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Auslan and Easy Read

Download this information in Easy Read format:

- [Understanding Supports for children who are deaf or hard of hearing Easy Read \(PDF 9.9MB\)](#)
- [Understanding Supports for children who are deaf or hard of hearing Easy Read Text Only \(DOCX 68.3KB\)](#)

Who are these guides for?

These guides are for families who have a child younger than 7, who is deaf or hard of hearing who want to understand the kinds of early intervention supports (including NDIS funded supports) that are available from providers and the community.

What can these guides help you with?

The guides can help you:

- Learn about [best practice early childhood intervention](#)
- Think about what the best support option/s may be for your child and family
- Plan your next steps to support your child and family
- Choose the right provider(s) for your child and family.

Early childhood intervention supports are recommended as early as possible to help build a child's skills, independence, and development. They can also help families build skills and knowledge to support their children.

If your child has recently been diagnosed with a hearing loss, you may have already been in contact with Hearing Australia. [Hearing Australia](#) provide hearing services and devices to people under 26 years of age who have permanent or long-term hearing loss.

We suggest reading the [Choices](#) guide created by Hearing Australia. Choices provides families and carers with information about support they provide for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

What topics does the guide cover?

- [Developing your child's language and communication](#)
- [Supporting your child's social-emotional wellbeing](#)
- [Developing your family's knowledge and skills](#)

How can you use the guide?

Step 1

Read the information below to learn about early intervention for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Step 2

Choose which section(s) is most important for your child and family. Referring to your child's short and long-term goals may be helpful, which can include all aspects related to your child's development.

Step 3

Refer to the guide during meetings or appointments with your MyNDIS Contact (who may be an [early childhood partner or planner](#)) or [provider](#) (s).

Step 4

It is a good idea to have regular conversations with your provider about the supports your child receives. This will help you better understand your child's progress and outcomes.

Your provider should also write reports so you can see the impact funded supports have on you and your child's daily life.

To learn more go to [early childhood provider reports](#) . We will also check in with you regularly in case anything changes.

For families with children with additional disabilities

Your child may also live with other disabilities. Your MyNDIS Contact can help you connect with providers who deliver early childhood interventions that best meet the needs of your child.

This may involve providers working together with your family to form a team around your child.

What do we mean by deaf or hard of hearing?

Different terms describe issues with hearing such as hearing loss, hearing impairment, deaf or hard of hearing. In this guide we use the terms hearing loss and deaf or hard of hearing. Your child may be deaf or hard of hearing from birth (congenital hearing loss) or may have become deaf or hard of hearing later in life (acquired hearing loss).

Hearing loss may occur in one ear (unilateral) or both ears (bilateral) and can range from mild to profound. The term Deaf may be used by people who use Auslan (Australian Sign Language) to communicate and who identify as members of the signing Deaf community. Some people may also identify themselves as 'culturally Deaf'.

Why is early childhood intervention important?

- [Early childhood intervention](#) is an evidence-based approach to provide children with developmental delay or disability with the best possible start in life.
- Accessing specialised supports and services during a child's early years will guide how they communicate, develop, and learn later in life. This can help you explore what's possible for your child.
- Development of language and communication is a strong focus of early childhood intervention for children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Early childhood intervention can support a family and child's wellbeing. It also helps children participate in the community.

Research shows families play an important role in early intervention. Children benefit most when their family is at the centre of all services and supports. That is why the family and early childhood professionals work together in partnership.

This is called family centred practice and together it creates the best possible experience and outcomes for the child and family.

Having a [key person](#) work with your family is an important part of early childhood intervention. They coordinate care for your child and family across various systems (for example, NDIS, community supports, healthcare professionals).

We support this as part of our [early childhood approach](#) .

[Best practice early childhood interventions](#) should use the following principles:

- The family and early childhood professionals work together in partnership. Services and supports are based on the family's needs and choices.
- Services and supports are delivered in a way that is respectful of a family's cultural, language and social backgrounds, and their values and beliefs.

- The child takes part in home and community life, with supports as needed, to create a real sense of belonging
- The child learns and practises skills in the activities and daily routines of their everyday life.
- Early childhood professionals and family form a team around the child.
- Supports build the knowledge, skills and confidence of the family and the important people in a child's life
- Services and supports work with the family on the goals they have for their child and family to achieve the best outcomes
- Early childhood professionals have qualifications and experience in early childhood development, and offer services based on sound evidence and research.

Tips for supporting your child who is deaf or hard of hearing

There are a number of different ways to support your child's development. The tips below come from best practice guidelines. You may find that some of these tips will work for your child and family and others may not be relevant for your situation.

- Early action helps. Seek supports as soon as possible after the hearing loss is diagnosed, so that you have the best possible chance to help your child's development.
- Children do best when families and providers work in partnership. Listen to what the professionals have to say but remember that you are an expert in the needs of your child and family. Together you can work out the best way to help your child to develop.
- Everyday life provides many opportunities for language learning. Talk to your providers and peer supports about how you can build language learning into your child's and family's daily routines.
- Family is important. Involve the whole family and encourage whole of family communication and inclusiveness. An example is working with a provider who teaches your child and family to learn Auslan together.
- Look after yourself. Taking care of your own wellbeing is important. Talk to your family and friends or a health professional if you need some additional support.

What supports are available?

Supports will look different for every child and family. Your supports may change as your child's needs and goals change. Learning from a wide range of people and organisations with different experiences is a good way to learn about different supports.

Support from friends, family, peers, and community networks is often very important for families. This may include connecting with:

- Other parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing. They may help you and your child learn about supports.
- Online parent groups. This can be through organised online forums for parents or carers of children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

- Parent-to-parent mentoring. This can involve parents who are trained to support and provide independent advice to new parents or carers.
- Other people who are deaf or hard of hearing. This could include people who have a hearing loss and whose usual means of communication is by speech or meeting people who are part of the deaf community.
- Mainstream supports. You can get these supports from other government funded services and they include things like health or early childhood education supports like your child health nurse or childcare.
- Local councils or other community groups. They may provide access to playgroups or other activities for children. This could include story time at the local library or a regular time to meet for a play at the local community centre.
- Family and friends. This can be an important source of support as they know your family, and you can share your experiences, including other people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Supports can also be delivered by providers. When we talk about providers we mean people or organisations who provide you with supports and services funded by your child's NDIS plan. This can include early childhood professionals. When you are choosing a provider to support your child and your family, you should check whether they provide best practice early interventions and have evidence they are able to help achieve the goals and outcomes you have for your child.

Where can you go to get more information?

[Access our resources](#) to learn about the NDIS early childhood approach.

Read [What if my child has just been diagnosed with a hearing loss?](#) This information explains the NDIS pathway hearing stream.

[Our guidelines](#) explain the early childhood approach.

You can read what we mean by [reasonable and necessary supports](#) and how we make decisions about the types of early intervention childhood supports that can be funded through the NDIS. Other supports may be available, such as [community and mainstream supports](#).

Examples of the types of supports that can be funded or provided through the NDIS is available on the [Would we fund it page](#).

If you want more information about supports, you could talk to:

- your [early childhood partner](#)
- your provider
- a peer support network
- health professionals like your child health nurse, paediatrician or general practitioner
- your audiologist at [Hearing Australia](#)
- organisations who support people who are deaf or hard of hearing and their families and carers
- your child's early childhood educator.

How do you record your choices?

We have a [checklist](#) to help you think about your supports. You can use it to keep a record of what you have read, record questions and who may help you answer them.

You could use the checklist when planning:

- a meeting with your early childhood partner or planner
- an appointment with your provider or audiologist.

You can also take the checklist to your meeting and fill it out together.

Where can you go to find a provider?

You can refer to [Choices, a guide developed by Hearing Australia](#) which describes the ‘professionals you may meet’.

Your early childhood partner or planner can help you find a [provider](#) .

We have a list of providers that you can search on the [Provider Finder page](#) .

Your GP or one of the other professionals working with your child may also be able to help.

You can contact Hearing Australia or check [Disability Gateway](#) for providers in each state or territory.

What to look for in a provider

Choose a provider who:

- Listens to you, understands your family’s needs and helps you to explore what’s possible for your child.
- Has skilled staff with expertise in working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Delivers [best practice early childhood supports](#) .
- Gives you information about all of your communication options.

Questions you can ask providers

When you are talking to a provider it can be useful to ask them questions about how they will work with your child and your family. This can help you work out if they are the right provider for you.

You may have your own questions, or you may like to ask questions like these below which are based on best practice guidelines.

Skills and experience of the provider:

- How will you support my child and family learn about which supports may be best for us, now and in the future?
- What experience do you have in working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing?
- What outcomes can your early intervention approach provide for my child and family?

Working with your family:

- How will you work with our family to meet our individual needs at your service and in our home?
- What evidence will you use to help us decide on the best supports for our child?
- Can you connect us with other families for peer support?

Delivering supports:

- How will you [report back to us](#) about our child's progress and outcomes so we can assess how well the supports are working for our child?
- What will your service do if the supports are not meeting our child's or family's needs?

Where has the information in the guide come from?

The information is based on a scientific review of research and current national and international guidelines. Many people helped to develop these Guides. They include NDIS participants and families of NDIS participants, organisations who represent people with disability, peak bodies from the disability sector, and NDIA staff.

The research used to develop this guide can be found in the following publications:

1. Early Childhood Intervention Australia. National Guidelines: [Best Practice in Early Childhood Intervention](#) . Early Childhood Intervention Australia Ltd. 2016.
2. Moeller, M.P., et al. [Best Practices in Family-Centred Early Intervention for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing: An International Consensus Statement](#) . Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education. 18 (4), 429-45. 2013.
3. Yoshinaga-Itano, C. [Principles and Guidelines for Early Intervention After Confirmation That a Child is Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#) . Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education. Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education. 19 (2), 143-175. 2013.
4. The Joint Committee on Infant Hearing. [Year 2019 Position Statement: Principles and Guidelines for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Programs](#) . The Journal of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention. 4 (2), 1-44. 2019.
5. Kumar, S., et al. [A Systematic Review of the Literature on Early Intervention for Children with Permanent Hearing Loss: Volume 1](#) . Centre for Allied Health Evidence, University of South Australia, Adelaide. 2008.

Disclaimer

This guide is designed to help you understand the supports that may be available to children who are deaf or hard of hearing. It does not imply that a specific support will automatically be included in your child's NDIS plan.

Some supports may be provided outside of the NDIS. All of the supports included in your child's NDIS plan must meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

You should read this guide alongside Our Guideline – [Early childhood approach](#) and [Mainstream and community supports](#).

This page current as of
16 April 2024