

Caregivers are Key Communicators Suggestions for Day Care and Early Childhood Staff

A young child with a hearing loss may need additional communication support with unfamiliar people or in group situations. There is much information available for understanding early childhood hearing loss. A family can describe what is most helpful for their individual child. When caring for babies, toddlers and preschoolers with hearing loss caregivers can consider providing the following support regularly.

Clear Interactions

- Respond to a child's words, actions and expressions to show awareness of what he wants.
- Point out sounds so a child will know the phone is ringing, the dog is barking etc.
- Include visual cues to predict what will happen (blankets at nap or hats for outside).
- Obtain a child's attention before communicating so he can be involved when tasks start.
- Position yourself at a child's ear and eye level for interactions to be easier to hear and see.
- Avoid communicating where it is hard to see faces such as in dark rooms or bright glare.

Auditory Assistance

- Learn how to quickly put on a child's implant, hearing aid or FM.
- Know how to check and replace a battery. Keep a list of tips to follow (trouble-shooting) when a device is not working.
- Encourage the child to wear his listening devices during waking hours.
- Identify a safe, consistent place to keep listening devices when not being worn.
- Talk in a normal tone at a typical pace. Do not shout or exaggerate your speech.
- Notify parents if a child complains of ear pain or has sores close to his device.

Constant Conversation

- Accept a child's approximations so he feels successful in early communication.
- Create enjoyable opportunities for a child to discover new words and explore concepts.



- Decrease background noise (TVs, traffic) so a child can localize and identify sounds.
- Communicate often through phrases, sentences, songs and conversations.
- Encourage a child to converse fully and often in the languages he is learning.
- Read books, interact with others, play games and do many tasks that involve language.

Typical Activities

- Engage in all the developmental activities appropriate for a child at that age.
- Encourage other children to be his playmates and communicate clearly.
- Emphasize to others a child's strengths and similarities but explain his devices or needs too.
- Recognize that a child may benefit from directions or requests being repeated or restated.
- Make a list of concerns or questions for the family or other service providers.
- Celebrate the child's many unique capabilities, changes and successes.

Parents can expand these guidelines with specific suggestions from the child's family and specialists. Share many ideas with your babysitter, nanny, child care and family caregivers.