

Why Your Baby's Hearing Health is so Important

Language is key to baby meeting developmental milestones. The earlier baby starts receiving input, whether through voiced or visual language, the more likely baby will be to develop age appropriate language. Your baby's most important learning takes place between birth and three-years-old and hearing loss that is undiagnosed can interfere with their understanding. If your baby has hearing loss, it is important to know as soon as possible.

Why We're Here

The West Virginia Hands & Voices Parent Support Program was established to provide support to families from those who have been through this process and know the importance of having a good support system as you find out the status of your baby's hearing. West Virginia law requires that all babies be screened for hearing loss. We can help your family as you navigate the hearing screening process.

How to Reach Us

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West Virginia Hands & Voices Parent Support Program



Christina and her daughter, Jenna.

Paula



Meet the Parent Support Specialists

Christina Payne - Hi. I am a mom of three. My daughter is deaf. She is the only person in our family with hearing loss. When we first learned of her diagnosis, I had no idea what the future would hold for her or us. Meeting other parents of kids with hearing loss was life changing for our family. It helped us know that even though things were different than planned, we would be okay!

Paula Allen - Hey, y'all! I'm an adoptive momma of 3. My youngest daughter, Emma, is deaf. I knew my daughter would face obstacles, but I also knew she would never face anything alone. The sense of hope I felt when I saw other DHH children flourishing floored me. I spend every single day giving my children my all and the support I've gotten from other parents of DHH children is what keeps me going.

What Happens Next?

- **Hearing Screening:**
Your baby either missed or did not pass the initial hearing screening.
- **Hearing Testing:**
Your baby's hearing needs to be tested by a qualified hearing specialist.
- **Early Intervention:**
If your baby has hearing loss, there are early intervention programs that can help your baby meet the developmental milestones.
- **If your baby has hearing loss:**
There is a wonderful community to support you, your family, and your baby as you learn about communication options and make decisions that work for your family.



The single most important factor in predicting successful outcomes of newly identified deaf and hard of hearing babies in early intervention is the active participation of their parents.

(Yoshinaga-Itano, Coulter & Thomson, 2000)



What We Do

The West Virginia Hands & Voices Parent Support Program provides support to families as they go through the process of learning their baby's hearing status.

We provide:

- Information on hearing screening and testing;
- Support during the discovery of your baby's hearing status;
- Referral and linkage to other needed programs;
- Advocacy, and education on how to advocate for your baby and family;
- Workshops on topics most needed by families; and
- A network of families supporting each other.