

## Early Intervention

Early intervention begins soon after the infant has been diagnosed with hearing loss.

In the state of Kansas, **ALL** children identified with hearing loss regardless of the type or the amount of loss **are automatically eligible to receive early intervention** services through their local Infant Toddler/*tiny-k* programs at no cost to the family.

Early intervention can help the family understand hearing loss and gain confidence as a parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child. It also will guide the parents in identifying their child's strengths and needs and help the child develop important language skills necessary to become part of the larger community.

Early intervention begins with a visit from an infant/family specialist. She or he is part of a team of professionals, including an audiologist, speech and language therapist, teacher of the deaf, primary care physician, school district representative, an advocate of your choice or other professionals that will meet the child's needs. The most important part of the team is the family. Infant/family specialists know ways to help the baby develop some skills at the same age that hearing children do. She or he may help the child listen with hearing aids or a cochlear implant.

The infant/family specialist also will show the family how to give the baby chances to look at the face for gestures and signs so the baby can understand the language used to communicate about everyday life. The infant/family specialist will help the family feel confident when they play with the baby and respond to things the baby finds interesting.

The specialist is a trained professional who has knowledge about hearing loss and its effect on a child's communication development. The primary goal of your specialist is to help you communicate with your child and encourage his or her development.

The specialist will work closely with you to identify your needs and set priorities for your baby, help you locate resources, and answer your questions. The specialist will schedule regular visits to take place in the home or another natural environment.

There are two main goals of early intervention: Goal # 1 is to help the baby who is deaf or hard of hearing learn to communicate, to use any available hearing and to interact socially. All children learn skills best at certain ages. During these "sensitive periods," the baby's brain is ready to learn. If these opportunities for learning are missed, it will be more difficult to learn the skills later on. Goal # 2 is to help the baby become a fully participating member of the family. Everyone in the family is important to the baby's development, especially in developing language and social skills.