

EARLY INTERVENTION SERIES

What to Expect from a Specialist in Family-Centered Intervention for Infants who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing



***“My child was recently identified with a hearing loss.
An infant-family specialist is scheduled to come to my home.
What should I expect from these visits?
How will this help my baby?”***

- An infant-family specialist’s primary goal is to support your communication with your baby. You will work together to encourage your baby’s development during natural daily routines. Infant-family specialists provide support and resources to families as they work to cope with and understand the diagnosis of hearing loss.

- The infant-family specialist will assist you in identifying sources of support, if this would be of help to you. There is much to know about hearing loss and its effects on language and learning. Your infant-family specialist should have extensive background in the areas of hearing loss and early intervention.

- You know your baby better than anyone. The infant-family specialist will want to learn from you. It is hoped that a comfortable partnership will develop as you work together. Your baby will benefit as you and the specialist share your expertise. Like any

partnership, your relationship should be built over time through honesty, trust and respect.

- You may have many questions about hearing loss and how best to help your baby learn. The infant-family specialist will be a resource to you as you search for answers. Don't be afraid to ask any question that comes up in your mind. There is no question that is too basic. For most parents who have a child with hearing loss, this is the first time they have been exposed to these issues.
- You may also be wondering how you and the family will communicate with your baby. Not all children with hearing loss learn in the same way. Not all families choose to communicate with the same methods. The infant-family specialist will support you as you consider your options. You will receive support in evaluating how your child is responding and in making decisions about communication approaches.
- Your infant-family specialist may have years of experience and expertise regarding children with hearing loss. However, you as the parent have the right to disagree with the opinions expressed by this professional. The infant-family specialist is there for you as a sounding board. The goal is for you to feel confident about the decisions you are making for your baby.
- The infant-family specialist will work with you to identify priority needs for your child and the family. The specialist will also work with you to identify your child's strengths and to evaluate your child's current developmental skills. This information will be used to write an Individual Family Services Plan. This document is like a road map. It will guide you and the infant-family specialist as you go about learning and growing with the baby.
- On home visits, the infant-family specialist will watch as you interact naturally with your baby. She or he will point out the many positive things you already do to support your baby's learning. She may suggest some additional techniques to try to encourage the baby's listening, babbling, watching and learning.
- Your infant-family specialist will work closely with your family to address priority goals you have set for yourselves and your baby. The specialist will work with you to evaluate the progress you are making and to set new goals.
- Some parents report a lack of confidence in parenting a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. It is a goal of early intervention for you to become confident in this role and optimistic about the days ahead.