

## Questions

- **Will a hearing loss affect my child's ability to learn?**
- **What role does hearing have in a child's development?**
- **How can I help my child to learn?**
- **What's the best way for me to help my child learn to communicate?**
- **What do people mean by "options" for communication?**
- **How do I decide what's best for my child and family?**
- **What if I try one communication method and later decide it's not the best match for my child and family?**



- **Will a hearing loss affect my child's ability to learn?**

There are many theories about how children learn. Most experts agree that it's through some combination of how we are genetically "programmed" and the experiences and opportunities that we have after we are born. Having a hearing loss will affect the way in which your child learns and develops. It doesn't mean that your child can't learn as much as he or she would be able to without the hearing loss — it just means that the learning process may be different.

- **What role does hearing have in a child's development?**

Hearing is one way that we get information about our world. People who hear use this sense to learn language and to learn other kinds of information about the world around them. For example, babies may hear a word like "bottle" over and over while they are being fed and eventually learn that when they hear this word, it means that they will soon be fed. Similarly, they learn that when they hear Mommy or Daddy's voice it means that this special person is nearby.

- **How can I help my child to learn?**

Children use their senses to take in the information about the world around them. Hearing is just one way that children learn. Children learn by using all of their senses – sight, smell, touch, taste, and hearing. They need opportunities and experiences to learn — playing, climbing, grasping, opening and closing things, and putting things in their mouths. Parents, other caregivers, siblings and other children provide these learning opportunities and help small children make the most of those experiences. By pointing out things that make sound and by talking to your child, you can help your child learn to use his remaining hearing to gain information. You can also help your child to learn through all his or her other senses. One of the most important ways that we learn about our world is through language. Communicating with your child and helping him to learn language is one of the best things that you can do to help your child learn and develop. Even if your child has other problems in addition to the hearing loss, there are ways to help your child learn and begin to make sense of the world. Your parent advisor or other early intervention specialist will be able to show you many ways that you can help your child.

- **What's the best way for me to help my child learn to communicate?**

There is no single answer to this question. A lot will depend on learning what works for you and for your child. This Topic Card and Topic Cards 7 and 8 provide basic information to help you decide what's best for your child and family. Topic Card 7 provides information on encouraging early communication development. Topic Card 8 provides information on a variety of communication options that are most commonly used for communication and language.



- **What do people mean by “options” for communication?**

When people discuss options or choices for communication, they are usually referring to ways in which language can be learned and communication can occur. These options include listening and talking (spoken language), visual communication (signed language) or some combination of these methods. Visual language can include American Sign Language (ASL) and Manually Coded English. Spoken language methods can include Auditory-Verbal, Auditory-Oral, and Cued Speech. There are also many ways in which visual and spoken language can be combined and used together. These include signing (manually coding) English and talking at the same time (simultaneous communication) or bilingual strategies (using spoken English or signed English and ASL). Topic Card 8 provides basic information on each method.

- **How do I decide what’s best for my child and family?**

There is no single right answer for all children or families. You may already know what you want to do or you may want to begin by learning all you can about the different communication options. Your deaf education parent advisor is an excellent resource. Your parent advisor can help you locate people and books that will provide more information. Parents of older children who are deaf or hard of hearing, adults who are deaf or hard of hearing, and schools that serve children with hearing loss are also good resources. Don’t rely on just one source for information. No two children and no two families are exactly the same; what works for one family or one person might not work for your family or your child. It’s really about finding the best communication “match” for your child and family.

- **What if I try one communication method and later decide it’s not the best match for my child and family?**

Choosing a communication method isn’t a one-time choice. It’s a process of discovering how your child learns best. Almost everyone uses both hearing and vision for communication – some communication options emphasize the use of sight more than hearing; some focus more on hearing. If you select a communication method, then later change to another method or combine several methods as you get to know your child and his learning style, that’s just fine. The most important thing is to communicate with your child and to help your child continue to develop and learn.