

## BACKGROUND:

# ACQUISITION OF LANGUAGE FROM BIRTH IS A HUMAN RIGHT

**E**arly identification of children who are born deaf or hard of hearing is critical to ensure that their families have the resources they need to help their children acquire language, spoken and/or visual, and achieve age-appropriate communicative, cognitive, academic, social, and emotional development. Originally enacted in 2000, the goals of the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Act (EHDI) are to establish hearing screening of all newborns by age one month, confirmation of hearing status by three months, and enrollment in an early intervention program for deaf and hard of hearing babies and their families by six months. In the 2010 reauthorization, the bill expanded range of services for families.

According to the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA), prevalence of hearing loss increases dramatically with age. National survey results show that in the population of those with hearing impairment, only 2 percent were born with a hearing impairment; 4–6 percent developed a hearing loss after birth and before six years; 11–12 percent developed hearing loss between ages six and 19 years; 50–64 percent developed hearing loss between ages 20 and 59 years; and 20–30 percent developed hearing loss at or after the age of 60 (data from the National Health Interview Survey, 2007, retrieved from the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders [NIDCD], 2010).

## Signs and Symptoms

Signs and symptoms associated with hearing loss—including behaviors of affected individuals—include:

- ▶ "muffled" hearing
- ▶ asking for repetition
- ▶ tinnitus
- ▶ difficulty attending
- ▶ difficulty understanding speech in noise
- ▶ turning the volume up on the television/music
- ▶ thinking others "mumble"
- ▶ difficulty understanding speech on the telephone
- ▶ difficulty understanding speech, particularly of women and children
- ▶ rhyming mistakes—for example, hearing the high-pitched sound /t/ in the word *tin* as /f/ in the word *fin*
- ▶ not participating in activities/isolating one's self
- ▶ speaking too loudly or too softly

## Signs and symptoms in school-age children also include:

- ▶ poor academic performance
- ▶ delayed language and speech production development
- ▶ behavioral concerns
- ▶ auditory processing problems

Not all children will experience each symptom.

## Resources

Palo Alto Medical Foundation Checklist  
IDEA Part C Final Regulations (2011) [PDF]  
CDC-Hearing Loss in Children (pages for professionals and consumers)  
Early Hearing Detection and Intervention - Pediatric Audiology Links to Services  
Guidelines for Pediatric Medical Home Providers (flowchart)  
Loud and Clear- Clinical Red Flags [PDF]  
My Baby's Hearing  
NIDCD-Communication Options for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing [PDF]  
The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center (ECTA Center)  
OPTION Schools, Inc.  
OSEP TA Community-Part C Settings-Services in Natural Environments  
U.S. Department of Education-Opening doors: Technology and communication options for children with hearing loss

American Speech and Hearing Association-Hearing Loss-Beyond Early Childhood  
National Association of the Deaf-Early Intervention for Infants and Toddlers

## Related Organizations

Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing  
American Academy of Audiology  
American Society for Deaf Children  
Beginnings  
Council for Exceptional Children  
Hands & Voices  
Listening and Spoken Language Knowledge Center  
National Association for the Deaf  
National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management  
National Center on Severe and Sensory Disabilities  
National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders