

Newborn Hearing Program

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI)

Facts

Two to three of every 1,000 children in the United States are born deaf or hard-of-hearing and are successfully identified early because of newborn hearing screening.

95% of newborns identified as deaf or hard-of-hearing are born to hearing parents with no family history of hearing loss.

Hearing loss is the most frequently occurring birth defect among newborns.



Screening

Evidence shows that newborn hearing screening is highly accurate and leads to earlier identification and treatment of infants with hearing loss, which results in improved language outcomes.

The American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Academy of Audiology, the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing, and the National Association of the Deaf have recommended that all babies be screened for hearing loss before they leave the hospital or 2-7 days after an out-of-hospital birth. Completing the screen BEFORE discharge or before leaving a midwife's care has been shown to be the most effective (and convenient) way for families to obtain screening.

Without screening, hearing-impaired children may not be identified until about age 2 ½ to 3 years old. Many may not be identified until they reach 5 or 6 years of age, long after the critical period for speech and language development had ended. With early identification, infants can be fitted with hearing aids as early as one month of age.

Without early identification and intervention, children with hearing loss have increased difficulties with verbal and nonverbal communication skills, increased behavioral problems, decreased psychosocial well-being, and lower educational attainment compared to children with normal hearing.

1-3-6 Plan

All states and territories in the United States work to ensure that infants are screened for hearing loss no later than 1 month of age, infants who do not pass the screening for hearing loss get a full hearing evaluation no later than 3 months of age, and infants with a hearing loss receive intervention services no later than 6 months of age.

The Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) system consists of collaborative efforts between the state health department newborn hearing program, hospitals, midwives, audiologists, early interventionists, parent support organizations, and primary care providers.



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