fathers in providing day-to-day Early Intervention services – something they have tried to do for years with limited success.



Liam Nay is 6 years old and has bilateral cochlear implants. His father, Sam, has been excited about Liam's progress in the Sound Beginnings program over the past 4 years. Because he is spending more time at home, Sam is now able to be more extensively involved in supporting his son with his on-line kindergarten class and individual language intervention sessions. Accustomed to having his mother attend the parent-child therapy sessions, Liam beamed, "You're okay to have in class too, Dad!" Sam noted that even though he and his wife have always worked together to help with Liam's therapy at home, "It has been a big help to Liam to get to spend time with both of us in different sessions with his teachers. When both of us get to spend time working with him, he knows that he is important to both of us."

Visit the [National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management](#) (NCHAM) to learn more about telehealth and how it can be used to support clinical health care and education via 2-way video conferencing.

## Hands & Voices Keeps Families Connected

[Hands & Voices](#), an organization dedicated to supporting families with children who are DHH, knew they had to get creative to keep families connected during this time of social isolation. The [Kentucky Hands & Voices](#) came up with the idea of a "Thursday Thirties" series, where every Thursday evening, they would have an on-line event to interact with families and answer their questions. For one of the events they partnered with Virginia Moore, executive director at the [Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing \(KCDHH\)](#). Virginia answered a series of questions from Hands & Voices kids about her role as an American Sign Language interpreter for the governor of Kentucky during the daily COVID-19 updates. She also spoke about her partnership with Hands & Voices and the importance of communication for children who are DHH.



Visit [Hands & Voices](#) to learn more about the services and support they offer to families of children who are DHH.

The stories above are just a few examples of how health care providers and organizations are adapting to provide education and other services to children who are DHH and their families. To learn more, view NCHAM, and Hands and Voices [webinar series](#) about bright spots and innovative activities during COVID-19 for children who are DHH.

### The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) offers this advice to families whose services have been interrupted

- **Communicate with your service coordinator.** Check in to see if services can continue virtually for the time being.
- **Find out best way to reach your service provider.** See if your provider will be available by phone/email/video conferencing to answer questions and offer suggestions, even if formal sessions aren't taking place.
- **Ask if changes to your child's Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) [460 KB/6 pages] are needed** —If changes are needed, how you can work with the rest of the IFSP team to make those changes.
- **Trust yourself.** You know your child best. Follow your instincts on what your child needs and which aspects of daily activities and routines are most conducive to their progress.
- **Remember your parent training.** Consider the strategies and interactions you already know work well and what

you are doing to foster communication development.

- **Let real life be the guide.** Young children learn best in the context of real-life activities and with the people who are most important to them. Weave communication interactions and goals into everyday routines and activities such as mealtime, bath time, changing time, playtime, and household chores.
- **Engaging in early intervention services is a choice.** It's okay to say that you need to cancel services if virtual or other modified services are not a good fit for your family.

Visit ASHA's [Better Hearing and Speech Month webpage](#) to find additional information and resources for parents.

### **The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) supports the continuation of newborn screening services during COVID-19**

- The [American Academy of Pediatrics \(AAP\)](#) supports the continued provision of health care for children during the COVID-19 pandemic unless community circumstances related to the pandemic require necessary adjustments.
- The AAP recommends that pediatricians continue to follow federal and state guidelines on newborn screening, including those for [newborn hearing screening and follow-up](#).

## Additional Resources

[CDC's Hearing Loss in Children](#)

[National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management \(NCHAM\)](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

[American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#)

[Hands & Voices](#)

[Sound Beginnings at Utah State University](#)

## References

1. Christine Yoshinaga-Itano C, Sedey A.L, Wiggin M, Chung W. Early Hearing Detection and Vocabulary of Children with Hearing Loss. *Pediatrics*. 2017; 140(2): e20162964; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2016-2964>

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