



INFORMATION EXPRESS

FACT SHEET

Spotlight on: 

Socialization and the Child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing

This Fact Sheet is derived from a full article on this topic which can be accessed through www.handsandvoices.org. Click on the “What Parents Need to Know” Series link.

Most deaf and hard-of-hearing children are born into hearing families and hearing communities. Since deafness and hearing loss affect a child’s ability to communicate, and communication is necessary for socialization, you may worry that your child will have difficulties developing relationships with family members, making friends, and participating in social activities. These are legitimate concerns, since your child is likely to be the only one in the neighborhood and their school who is deaf/hard-of-hearing. (d/hh) However, parents do not have to be weighed down by these concerns. Educating yourself will be the first step to ease the fear, and will ultimately help you support the development of your child’s self-esteem and social confidence.

What impact will this have on my child’s social development?

- Will my child have friends?*
- Will he/she be teased?*
- Will he/she play sports?*
- How will I ever leave my child in daycare?*
- Will my child.....?*

Where can I find the information I need?

Fortunately, parents can obtain helpful information from a wide variety of sources such as:

- ❖ Internet
- ❖ Health professionals (audiologist, pediatrician, etc.)
- ❖ Early intervention specialists (speech therapists, ASL instructors, early childhood educators, etc.)
- ❖ Primary and secondary educators of deaf and hard-of-hearing students

- ❖ Organizations that focus on deafness and/or hearing loss (Hands & Voices, State Association of the Deaf, AG Bell, State School for the Deaf, Self Help for Hard of Hearing (SHHH), Commission for the Deaf/HH etc.)
- ❖ List-serves that provide periodic information via e-mail
- ❖ Books and journals
- ❖ People who have “walked the walk.” – Other Parents of Deaf/hh kids; Deaf/hh adults.

Facilitating positive social experiences: The early years.

Things to consider:

- ❖ What is my child’s personality like? Is he/she shy or outgoing?
- ❖ When leaving my child with caregivers, have we considered communication access?
- ❖ Do I/my child know how to respond to inquisitive questions from the “Hearing world”?

**Running interference:
Knowing when to step in, and
when to step back.**

Think about:

- ❖ Letting your child work out issues/communication challenges with friends before you step in
- ❖ Role playing with your child to develop social skills
- ❖ As your child gets older, you will need to 'step in' less often

Maintaining and strengthening social ties

What you can do to help:

- ❖ Initiate Play dates for your child
- ❖ Maintain classroom friendships throughout the summer months
- ❖ Provide opportunities for hearing children to learn communication strategies (i.e. sign lan-

guage, oral communication strategies)

Getting technical: Writing social objectives into the IEP.

Make sure that:

- ❖ Social goals are written into the IEP
- ❖ Your child has the opportunity to be with deaf/hh peers and deaf/hh adult role models in some capacity throughout the year
- ❖ The school setting provides for authentic peer friendships

Facilitating social competence: Challenges and ideas

- ❖ Understand the challenges: social isolation; passive or inferential learning deficits; changing environments throughout the day

- ❖ Ideas: Work behind the scenes; utilize technology; advocate for access in the community

Deafness / hearing loss affects communication, and communication is crucial for developing social relationships. However, you can be sure that your deaf or hard-of-hearing child will find ways to express themselves and reach out to others and friendships will form. Perhaps these friendships may be different in some ways from those you had as a child, or from those that your hearing children have, but if your child is happy, confident, and has enriching relationships, that is what is important.

The "What Parents Need to Know" Series

The "What Parents Need to Know" Series includes full articles and two-page synopsis of the following topics:

- ❖ Socialization and the Child who is Deaf or Hard of Hearing
- ❖ Self-Advocacy for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students
- ❖ School Placement Considerations for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Student
- ❖ From High School to Post-Secondary Education: The Transition Process

For more information, contact: Colorado Families for Hands & Voices at: www.handsandvoices.org, or PO Box 371926, Denver, CO 80237

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