

# EARLY HEARING DETECTION & INTERVENTION INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES & CAREGIVERS



[health.mn.gov/improveEhdi](https://health.mn.gov/improveEhdi)



**DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH**

CHILDREN & YOUTH WITH  
SPECIAL HEALTH NEEDS

## Introduction

MDH mails a binder of print resources to families in Minnesota with children recently identified as deaf or hard of hearing. This document provides most of the resources in electronic form. Resources that are only available in print form are not included in this list, and instead we link to the organization's website directly. This document is intended for parents who wish to have an electronic approximation of the printed materials. For extended family members, teachers, healthcare providers and family advocates, this electronic version is intended to guide conversations or help families walk through the printed materials.

[Early Hearing Detection and Intervention, Parent Letter and FAQ  
\(www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/childreneyouth/improveehdi/parentletter.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/childreneyouth/improveehdi/parentletter.pdf)

## Disclosure

This resource does not provide medical advice. It provides general information about hearing. Every child and family are different and some of the information may not apply to your child specifically. Always check with your child's healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about their condition.

## Respect for Identities

We respect the terms people use to identify themselves. People may self-identify as deaf, hard of hearing, a person with hearing loss, a person with a hearing difference, etc. You might see the phrase "deaf and hard of hearing (DHH)," used in an all-inclusive manner. You might also see the words "hearing loss" when talking about a medical diagnosis.

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## Section 1 – EHDI Roadmap

### EHDI Roadmap

Following the EHDI Roadmap you will connect with programs and resources available to you, coordinate with your child’s doctor, and follow a plan of care. With early care and connection to intervention, your family will find support while your child is developing language and communication skills. Connect with these programs while you are making these early decisions for your child and for your family, ensuring your child’s good health and development.

- [Early Hearing Detection and Intervention: A step-by-step road map for families and caregivers \(www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/childreneyouth/improveehdi/roadmap-eng.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/people/childreneyouth/improveehdi/roadmap-eng.pdf)

### Window of Opportunity

Early in life, a baby’s brain develops quickly. Before an infant can communicate, they watch, listen, and learn the sounds of different words and other crucial aspects of speech and language. This time is often called a “window of opportunity” for language learning.

- [Window of Opportunity \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/childreneyouth/improveehdi/windofopp-eng.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/childreneyouth/improveehdi/windofopp-eng.pdf)

## Section 2 – Audiology

### What is the role of an audiologist?

An audiologist is a licensed medical professional who evaluates, diagnoses, treats, and manages hearing loss and balance disorders. Audiologists use specialized techniques to evaluate hearing in infants and children and recommend appropriate hearing devices, when chosen. Families might work with audiologists both at their clinic or in their school.

- [Questions you may want to ask your child’s audiologist \(www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/audiologist\\_questions\\_eng.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/audiologist_questions_eng.pdf).

### Hearing devices

Your child’s audiologist will help you navigate the process for hearing devices, should your family choose them. According to [Minnesota Statue 62Q.675 \(www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/62Q.675\)](http://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/cite/62Q.675): A health plan must cover hearing aids for all individuals for hearing loss that is not correctable by other covered procedures. Coverage required under this section is limited to one hearing aid in each ear every three years.

- [Hearing Aids – 18 Years or Younger \(www.mn.gov/deaf-commission/assets/2.02-Hearing%20Aids%20Law%203-2017-Web\\_tcm1063-529917.pdf\)](http://www.mn.gov/deaf-commission/assets/2.02-Hearing%20Aids%20Law%203-2017-Web_tcm1063-529917.pdf)
- [Hearing aid appeals: Information for parents \(www.edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-7915-ENG\)](http://www.edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-7915-ENG)
- [Hearing Aid Financial Resources \(www.mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/assistive-technology/hearing-aids/hearing-aid-resources.jsp\)](http://www.mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/assistive-technology/hearing-aids/hearing-aid-resources.jsp)

## State of Minnesota Pediatric Hearing Device Loaner Program

The [State of Minnesota Pediatric Hearing Device Loaner Program \(www.hearbank.web.health.state.mn.us\)](http://www.hearbank.web.health.state.mn.us) has hearing aids available for use while insurance approval is pending. Your audiologist can order these hearing aids for you.

## Section 3 – Family Connections

Parent-to-parent support and Deaf Mentor/Deaf and Hard of Hearing Guide services are offered to families by grant-funded programs in Minnesota. These programs provide unbiased information on communication, education, medical options, and perspectives of parents and people who have grown up deaf and hard of hearing. Learn more about these and additional supports below.

### Minnesota Hands & Voices

#### Parent Guides

[Minnesota Hands & Voices \(www.mnhandsandvoices.org\)](http://www.mnhandsandvoices.org) Parent Guide program provides unbiased, parent-to-parent support to families who have just learned of their child's hearing difference.

“We are parents of children who are DHH, sharing powerful common experiences, hopes, and dreams. We're here to support families like yours across Minnesota. It is our strong belief that you, as parents, know what is best for your child, and we are here to guide you to the programs, resources and connections that will help you make sound, knowledgeable decisions. There are no limits to your child's potential.” – *Minnesota Hands and Voices*

#### Deaf and Hard of Hearing Guides

The [Deaf and Hard of Hearing Guide Program \(www.lssmn.org/mnhandsandvoices/about-us/deaf-and-hard-hearing-guide-program\)](http://www.lssmn.org/mnhandsandvoices/about-us/deaf-and-hard-hearing-guide-program) provides families and their children with positive role models who share their own experiences groups up.

“Deaf and Hard of Hearing Guides act as unbiased resources and help the family and child identify practical solutions for navigating some of the common challenges that Deaf/Hard of Hearing children may experience.” – *Minnesota Hands and Voices*

#### Deaf Mentor Family Services

[Deaf Mentor Family Services \(www.lssmn.org/dmfs\)](http://www.lssmn.org/dmfs) is comprised of three different programs: the Deaf Mentor Family Program, Snapshots and EMPOWER!

“Deaf Mentors are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). They also have an easy communication style with family members who hear and genuinely enjoy working with children. During visits, families learn ASL and other communication techniques unique to DHH children. In this relaxed setting, family members are encouraged to ask questions about ASL, Deaf culture, and daily life as a DHH individual.”

– *Deaf Mentor Family Services of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota*

## Minnesota Deafblind Project

The [Minnesota DeafBlind Project \(www.dbproject.mn.org/\)](http://www.dbproject.mn.org/) provides family support, resource sharing, workshops, webinars, mentoring, etc. to the families and school teams of children and youth who have a combined hearing and vision loss, birth up to age 22.

“The Minnesota DeafBlind Project believes in the importance of families learning all they can about combined hearing and vision loss. The Minnesota DeafBlind Project provides targeted support for individual families through video/phone calls and text, sharing of resources, training opportunities, and fostering connections within the DeafBlind network and community.” – *Minnesota DeafBlind Project*

## DeafBlind Services Minnesota

[DeafBlind Services Minnesota \(www.visionlossresources.org/programs/dbsm/children-youth-and-family-services/\)](http://www.visionlossresources.org/programs/dbsm/children-youth-and-family-services/) provides support, information, referral, training, and advocacy to deafblind children ages 0-21 while in school on an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP)/Individualized Education Program (IEP). Their interveners are trained staff who work with deafblind children so they may learn about their environment, community, meet developmental goals, and develop communication strategies.

## Section 4 – Growth and Development

### Help Me Grow

[Help Me Grow \(www.helpmegrowmn.org\)](http://www.helpmegrowmn.org) has many resources for parents and caregivers about the development of infants, toddlers, and young children. This includes information and videos on skills to watch for, activities that help support development, family stories, and information about how to get help when there are questions or worries about a child’s development. Children who are deaf or hard of hearing may be eligible to receive free early intervention supports and services. A provider from the family’s local school district program contacts the family after a connection is made through Help Me Grow and works with families of eligible children to make a plan for next steps.

“Early intervention” is supports and services for children who may be or are at risk for a developmental delay and their families. These services are sometimes called “Infant and Toddler Intervention Services” for children from birth through 2 years of age. These services are sometimes called “Preschool Special Education Services” for children ages 3 up to when they start Kindergarten. All early intervention services are provided free of charge to eligible children and families through local public school districts and cooperatives across Minnesota and 11 Tribal Nations who share land with us, regardless of a family’s income or immigration status. Once connected, an early interventionist (a specialist who works with infants, toddlers, young children with disabilities, and their families) will contact you to learn more and help you with next steps. This might mean creating an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP).

- [Education Letter for Families of Young Children with Hearing Differences \(www.mnlowincidenceprojects.org/documents/ehdi/communicationOpp/Education\\_Letter\\_for\\_Families\\_MDE\\_MNLIP\\_2024.pdf\)](http://www.mnlowincidenceprojects.org/documents/ehdi/communicationOpp/Education_Letter_for_Families_MDE_MNLIP_2024.pdf)
- [Making a Plan for Your Child \(www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/planforyourchild.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/planforyourchild.pdf)
- [Questions you may want to ask your child’s early intervention team \(www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/early\\_intervention\\_questions\\_eng.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/early_intervention_questions_eng.pdf)

## Schools and programs

There are many schools and programs serving infants and children who are deaf and hard of hearing. This site has a list of educational options that explains types of programs and lists Minnesota schools and programs by geographic region.

- [Schools and programs serving deaf and hard of hearing children \(www.mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/children/education/\)](http://www.mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing/hearing-loss/children/education/)

## Section 5 – Communication

Before an infant can communicate, they watch, listen, and learn the sounds of different words and other crucial aspects of speech and language. Families have many choices about language and communication for their young children.

- [Exploring Communication Opportunities for Children with Hearing Differences: An Overview \(www.mnlowincidenceprojects.org/documents/ehdi/communicationOpp/ExploringCommOppForChildren\\_Overview\\_Dec2020.pdf\)](http://www.mnlowincidenceprojects.org/documents/ehdi/communicationOpp/ExploringCommOppForChildren_Overview_Dec2020.pdf)
- [Decision Guide to Communication Choices \(www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/commdecisionguide3508.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/commdecisionguide3508.pdf)

Additionally, there are resources for families to learn about different communication strategies. These are just a few of the many online resources where parents can learn about available communication opportunities:

- [Sign It! American Sign Language Classes Online \(www.infanthearing.org/signit\)](http://www.infanthearing.org/signit)
- [Hear to Learn \(www.heartolearn.org\)](http://www.heartolearn.org)
- [Cue College \(www.cuecollege.org/cue-family-program\).](http://www.cuecollege.org/cue-family-program)

## Section 6 – Health Care

### Health care providers

When a child is identified as deaf and hard of hearing, there are many doctors and specialty care providers they will see. Their primary care provider will help coordinate care among the primary care team, specialists, and community partners to ensure patient-centered whole person care and improve total health and well-being.

- [Questions you May Want to Ask Your Child’s Medical Professional \(www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/medical-professional\\_questions\\_eng.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/medical-professional_questions_eng.pdf)

Some of the other providers your child might see include:

- **Ear Nose and Throat (ENT) or Otolaryngologist:** Otolaryngologists perform a full medical diagnostic evaluation of the ears, head and neck and related structures, and provide appropriate medical and surgical management and medical clearance for hearing devices, when chosen.
  - [Questions you May Want to Ask Your Child’s Ear, Nose, and Throat Doctor \(www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/ent\\_questions\\_eng.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/ent_questions_eng.pdf)

- **Geneticist:** Geneticists, along with genetic counselors provide evaluation and counseling to provide information to families about etiology (cause) of hearing loss, prognosis for progressive (worsening) hearing loss, as well as associated medical conditions that might need further evaluation (for example: vision, heart, kidney, other).
  - Learn more about the [Genetics of Hearing Loss \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/childreneyouth/improveehdi/hlgenetics-eng.pdf\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/childreneyouth/improveehdi/hlgenetics-eng.pdf).
  - [Questions You May Want to Ask Your Child's Genetics Team \(www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/genetics-questions\\_eng.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/genetics-questions_eng.pdf)
- **Ophthalmologist:** Eye specialist that evaluates your child's eyesight and checks for associated vision disorders (for example: Usher syndrome, cataracts, or other conditions).
- **Speech-language pathologist:** A professional trained to test and work with children with speech and language challenges.
  - [Questions you May Want to Ask Your Child's Speech-Language Pathologist \(www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/speech\\_language\\_pathologist\\_questions\\_eng.pdf\)](http://www.cdc.gov/hearing-loss-children/media/pdfs/speech_language_pathologist_questions_eng.pdf)

## Financial resources

There are financial resources available for families.

- [Insurance Affordability Programs \(IAPs\) Income and Asset Guidelines \(www.edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3461A-ENG\)](http://www.edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3461A-ENG)
- [Medical Assistance for Adults and Children Who Are Blind or Have a Disability or For People 65 Years Old or Older \(www.edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/public/DHS-2087C-eng\)](http://www.edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/public/DHS-2087C-eng)
- [Minnesota Health Care Programs \(www.edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3182-ENG\)](http://www.edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Public/DHS-3182-ENG)
- [MNsure Brochure \(www.mnsure.org/assets/mnsure-brochure-english\\_tcm34-539777.pdf\)](http://www.mnsure.org/assets/mnsure-brochure-english_tcm34-539777.pdf)

## Section 7 – General resources

Below are additional resources to support your family on your journey.

- [MinneStories \(www.health.state.mn.us/people/newbornscreening/families/minnestories\)](http://www.health.state.mn.us/people/newbornscreening/families/minnestories) is a collection of short stories where families share their own, personal experience of being impacted by newborn screening.
- [Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services \(www.mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing\)](http://www.mn.gov/deaf-hard-of-hearing) can help families get resources that fit their needs, learn about hearing loss, get assistive technology and tools, connect to mental health resources, and find resources in their communities.
- [PACER Center \(www.pacer.org\)](http://www.pacer.org) is a parent training and information center for families of children and youth with disabilities or special health care needs from birth through young adulthood. Parents can find publications, workshops, and other resources to help families make decisions about education, health care, and other services.
- [Minnesota Hands & Voices Resource Directory \(www.lssmn.org/mnhandsandvoices/resources-information/resource-directory\)](http://www.lssmn.org/mnhandsandvoices/resources-information/resource-directory) was created to let parents know about some of the most important resources available. It is updated annually.

- The [Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing Resources \(www.mn.gov/deaf-commission/advocacy-issues/education/resources\)](http://www.mn.gov/deaf-commission/advocacy-issues/education/resources) was designed to connect parents, family members, and students who are deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing with the resources they need.

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Child & Family Health  
Children and Youth with Special Health Needs  
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651-201-3650 or toll free 1-800-728-5420  
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[www.health.state.mn.us/improveEHD/](http://www.health.state.mn.us/improveEHD/)

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*To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-3650.*