OVER 40 MILLION AMERICANS (approximately 20% of the population) are considered deaf or hard of hearing. In the United States alone, over 24,000 children are born every year with some level of hearing loss. Out of every 1,000 of these children, about 2 to 3 are born with a detectable level of hearing loss in one or both ears. Thus, one of the key approaches to addressing this significant public health issue is through effective screenings and early intervention practices.

One of the challenges of such early detection strategies may stem from the fact that more than 90 percent of children who are deaf are born to hearing parents. It is one of the reasons why it is so important for all newborns and infants to have access to universal screening for hearing loss.

Moreover, 15 out of every 1,000 Americans under the age of 18 have some type of hearing impairment. Service provisions and support systems that will enable them to maintain healthy lifestyles must thus be catered according to each specific age group.

For young children and adolescents who are deaf or hard of hearing, providing them with the right tools that will help in many facets of their development, such as physical, emotional, and social, is crucial to their wellbeing. Children who do not receive help for hearing loss have a greater risk of language delays, reading difficulty, and trouble with social skills. Research has indicated that children with only mild hearing loss are already ten times as likely to be held back a grade than children with typical hearing.

Nevertheless, studies have also shown that the rates and patterns of language development and other related abilities of children who are deaf and hard of hearing are “as varied as the characteristics of the children themselves, their cultural and family contexts, and their language-learning environments.” Therefore, meeting the needs of each child in order to achieve his or her desired health outcomes varies by individual and will be best addressed through effective collaborations of the family and healthcare professionals in their respective communities.

Detection and Screening
“The sooner a child with a hearing problem is diagnosed and gets individualized language training (whether it be oral or sign language), hearing aids, cochlear implants, or other treatment, the more likely he or she is to meet developmental speech and language milestones.” Medical professionals and experts advise that the best time for children with hearing loss to receive help is before they are 6 months old.

The Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program was established for this purpose. EHDI refers to the practice of screening every newborn for hearing loss prior to hospital discharge. Infants not passing the screening receive diagnostic evaluation before three months of age and, when necessary, are enrolled in early intervention programs by six months of age. All 50 states and the District of Columbia have Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) laws or voluntary compliance programs that screen an infant's hearing.

The District of Columbia Department of Health has established the Newborn Hearing Screening Program to ensure that all infants born in the District of Columbia undergo a newborn hearing screening before they are discharged from the hospital. “Infants that do not pass the initial and repeat screenings will be evaluated and linked to hospitals, primary health care providers, public health workers and others for appropriate treatment.” Furthermore, the program also provides culturally competent support to families throughout the screening, diagnostic, and intervention stages.
Listed below are the current personnel for the *Newborn Hearing Screening Program* in the District of Columbia:

**Sandra A. Davis, MPH**, Program Specialist  
DC Department of Health  
Community Health Administration  
Perinatal & Infant Health Bureau  
899 N. Capitol St., NE, 3rd Fl., Washington, DC 20002  
Phone: (202) 478-5820 • Fax: (202) 671-0854  
E-mail: sandraa.davis@dc.gov

**Lisa M. Thompson**, Program Specialist  
DC Department of Health  
Community Health Administration  
Perinatal & Infant Health Bureau  
899 N. Capitol St., NE, 3rd Fl., Washington, DC 20002  
Phone: (202) 442-5834 • Fax: (202) 671-0854  
E-mail: lisam.thompson@dc.gov

**REMEMBER!** The national recommendations on Early Hearing Detection and Intervention are as follows: 

1. Newborns must be **SCREENED** for hearing loss by 1 month of age.  
2. Have **DIAGNOSTIC FOLLOW-UP** by 3 months of age.  
3. Receive appropriate **INTERVENTION** services by 6 months of age.

**USEFUL TOOL!**  
Learn how to navigate the system set up by the DC Department of Health on newborn hearing screening and for infants with hearing loss by utilizing the: *District of Columbia Newborn Hearing Screening Family Roadmap.*

**Seeking Early Intervention and Specialized Education Services in DC**  
Following the screening and diagnostic processes, it is important for children diagnosed with hearing loss to receive intervention services promptly. In the District of Columbia, children age birth to 3 can obtain those services through the *Strong Start: DC Early Intervention Program.* Any form of hearing loss diagnosis (i.e., including unilateral hearing loss) automatically qualifies a child to receive services from Strong Start, while children over the age of 3 can be directly referred to DC's *Specialized Education services.*

For more detailed information on how to receive appropriate intervention and specialized education services in the District of Columbia, refer to our *Early Intervention & Special Education in DC* factsheet.

**The Role of Healthcare Providers**  
Although universal screening for hearing loss has now been made available, including in the District of Columbia, children often get lost in the follow-up process, which ultimately poses serious consequences to their development. Thus, the role of healthcare providers (e.g., primary care physicians) is vital in making sure that children with hearing loss are properly monitored, that appropriate and acceptable services are identified, and that families are equipped with sufficient knowledge in seeking care and support for their children. It is generally advised and best practice to make referrals for children diagnosed with any type of hearing loss immediately following a consultation or doctor’s visit in order to ensure that the child becomes registered in the DC health system. Hence, given the family’s consent, a successful referral will allow the child to swiftly transition into receiving the early intervention or special education services he or she needs.

Providers can greatly assist in ensuring that families are aware of such services rendered in the District of Columbia and that they are fully taken advantage of. Identifying the right providers, clinics, educational programs, and even partnering with suitable advocacy groups will go a long way in helping children with hearing loss and their families to alleviate the challenges they face and set them up for success later in life.
Helping Families Understand Treatment Options

It is important for providers of children who are deaf and hard of hearing to be able to help the parents (or other family members) evaluate the options about how to best support their children. Since the family will always have the final say on how to proceed with treatment options for their child, the providers’ knowledge of available services and supports in the District of Columbia can greatly assist in securing the child’s optimal developmental growth and wellbeing. There are many opinions about the “best” ways to support children who are deaf, from use of cochlear implants to use of sign language as the only means of communication. Making such a decision for one’s very young child, particularly for hearing parents, is complicated and providers can help by linking families to a range of information. In recent years, the emergence of the deaf culture or DHH (deaf & hard of hearing) communities has given voice to resistance to existing medical solutions or approaches, particularly with the introduction of cochlear implants. Families may encounter strong advocacy from individuals and groups who hold these beliefs and should be prepared for strong and divergent views in the field. Health care providers can help prepare parents to consider and evaluate information as they decide which options to pursue.

There is a wide array of services for children who are deaf and hard of hearing available in the District of Columbia. Some of these organizations are listed in the table below. The organizations and services listed do not represent any recommendations on the part of the DC Resource Center for Children with Special Health Care Needs about specific approaches to serving children who are deaf or hard of hearing. They are included to provide information about the spectrum of services and programs in DC.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SERVICES AND SUPPORTS IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Strong Start: DC Early Intervention Program</td>
<td>A statewide, comprehensive, coordinated, multidisciplinary system that provides early intervention therapeutic and other services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and developmental delays. The federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C, along with the District of Columbia Public Law 1-2-119 mandate that infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families receive coordinated services (that are flexible, culturally responsive, and meet their needs) early enough to make a difference. It serves as the single point of entry for infants and toddlers in Washington DC whose families have concerns about their development.</td>
<td><a href="http://osse.dc.gov/service/strong-start-dc-early-intervention-program-dc-eip">http://osse.dc.gov/service/strong-start-dc-early-intervention-program-dc-eip</a></td>
<td>Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Division of Early Learning 1371 Harvard Street, NW Washington, DC 20009 Service Contact: Jerri Johnston-Stewart, Program Manager Phone: (202) 727-3665 Fax: (202) 724-7230 TTY: 711 E-mail: <a href="mailto:osse.dceip@dc.gov">osse.dceip@dc.gov</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specialized Education</td>
<td>For children 3 years or older, a different system is in place to support their learning and education. The focus of the IDEA, Part B or special education system for children 3 to 21 years of age is to guarantee access to a free and appropriate education for all students with delays and disabilities.</td>
<td><a href="http://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education">http://osse.dc.gov/service/specialized-education</a></td>
<td>Office of the State Superintendent of Education, Division of Specialized Education 810 First Street, NE, 5th Floor Washington, DC 20002 Phone: (202) 727-6436 Fax: (202) 741-0227 TTY: 711</td>
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### Services and Supports in the District of Columbia Continued

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<tr>
<td><strong>District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS): Sensory Support Programs</strong></td>
<td>Serving eligible students who are deaf/hard of hearing or who are blind/visually impaired (and others with diagnoses of sensory impairment or require communication and sensory support to access their school environment), these programs aim to help students develop the skills they need to learn successfully alongside their peers and to live independently. A typical classroom consists of staff that provides instruction in American Sign Language and other services to students who are deaf or hard of hearing. Sensory Support classrooms also help students develop communication and daily living skills that provide them the opportunity to succeed inside and outside the classroom.</td>
<td>[<a href="http://profiles.dcps.dc.gov/pdf/OSI">http://profiles.dcps.dc.gov/pdf/OSI</a> Family Programs and Resources Guide SY 14-15.pdf](<a href="http://profiles.dcps.dc.gov/pdf/OSI">http://profiles.dcps.dc.gov/pdf/OSI</a> Family Programs and Resources Guide SY 14-15.pdf)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</strong></td>
<td>A nonprofit organization that helps families, health care providers and education professionals understand childhood hearing loss and the importance of early diagnosis and intervention. Through advocacy, education, research and financial aid, AG Bell helps to ensure that every child and adult with hearing loss has the opportunity to listen, talk and thrive in mainstream society.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.listeningandspokenlanguage.org">www.listeningandspokenlanguage.org</a> 3417 Volta Place, NW Washington, DC 20007 Phone: (202) 337-5220 Fax: (202) 337-8314 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@agbell.org">info@agbell.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s National Health System: Hearing and Speech Division</strong></td>
<td>Children’s National pediatric hearing and speech specialists provide diagnostic, treatment, and group therapy services for children with audiology (hearing) and communication disorders. Because these problems can affect a child’s development, they emphasize early diagnosis and early intervention.</td>
<td><a href="http://childrensnational.org/departments/hearing-and-speech?sc_lang=en">http://childrensnational.org/departments/hearing-and-speech?sc_lang=en</a> 111 Michigan Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20010 Phone: (202) 476-5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Children’s National Health System: Pediatric Cochlear Implants</strong></td>
<td>The Cochlear Implant Program at Children’s National evaluates children at any age and hearing level. Infants who are identified with hearing loss first undergo a trial to assess the effectiveness of hearing aids. The Cochlear Implant Committee evaluates infants who do not show improvement with hearing aids. This group of audiologists, speech therapists, and otolaryngologists determine each infant’s candidacy for cochlear implantation.</td>
<td><a href="http://childrensnational.org/choose-childrens/conditions-and-treatments/ear-nose-throat/cochlear-implants-program">http://childrensnational.org/choose-childrens/conditions-and-treatments/ear-nose-throat/cochlear-implants-program</a> 111 Michigan Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20010 Phone: (202) 476-5000</td>
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| Gallaudet University              | Gallaudet University is the world leader in liberal education and career development for students who are deaf or hard of hearing. The University enjoys an international reputation for its outstanding programs and for the quality of the research it conducts on the history, language, culture, and other topics related to people who are deaf. | www.gallaudet.edu  
800 Florida Avenue, NE  
Washington, DC 20002  
Phone: (202) 651-5000                                                                                           |
| Gallaudet University:             | The center is one of the largest of its kind in the DC area and provides a wide array of services to the Gallaudet community, their family members, and the local community. Services include: an Assistive Devices Center, audiological evaluation, aural rehabilitation, cochlear implant services, hearing aid services, speech reading classes, and speech-language pathology services. | www.gallaudet.edu/hsc.html  
Program Director: Kenneth Henry, Ph.D.  
Contact: Khera Allen  
Sorenson Language and Communication Center (SLCC) 2200  
VP: (202) 250-2119  
TTY: (202) 651-5328  
Voice: (202) 651-5328  
Fax: (202) 651-5324                                                                                                   |
| Hearing and Speech Center        | The Laurent Clerc National Deaf Education Center at Gallaudet University provides information, training, and technical assistance for parents and professionals to meet the needs of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Their mission is to improve the quality of education afforded to students who are deaf or hard of hearing from birth to age 21 throughout the United States. | www.gallaudet.edu/clerc_center.html  
TTY/Voice: (202) 651-5855 / (202) 651-5051  
Fax: (202) 651-5857  
E-mail: clercent@gallaudet.edu  
infotogo@gallaudet.edu  
Kendall Demonstration Elementary School:  
www.gallaudet.edu/kdes.html  
VP: (202) 250-2761  
Voice: (202) 651-5206  
Fax: (202) 651-5646  
Español: (202) 651-5425  
Admissions E-mail: kdesadmissions@gallaudet.edu                                                                 |
| The Laurent Clerc National Deaf   |                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                  |
| Education Center                  |                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                  |
| District of Columbia Association  | DCAD’s mission is to empower all residents who are deaf or hard of hearing in the DC area and provide advocacy for equal political, social, and economic access among its population. To that goal, they are focused on increasing their visibility in both government and community levels. | http://dcdeaf.org/wp  
Mailing Address:  
DCAD  
P.O. Box 2741  
Washington, DC 20013-2741                                                                                   |
| of the Deaf (DCAD)                |                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                  |
## Services and Supports in the District of Columbia Continued

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<td>The River School</td>
<td>A local institution that provides a 10-month educational program to children 18 months through Grade 3. Emphasizing experiential and collaborative learning, it aims to provide successful educational experiences for children and their families by uniting the best practices of early childhood education and oral deaf education, and promoting clinical research and training in child language and literacy.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.riverschool.net">www.riverschool.net</a> 8600 MacArthur Blvd, NW Washington, DC 20007 Phone: (202) 337-3554 / (866) 596-8929 Fax: (202) 337-3534 Email: <a href="mailto:info@riverschool.net">info@riverschool.net</a></td>
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### OTHER PROGRAM AND RESOURCE GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

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<tr>
<td>National Association of the Deaf (NAD)</td>
<td>As the nation’s premier civil rights organization of, by and for individuals who are deaf and hard of hearing, it covers areas of early intervention, education, employment, healthcare, technology, telecommunications, youth leadership, etc. It carries out its federal advocacy work through coalition efforts with specialized national deaf and hard of hearing organizations, as well as coalitions representing national cross-disability organizations.</td>
<td><a href="http://nad.org">http://nad.org</a> 8630 Fenton Street, Suite 820 Silver Spring, MD 20910 (301) 328-1443 (Sorenson) (301) 587-1788 (ZVRS) (301) 338-6380 (Convo) TTY: (301) 587-1789 Fax: (301) 587-1791</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA)</td>
<td>As one of the country’s leading organization representing people with hearing loss, HLAA provides assistance and resources for people with hearing loss and their families to learn how to adjust to living with hearing loss. HLAA is working to eradicate the stigma associated with hearing loss and raise public awareness about the need for prevention, treatment, and regular hearing screenings throughout life.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.hearingloss.org">www.hearingloss.org</a> 7910 Woodmont Avenue, Suite 1200 Bethesda, MD 20814 Phone: (301) 657-2248 Fax: (301) 913-9413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Cochlear Implant Alliance</td>
<td>The American Cochlear Implant Alliance is a not-for-profit membership organization with the purpose of eliminating barriers to cochlear implantation by sponsoring research, driving heightened awareness and advocating for improved access to cochlear implants for patients of all ages across the United States. ACI Alliance members are clinicians, scientists, educators, and others on cochlear implant teams as well as parent and consumer advocates.</td>
<td><a href="https://acialliance.site-ym.com">https://acialliance.site-ym.com</a> Mail: ACI Alliance P.O. Box 103 McLean, VA 22101-0103 E-mail: <a href="mailto:info@acialliance.org">info@acialliance.org</a> Phone: (703) 534-6146</td>
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</table>
Additional Resource Guide
What’s Hearing Loss? (Guide for Explaining to Children)
http://kidshealth.org/kid/health_problems/sight/hearing_impairment.html

Types of Hearing Loss
www.asha.org/public/hearing/Types-of-Hearing-Loss

Rights for those with Hearing Loss
www.ovationhearing.com/resources/rights-for-those-with-hearing-loss

Career Assistance for the Deaf and Hearing Impaired
www.hloom.com/career-assistance-for-the-deaf-and-hearing-impaired

References


