

Your Child Has a Severe Hearing Loss



If your audiologist has described your child's hearing loss as severe, you may have many questions, such as:

What is severe hearing loss?

Severe hearing loss is a very significant degree of hearing loss. Without hearing aids, a child with a severe hearing loss will be unable to hear most speech sounds at normal speaking level, even in a quiet environment. Children with severe hearing loss are eligible for Early Intervention services in Massachusetts.

Will my child need hearing aids?

In most cases, children with severe hearing loss will benefit from the use of hearing aids. Some children may benefit from a cochlear implant, a device which can offer access to a wider range of sound. Your audiologist can help you to know if hearing aids and/or cochlear implants are right for your child. Many children with severe hearing loss will also use other types of equipment to help them hear in group settings.

Does my child need intervention services now?

All children with hearing loss are eligible for Early Intervention services from birth until the age of three, no matter the degree. We encourage families who have a child with hearing loss to enroll in Early Intervention as early as possible to avoid delays in speech, language and brain development. You will work with your Early Intervention provider to decide the best plan for your child and your family.

Hearing loss is now found in children at a much younger age because of newborn hearing screening. Studies have shown that the earlier children with hearing loss receive Early Intervention, the better the results. Talk to your child's audiologist and doctor and call the **Universal Newborn Hearing Screening Program** at **800-882-1435** for more information. You can also e-mail newborn.hearing@state.ma.us.

You might want to consider these tips for your child with a severe hearing loss:

- Connect with other parents of children with hearing loss. Ask your audiologist or Early Intervention provider if there is a parent group in your area, and consider contacting **Mass Family TIES** to be connected to another family.
- Contact the **Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**. MCDHH provides many other helpful resources and services, including Children's Specialists who can work with your family to understand the unique needs of children with hearing loss. MCDHH is also a good source of information about helpful technologies for children and adults who have a hearing loss.
- Consider enrolling in the **Family Sign Language Program**. In Massachusetts, all families of children with hearing loss are eligible for American Sign Language classes taught in the home. Sign language can give your child earlier access to language, which benefits children's brain development and speech.
- Continue to have your child's hearing tested on a regular basis, as recommended by your audiologist. The audiologist will keep track of your child's hearing in case there are any changes.
- Be sure to let people know it is important to have your child's attention when they talk with your child.
- Cut down or eliminate background noise, for example, television or radio, when speaking or reading to your child. Also make sure that your face is visible when speaking or reading to your child.
- Children with severe hearing loss will need lots of help understanding the meaning of things that happen around them. You can help your child by describing the things that you see and do, and by narrating all of your activities together, such as meals, bath time, changing diapers and bedtime.
- Children and adults with hearing loss can feel isolated when they do not understand what people around them are saying, especially in a group setting. Let your child know that it is OK to ask someone to repeat themselves, or to speak more slowly and clearly.
- Seek medical attention whenever you suspect your child has an ear infection.