Services for Deaf People in a Rural Setting: Issues and Recommendations for Parents

**?**

* You are a parent
* You think your child may be hearing impaired or deaf

# What do you do?

Helpful Hints

**Remember:**  
You are not alone  
Impaired hearing is relatively common among children.  
Impaired hearing is not a disaster.

# 1. Causes of deafness

* Deafness at birth may run in your family. Check with relatives.
* Hearing impairments can arise if diseases such as german are caught by the mother during pregnancy.
* Pregnant mothers should always consult a doctor or health worker before taking medicine during pregnancy (some can harm the unborn child).
* Childhood diseases: measles, mumps, meningitis (brain fever) can all lead to loss of hearing.
* A child that is born very early or has low weight at birth may have a hearing loss.
* Injury to the ear, e.g. using sticks/pins to clean the ear can cause deafness.
* Pus coming from the ear is caused by an infection in the middle ear. If not treated, it can cause permanent hearing loss.

**Remember:**  
Illness, both during pregnancy and childhood years can cause deafness.  
When pregnant always check with a doctor before taking medicine.  
Do not put things in your ears, even to clean them.

# 2. Is your child hearing impaired?

**Questions to ask**

* Why do you believe that your child has a hearing loss?
* Did you have measles (rubella) when you were pregnant?
* Did you have a difficult, early or delayed labour?
* Did your child cry at birth? \* Was your child sick with measles?

**Basic tests**

* Does your child come when you call his/her name?
* Does your child seem to only hear loud sounds. Does he/she ignore quieter sounds?
* Stand behind your child and calls his/her name. Do they turn round and answer?
* Stand behind your child and clap your hands. Does he/she hear?

**Remember:**  
Simple games could suggest if your child is hearing impaired.

# 3. My child doesn't seem to hear, what should I do?

**Meet the right people**

You should visit at least one of the following people:

* ENT (ear, nose and throat) Specialist
* Audiologist (hearing specialist)
* Teacher of deaf children
* Health Worker
* Other parents of deaf children
* Deaf adults

**Let the specialist assess your child**

* The specialist will assess your child's hearing through activities and games.
* He/she will ask lots of questions. They may seem personal - about your pregnancy, the birth, the family but the answers will help the specialist to help you. Try to give full, accurate answers.
* Some mild and moderate hearing losses can be cured by taking medicine or simple surgery.

**Remember:**  
Give correct information, even if questions seem personal.  
Meeting the right people is important.  
A specialist should diagnose your child's hearing loss/deafness.

# 4. What if my child is permanently hearing impaired?

**Communication**

* With guidance from the specialist you need to decide how your child will communicate. This could be through speech, signs or both.
* If your child only has a mild or moderate hearing loss (that cannot be treated) they may be able to use a hearing aid and communicate using spoken language.
* If your child has a severe hearing loss they may use a hearing aid and communicate using spoken and Sign Language.
* If your child has a total hearing loss a hearing aid will not help him/her. He/she will use mainly Sign Language.

Speech is not the only form of communication.  
Your child could use speech, signs or a combination.

**Developing Language & Communication Skills**

* Your decision on how to communicate affects the way you should interact with your child to ensure good language development.

# 5. A child with hearing aids

**What does a hearing aid do?**

* The main purpose of a hearing aid is to make sounds louder.
* A hearing aid does not restore normal hearing.
* A hearing aid cannot make a totally deaf person hear.

**What should I do?**

\* You must teach your child to listen with the hearing aids. \* You are responsible to help your child listen and learn differences between sounds. \* Ensure your child wears his/her hearing aid during waking hours. \* Talk with your child face to face as often as possible: while feeding, washing, etc. \* You could also communicate in sign. \* Play with your child - read stories to him/her.

**Remember:**  
Create sounds that will help your child to listen.  
It's okay to talk to your deaf baby/child.  
All parents talk with their children.

**How do you know if the aid is working**

* Your child will only hear and understand different sounds if his/her hearing aid works.
* Do daily checks by listening to the hearing aid yourself.
* Batteries can create problems. Check these regularly.
* Clean the ear moulds regularly in soap and water. Remove any wax that is blocking the tube.
* Make sure wax doesn't build up. This can block sounds and stop the ear mould fitting well.
* If your child wears a body aid, check the cord. These can easily get broken.

**Remember:**  
Make sure the hearing aid is in full working order.  
Make use of all opportunities to communicate with your child.

# 6. What if my child doesn't have hearing aids?

**Why not hearing aids?**

There can be several reasons for a hearing impaired/deaf child not having hearing aids:

* They cannot help children who are completely deaf.
* They are not available.
* You cannot afford hearing aids.
* You choose to communicate via Sign Language. Perhaps there is a signing deaf community which your child could be a part of. Alternatively, you may feel that signing will give your child a more comprehensive vocabulary.

**Where can I learn signs?**

* Seek information from a teacher for deaf children. He/she may be able to help you.
* Seek information from a deaf adult.
* Seek information from other parents with deaf children.
* Seek information from the local Deaf Association. How should I use signs?
* Sign and talk with your child as much as possible, e.g. when feeding and washing.
* Practice your signs with your child. Use gestures.
* Let your child see your face and hands when speaking or signing.
* Let your child know that you are communicating with him/her.
* Play with your child. Read stories to him/her.
* Make sure your child is an integrated member of the family.

**Remember:**  
You don't have to be a Sign Language expert to communicate with your child. Don't be disappointed if your child does not react quickly. It's a long process, but every time you talk/sign with your child he/she is learning something.

# 7. Where can I find more information?

**You can ask:**

* Teachers
* Health Workers
* Community Workers
* Other parents
* Deaf adults

**How can they help?**

* A health worker or teacher may know about a school, centre or association that can help you.
* Another parent may give you helpful tips based on his/her experiences.
* Other parents can provide support. You can talk about common concerns, problem solving, how to get more support.

# 8. Is this all I should do?

This list is not exhaustive, it is simply to give you some helpful hints. Experiment and see what works best for you. Don't forget, with your support, your deaf or hearing impaired child can achieve a lot.

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Your deaf child can learn to do most jobs.  
Your child can become an independent adult.

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Initiative for Deaf Education in the Third World, India, 1994

Issues and Recommendations for [Interpreters](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/interps.docx)  
Issues and Recommendations for [Sign Language](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/signlang.docx)  
Issues and Recommendations for [Teachers](http://www.eenet.org.uk/resources/docs/teachers.docx)

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