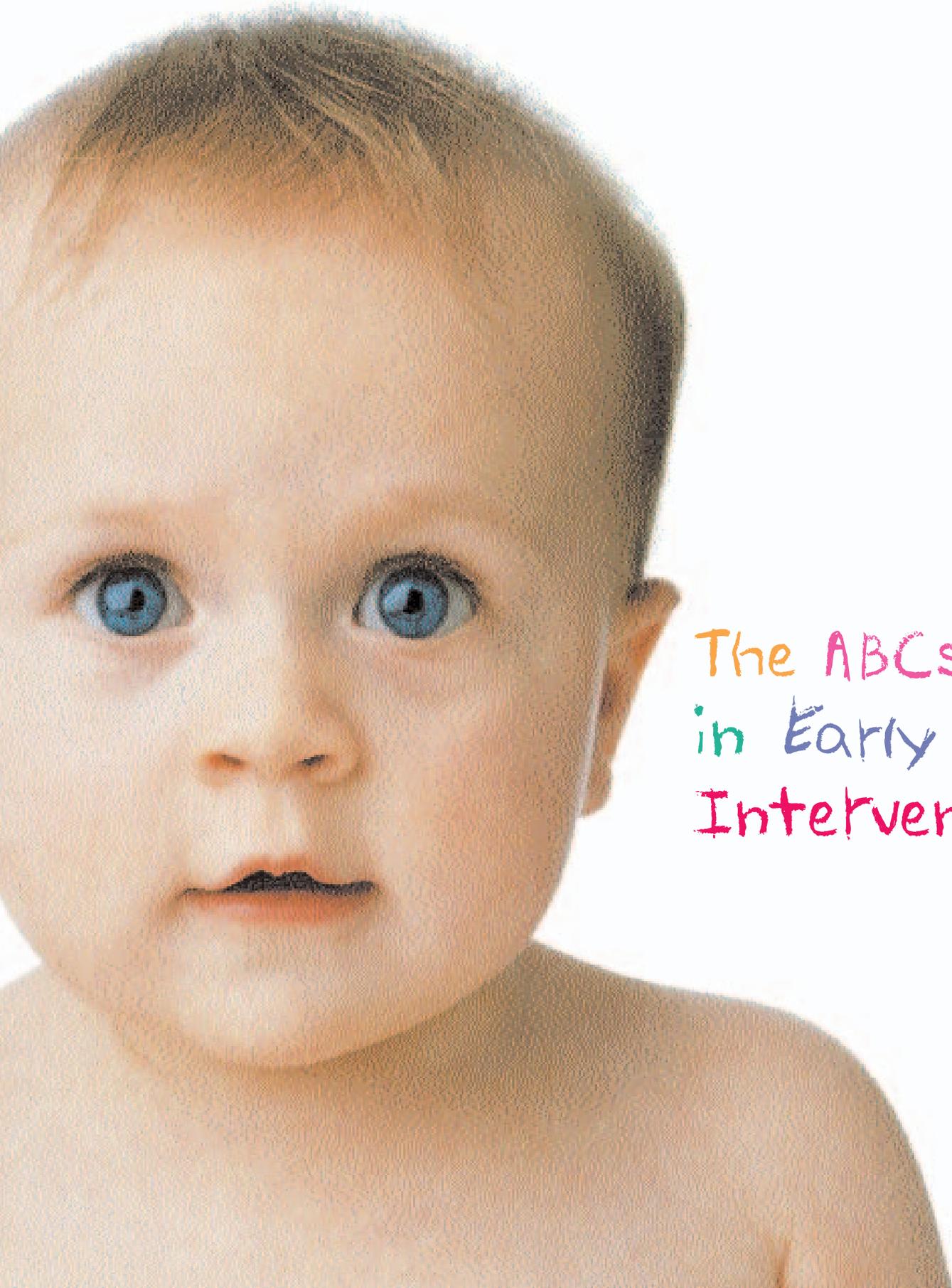


Ensuring the best outcomes for your child
with a hearing loss.



The ABCs*
in Early
Intervention

Sound advice for parents of infants and children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- 1 Above all, love, play and have fun with your child!
- 2 Give your child lots of verbal stimulation. Name objects as you see or touch them. Describe how things look and feel, and compare one to another. As you go through your daily activities, discuss what you're doing and why.
- 3 Speak in full sentences. Pronounce words clearly, with lots of melody. Stay close. The farther away you are, the harder it is for your child to hear you.
- 4 Read aloud every day. Very young children need to be held close and share the experience of storybooks, nursery rhymes and picture books.
- 5 Sing to your child! Fill their days with all kinds of music and songs. Enjoy the interaction of singing and playing.
- 6 Focus your child on listening. Call attention to sounds around the room, and use listening words such as "you heard me, you were listening."
- 7 Minimize background noise. Your child may not be able to hear you over conversations, radio or TV.
- 8 Once your child receives a hearing aid or cochlear implant, make sure he or she wears it every waking hour. The **auditory brain centers*** need consistent access to clear, complete sound in order to develop.
- 9 Check the hearing aid or cochlear implant regularly. Check batteries, too.
- 10 Get educated. There is a lot to know about schooling options and hearing technologies. Fortunately there are many organizations ready to help. (See inside page for a FREE parent resource kit.)

With today's early intervention, education and technologies, the sky is the limit for the development of language.

For information about oral deaf education, an early intervention approach to teaching children who are deaf or hard of hearing to listen and talk, call:

1-877-ORALDEAF (1-877-672-5332), TTY/Fax: 1-877-672-5889
or visit www.oraldeafed.org.

Today, most babies born with hearing loss can have access to meaningful sound.

Thanks to mandatory infant screening programs, children's hearing losses are now diagnosed early, when intervention has the best outcomes. And new hearing technologies can provide stimulation to the **auditory brain centers*** of children with hearing loss.

Early intervention and assistive devices, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, are only the first steps in the process, however. Once hearing amplification has been established, parent-centered therapy and educational programs that focus exclusively on listening and talking are essential. This combination of education and technology provides the stimulation infants and toddlers need to develop their **auditory brain centers***.

Literacy: another benefit of early intervention.

The brain is a miraculous instrument, designed to make sense of sound by hearing speech over and over during infancy. We are, so to speak, "wired" to develop speech through the auditory system.

It turns out that we also use the auditory system when we read. In fact, the areas of the brain in which written words are processed overlap with areas in which spoken words are processed. This is why reading may be much easier for children whose **auditory brain centers*** are highly developed, and why early access to sound can be significant for a child's long-term academic and career success.

Information for parent who are deaf or

You probably have many questions about why this happened to your child and how it will affect his or her life. Many parents grieve; others feel angry, depressed or numb. It can be hard to focus on all the new information, and even harder to make decisions and take action at such an emotional moment.

At the same time, there are things that must happen quickly to give your child the best start in life. Infants' brains grow very rapidly. The first months are critically important because that is when the **auditory brain centers*** develop most efficiently.



This brochure will tell you:

- What happens in the first months
- How the **auditory brain centers*** develop
- Why you need to take action now
- What to do to ensure the best outcomes for your child

s of infants and children hard of hearing.

Early access to sound is important.

Did you know that we hear with our brains? The ears are just a way in.

In fact, you can think of the ears as an input device for the brain, much as a keyboard is an input device for a computer. The ear's job is to sense vibrations in the air and pass the sensory data to those parts of the brain most responsive to sound. These **auditory brain centers*** process raw sound and make sense of it. This process of making sense of airwaves is what we mean by "hearing."

Auditory brain centers* don't start out with the ability to hear. Hearing develops only as the brain is stimulated by many sounds during infancy. Every time a sound stimulates the **auditory brain centers***, the brain develops thousands of new connections between cells, called *synapses*. The growing network of *synapses* enables the baby to make sense of sounds, especially the complex and detailed sounds of language.

When the ears don't work properly, the **auditory brain centers*** don't get the stimulation needed to build new *synapses*. This is why an undiagnosed and untreated hearing loss in early childhood can permanently affect a child's ability to hear and understand subtle sounds and differences, even if the hearing loss is treated later.

Studies tell us that an important period for the development of the "hearing" brain is the first six months of life. **Access to sound during infancy is critical for the **auditory brain centers*** to fully develop.**

What parents can do.

With early amplification and intervention, even children with profound hearing loss can enjoy the delights of sound from an early age. Parents can help tiny brains to develop to their fullest capacity by doing what parents do best: loving and playing with their child.

A child with a hearing loss needs even more of an introduction to the world of sound than a child with hearing. Parents should play, talk, sing and laugh with their child, encourage noisemaking, and reward efforts to talk.

But first, parents should make sure the child has the best possible access to sound so that **auditory brain centers*** are stimulated with a wide range of frequencies during the critical early months.

For more information:

Flexer, C. (1999). *Facilitating Hearing and Listening in Young Children* (2nd edition). San Diego, CA: Singular Publishing Group. (May be obtained from the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.)

Robertson, L. (2000). *Literacy Learning for Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing*. Washington DC: Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The following 22-minute videotape pertains to any child who learns in a classroom. It highlights the significant relationship between listening and literacy.

Flexer, C. (1998). "Enhancing Classrooms for Listening, Language, and Literacy." INFO-LINK Video Bulletin, Box 852, Layton, UT, 84041. 801-544-1388. (www.infolinks.com). A captioned version of this videotape may be ordered from the Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

The information presented in this brochure was developed by Carol Flexer, Ph.D. Dr. Flexer received a doctorate in audiology from Kent State University in 1982. She has been at the University of Akron for 21 years where she is a professor of audiology in the School of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology. Her special areas of expertise include pediatric and educational audiology.

MAKE a joyful noise Parent Kit

Free resource about oral deaf education, an early intervention approach to teaching children who are deaf or hard of hearing to listen and talk. Also includes the 20-minute video, "dreams SPOKEN here," article reprints and a suggested parent reading list.

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