

Minnesota Department of Health

Newborn Hearing Screening: Follow-Up

MEDICAL FACT SHEET

WHAT HOSPITALS CAN DO TO IMPROVE FOLLOW-UP RATES

Why parents might not return for follow-up

- Parents don't fully understand their baby's screening results.
- Parents don't fully understand the importance of follow-up evaluation.
- Parents were not provided with necessary appointment and resource information.

What parents should know

- The results of their baby's hearing screen and what the results mean.
- Hearing loss cannot be tested for at home - newborns with hearing loss can still startle to noises like hand clapping.
- Why a prompt follow-up evaluation is necessary.
- Contact information for keeping the follow-up appointment.

What nursery staff should know

- Without newborn screening, hearing loss often remains undetected until a child is 2 or 3 years old.
- When hearing loss goes undetected, language development is delayed and children face adverse outcomes.
- Babies with REFER results need to be seen promptly for further testing. Careful communication with parents is essential to ensure that parents keep their baby's follow-up appointment.

How can staff make sure parents keep follow-up appointments?

- **Develop a standard protocol**
 - § Review hearing screening results with parents.
 - § Provide parents with written information about hearing screening and be available to answer any questions.
 - § Empower parents to keep follow-up appointments.
 - § Use Parent Notification Forms provided by MDH to notify parents and providers of screening results.
 - § Document hearing screening information (results and follow-up steps taken) in a hospital logbook.
- **Develop protocols to deal with special circumstances**
 - § **Equipment Problems** - have a plan in place to get babies whose hearing was not screened back to the nursery or to a clinic site in a timely manner.
 - § **Babies who miss rescreen appointments** contact family to set-up new time or further educate on the importance of follow-up testing for hearing loss.

What if returning for follow-up is difficult for parents?

- **Work with the clinic** - combine follow-up with well-baby care. Reducing the number of appointments a family has can increase the chance that they will follow-up.
- **Be flexible** - Offer several rescreening options. Let parents come on evenings, nights, or weekends when transportation is easier.