

# Approaches to communication

Information to help parents make decisions

**M**ore than 9 out of 10 children born with hearing loss have parents with typical hearing, according to the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders.

Most of these families have no experience with hearing loss or the associated terminology. Families often do not understand how typically hearing children develop language, or how hearing loss affects language development.

Families may feel they are alone in this journey, but they are not. Studies indicate that as many as 6 children per 1,000 in the United States are born with a hearing loss each year.

Families need access to impartial, accurate information early on, and they need to know *they* are the true experts for their child and their family.

The Joint Commission on Infant Hearing (JCIH) endorses early hearing detection and intervention for infants to maximize linguistic competency and literacy development for infants and children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

There is so much focus on early identification

and early intervention because we know birth to age 3 are the critical years for children to develop expressive and receptive language, communication skills, and speech (when appropriate). Research tells us that infants with hearing loss who begin services before 6 months of age will develop language (spoken or signed) on par with their hearing peers.

During these early months, parents are asked

to make decisions quickly. The sense of urgency can be overwhelming. Some choices will be easy, some will take more time to make. And not all families will need to make a decision immediately about which language will be right for them or whether or not they want to pursue amplification.

Families who face these choices are encouraged to research their options, do

their homework, meet other families and community members, and seek out professionals for information.

There is no one way to raise a child who is deaf or hard of hearing. Each family finds and chooses what works best for them. That may include more than one language or communication method.

Learn more about the options inside.

*Families should have access to information about all intervention and treatment options and counseling regarding hearing loss.*

*Intervention programs should recognize and build on strengths, informed choices, traditions, and cultural beliefs of the families.*

Joint Commission on Infant Hearing