

CEASD Position on Early Intervention Programs for Children with Hearing Loss

CEASD supports newborn hearing screening, follow up audiological evaluation for babies who are referred from the screen, and appropriate early intervention for babies and toddlers with hearing loss. In this position paper¹ CEASD identifies the critical elements of an early intervention program and encourages state EHDI programs to collaborate with schools for the deaf to provide a full range of quality services for these children and families.

Research has shown that children who have their hearing loss identified early and receive appropriate early intervention demonstrate significantly better language outcomes than those who do not. CEASD recognizes that quality early intervention programs are key to the language, emotional, and later, academic, success of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Quality programs provide children and families with a strong foundation for communication and cognitive development. CEASD believes that early intervention programs that serve children who are deaf and hard of hearing should provide:

Qualified early intervention providers. These providers should be credentialed by the early intervention system in the state in which they work. Minimally, they must have education and experience with the 0-3 population and have a degree in Deaf Education. They should know about the acquisition and development of spoken and signed language in children who are deaf and hard of hearing. They should possess the training and skills necessary to help children develop age appropriate language. They should be skilled in working with families from diverse backgrounds.

Parent information and training. This must be responsive to the needs of each family and child and documented in the Individualized Family Service Plan as a family need. It could include but is not limited to information about hearing loss, language and communication options, community programs, and any other area of family interest. Family training could include but is not limited to helping parents acquire the skills they need to help support their child's sign language and/or spoken language development, including linkage to community programs and other resources for learning sign language.

Opportunities for parents to connect with other parents of children with hearing loss. Parents benefit greatly from information that comes from other parents, which is different from the information coming from professionals. Programs/providers should ensure there are various ways that parents can meet and learn from each other, from offering facilitated meetings, social events, one to one mentoring, connection with a parent organizations, or other means.

¹ CEASD also helped develop and is a signatory to *Natural Environments for Infants and Toddlers Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and Their Families*. (Joint Committee of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the Council on Education of the Deaf, January 18, 2006, <http://www.asha.org/about/legislation-advocacy/federal/idea/nat-env-child-facts.htm>, retrieved November 14, 2006)

Opportunities for parents to connect with adults who are deaf and hard of hearing. Parents have many questions about the future of their child. Most likely, their child who is deaf is the first individual who is deaf they have ever met. Meeting adults who are deaf can help give them a positive vision for the success of their child. Programs/providers should provide parents with opportunities for meaningful interactions with adults who are deaf from a variety of backgrounds, including the use of early intervention mentors who are deaf .

Support for technology. This includes technology to enhance a child's auditory functioning, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, and technology that addresses a child's visual needs such as videophones and flashing lights. Programs/providers should provide services to the child and family that are appropriate to the technology, such as instruction in its use, adjustment of the device, and other forms of support.

Culturally appropriate services. This includes communication with parents in their native language, through an interpreter if necessary, and sensitivity to the family's cultural values and beliefs.

Option of a school for the deaf. Some schools for the deaf offer early intervention programs. With a nearly two hundred year history educating students who are deaf and hard of hearing, schools for the deaf are uniquely qualified to serve babies and toddlers with hearing loss and their families. CEASD encourages state EHDI programs to collaborate with schools for the deaf to provide a full range of quality services for these children and families.

Founded in 1868, CEASD is committed to the promotion of excellence within a continuum of equitable educational opportunities for all children and adults who are deaf or hard of hearing. CEASD advocates on behalf of individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing and supports the efficient and effective management of schools, programs, program service centers, and governmental units offering educational and related programs and services. CEASD's membership consists of over 100 member schools and programs serving over 12,000 children who are deaf and hard of hearing and their families.