

ANNOUNCEMENT: Early Intervention – 13 # 06

Effective Date: August 1, 2013

SUBJECT: Children who Have a Hearing Loss

TO: Infant/Toddler and Preschool Early Intervention Program Leadership

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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this announcement is to provide guidance to early intervention programs serving infants, toddlers and preschool age children with hearing loss and their families. This announcement updates information provided in Announcement EI-09 #01, titled *Recommendations for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*.

BACKGROUND:

Deafness/hearing loss from birth, even if it is mild or in only one ear, can have a significant negative impact on the early acquisition of communication and language skills, cognitive and social-emotional development and future academic achievement. Research has shown that when infants with hearing loss begin intervention early, their progress on developmental outcomes is more advanced than those who begin early intervention at later ages. The benefits to early language and social gains outweigh a variety of factors previously thought to be critical, such as the specific choice of communication method or the presence of additional disabilities.

DISCUSSION:

Identification:

A child is eligible for early intervention services if the child has any degree of diagnosed permanent hearing loss, including mild and unilateral hearing losses, and is in need of early intervention services. When conducting an evaluation with the child and family, information shall be obtained on the child's hearing development. Information on the child's hearing development shall be documented in the *Early Intervention Evaluation Report*.

Parents, pediatricians, audiologists, or other professionals can make a referral or obtain more information about early intervention services by calling CONNECT at 1-800-692-7288.

Reporting Back to Referral Sources:

Notifying referral sources regarding the outcome of a referral can provide valuable feedback to the referral source. Infant/toddler and preschool early intervention programs should encourage parents to communicate the results of the early intervention evaluation to the referral source or request parental consent to communicate the results of the evaluation to the referral source. The Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare's, Bureau of Early Intervention Services has developed a form that can be used to obtain consent. The *Voluntary Authorization to Release Information* form can be found at www.pattan.net (following the path, Legal > Forms, and searching for the form).

Infant/toddler programs shall collect data on whether children were screened as newborns. The Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program in the Pennsylvania Department of Health must meet the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's federal requirements by reporting the numbers of infants who both do and do not receive a follow-up (including the onset of receipt of early intervention services) after newborn screening each year. By communicating with the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program when an infant is referred by the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention program, infant/toddler early intervention programs that transmit information will be further assisting the Department of Health with this federal reporting requirement.

Individualized Family Service Plan and Individualized Education Program Development:

The individualized family service plan or individualized education program team shall address the communication needs of children who have a hearing loss. The *Early Intervention Communication Plan* tool identifies issues that shall be addressed during the planning process. The team may choose to use that tool as an aid and embed the communication plan components into the *Individualized Family Service Plan* or *Individualized Education Program* or may select to use the *Early Intervention Communication Plan* and append it to the *Individualized Family Service Plan* or *Individualized Education Program*. The *Early Intervention Communication Plan* tool can be found at www.pattan.net (following the path, Legal > Forms, and searching for the form).

Infant/toddler and preschool early intervention programs shall consider a variety of factors in designing early intervention services for children who have a hearing loss and their families. These factors include, but are not limited to: family choice of communication method; additional disabilities; and assistive technology, including the functioning of hearing aids, frequency modulation systems, and cochlear implants.

On-Going Assessment:

Hearing loss is not an obvious condition and can occur at any time beyond the newborn period. It is the responsibility of the evaluation, individualized family service plan and individualized education program teams to address each child's medical status, including hearing and vision, as part of the evaluation and plan development process. In addition, families should be encouraged to closely monitor their child's hearing assessments or reviews conducted during well-child visits

and other resources and collaborate with early intervention staff to ensure the *Individualized Family Service Plan* and *Individualized Education Program* contains current information.

Family Resources and Support:

The value and the importance of starting early intervention at the earliest age possible should be explained to the family. Local infant/toddler and preschool early intervention programs shall provide families with, *Getting Started: Resources for Parents and Families of Infants and Young Children with Hearing Loss*. This booklet was prepared in partnership with parents to assist families in understanding the impact of a hearing loss on children and families. The booklet can be found at www.pattan.net (following the path, Resources > PaTTAN Publications, and searching for the booklet).

Parents of children who have a hearing loss shall be offered parent support services, which could include the following:

- Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side of Pennsylvania is a parent organization dedicated to directly supporting families, and infants and toddlers who are newly identified as having a hearing loss by offering them the opportunity to talk to or meet face-to-face with a parent guide. Referral forms to Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side of Pennsylvania can be found at www.paeearlyhearing.org/gbys.php. Hands & Voices Guide By Your Side of Pennsylvania can also be contacted by calling 800-360-7282 x3908 or 717-541-4960 x3908, or by emailing Anne Gaspich at agaspich@pattan.net.
- Parent to Parent of Pennsylvania is a statewide resource that can match parents and family members of children with disabilities or special needs, to supporting parents on a one-on-one basis, according to condition or concerns. Parent to Parent can be reached at www.parenttoparent.org or at 1-888-727-2706.

Early Intervention Personnel:

Infant/toddler and preschool programs shall provide information and training, as appropriate, to insure that early intervention staff are familiar with the needs of children with a hearing loss.

NEXT STEPS:

1. Infant/toddler and preschool early intervention programs shall evaluate their current practices and make changes as appropriate.
2. Announcement EI-09 #01, titled *Recommendations for Children Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing* is obsolete with issuance of this announcement.

Comments and questions should be directed to the Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Public Welfare's, Bureau of Early Intervention Services at 717-346-9320 or ra-ocdintervention@pa.gov.