

## POLICY



### Provision of Early Intervention for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children in Australia

<b>Purpose</b>	This position statement outlines the minimum requirements for the provision of early intervention programs for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families in Australia.
<b>Overview</b>	<p>More than 90 percent of deaf and hard of hearing children are born to hearing parents, most of whom have had minimal experience in raising and communicating with a deaf child. For this reason, it is essential that high quality early intervention programs support families soon after the diagnosis of their child's hearing loss. In Australia, children aged from birth to school entry are eligible to enrol in early intervention programs following diagnosis of a permanent bilateral hearing loss for which listening devices have been prescribed.</p> <p>This position statement was developed and supported by the following stakeholder organisations participating in the Deaf Australia Early Intervention and Education Working Group:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deaf Australia</li> <li>• The Shepherd Centre</li> <li>• Parents of Deaf Children</li> <li>• Aussie Deaf Kids</li> <li>• Deaf Children Australia</li> <li>• Royal Institute for Deaf and Blind Children</li> <li>• National Association of Australian Teachers of the Deaf</li> <li>• Community members, including parents of deaf and hard of hearing children</li> </ul>
<b>Scope</b>	All deaf and hard of hearing children who are eligible for enrolment in early intervention programs, and their families in Australia.
<b>Position Statement</b>	<p>The following principles are considered to be minimum requirements to be incorporated in early intervention programs for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families in Australia:</p> <p><b>Principle 1:</b> All deaf and hard of hearing children and their families will be provided access to early intervention programs directly following initial diagnosis of the hearing loss. The children's enrolment in early intervention services will be tracked through suitable data management systems which will monitor their use of appropriate services. Such timely intervention will maximise the child's developmental outcomes by providing high quality early intervention based on data gathered through program monitoring.</p>

	<p><b>Principle 2:</b> All early intervention program managers will have specialised knowledge and communication skills related to engaging with deaf and hard of hearing children and adults. A bilingual approach that provides deaf and hard of hearing children and their families' access to Auslan and English or their home language (spoken or otherwise) will maximise language, academic and social outcomes and will ensure that the children's right to access Auslan is maintained.</p> <p><b>Principle 3:</b> All early intervention programs will provide access to specialists who are professionally qualified to implement programs that monitor and support child development and family well-being. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professionally qualified Teachers of the Deaf who are either native signers or fluent in Auslan and who are trained to teach parents, families and young children.</li> <li>• Professionally qualified Auslan language models who are either native signers or fluent in Auslan and who are trained to implement sign language programs with parents, families and young children.</li> <li>• Professionally qualified Teachers of the Deaf and therapists who are trained in auditory-oral approaches that support the development of listening and speaking skills by young deaf and hard of hearing children.</li> <li>• Access to appropriate high quality resources that support the skill development of Auslan, listening and speech skills.</li> <li>• Balanced and respectful partnerships between families and the professionals supporting them will be a feature of all early intervention programs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Principle 4:</b> All early intervention programs will include allied professionals who have specialised qualifications, knowledge and skills to support deaf and hard of hearing children who have additional disabilities. These professionals may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speech and Language Therapists</li> <li>• Educational psychologists</li> <li>• Occupational Therapists</li> <li>• Physiotherapists</li> <li>• Social Workers</li> </ul> <p><b>Principle 5:</b> All early intervention programs will support access to culturally sensitive services that provide equitable information for families from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This includes information provided in Auslan for deaf and hard of hearing parents and other relatives in the family.</p> <p><b>Principle 6:</b> All early intervention programs will periodically monitor the developmental progress of deaf and hard of hearing children. Standardised, norm-referenced assessment tools will measure communication and language development (signed, spoken and alternative/augmentative), auditory skills, social-emotional and cognitive skills. Appropriate follow-up intervention will be provided, based on the data collected from these assessments.</p> <p><b>Principle 7:</b> All early intervention programs will provide deaf and hard of hearing children access to appropriate audiological management and monitoring of their use of functional auditory skills. Appropriate audiological support will be provided for all degrees and types of</p>
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	<p>hearing loss, including sensorineural, conductive and Auditory Neuropathy Spectrum Disorder (ANSO). Immediate follow up intervention will be provided as needed.</p> <p><b>Principle 8:</b> All early intervention programs will provide families with opportunities to engage with other families of deaf and hard of hearing children. Families will also be given opportunities to meet deaf and hard of hearing adults who are trained to provide culturally and linguistically sensitive support, mentorship and guidance. This facilitates the learning of Auslan and the promotion of the linguistic and cultural identity of the deaf and hard of hearing community.</p> <p><b>Principle 9:</b> Parents of deaf and hard of hearing children will play a central role in determining the goals and content of their child's early intervention program. The parents' strengths and knowledge of their deaf child will be acknowledged and respected at all times. Importantly, deaf and hard of hearing adults in the community will also be active participants and will be respected for their knowledge and experience. They will provide valuable consultations to ensure optimal outcomes for the development and implementation of early intervention and detection programs at state/territory and national levels.</p> <p><b>Principle 10:</b> All deaf and hard of hearing children and their families will be assured of continuing best practice in early intervention through data gathered from ongoing research. Findings of studies of particular relevance will be related to the benefits of early intervention, spoken and sign language development, paediatric audiology, family-centred early intervention and parent-child interactions.</p>
<b>Supporting Evidence</b>	<p>Ad Hoc Committee of the General Assembly, United Nations (2006). Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities and optional protocol.</p> <p>Moeller, M. P., Carr, G., Seaver, L., Stredler-Brown, A., &amp; Holzinger, D. (2013). Best practices in family-centered early intervention for children who are deaf or hard of hearing: An international consensus statement. <i>Journal of Deaf Studies and Deaf Education, 18</i>(4), 429-445.</p> <p>Muse., C., Harrison, J., Yoshinaga-Itano, C., Grimes, A., Brookhouser, P. E., Epstein, S....Martin, B. (2013). Supplement to the JCIH 2007 position statement: Principles and guidelines for early intervention after confirmation that a child is deaf or hard of hearing. <i>Pediatrics, 131</i>(4), e1324-1349. DOI: 10.1542/peds.2013-0008.</p>
<b>Keywords</b>	deaf; hard of hearing; early intervention

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