Auditory Impairment (AI)/Deaf or Hard of Hearing

The terms *auditory impairment*, *hearing impairment*, and *hard of hearing* are all referred to in Texas law and have the same meaning while federal law generally uses the term *hearing impairment*. *Deafness* means a hearing impairment that is so severe that the child is impaired with processing linguistic information through hearing, with or without amplification, that adversely affects the child's educational performance. *Hearing impairment* means an impairment in hearing, whether permanent or fluctuating, that adversely affects the child's educational performance but that is not included under the definition of deafness.

**Characteristics**

Every newborn is screened for hearing loss. Sound is measured by its loudness/intensity (in decibels) or frequency/pitch (in hertz). Hearing loss is generally described as slight, mild, moderate, severe, or profound. There are four types of hearing loss: conductive hearing loss, sensorineural hearing loss, mixed hearing loss, and central hearing loss. Signs of a hearing loss are: does not respond to sounds or to own name, asks for things to be repeated or says “huh?”, is delayed in developing speech or has unclear speech, turn the volume up loud on TV.

- An otological examination (the structure and function of the ear) performed by an otolaryngologist (a doctor for ear, nose, and throat), or by a licensed medical doctor with documentation that an otolaryngologist is not reasonably available;
- An audiological evaluation (the type of degree of hearing loss by playing of generated or recorded sounds) performed by a licensed audiologist;
- A description of the implications of the hearing loss in a variety of circumstances with or without recommended amplification (hearing aids or other devices); and
- An assessment of the child's potential for communications through a variety of means, including:
  - Oral (spoken) and aural (hearing) means;
  - Fingerspelling; or
  - Sign language.

**Tips for Parents**

- Children with a hearing loss miss a lot of the learning that happens from listening. They need to learn all of this information in different ways. Find out how your child’s hearing loss changes the way she/he learns about the world.
- Your child probably learns a lot from the things she/he can see. Many children with a hearing loss use things they can see, or visual cues, to help them pick up what they miss from their hearing loss.
- But children with a hearing loss who don't use sign language still use their sight to help them learn. For example, your child might watch what the teacher writes on the blackboard very carefully. Or she/he may watch the teacher's face for speechreading cues to help her/him understand what she/he sees and hears.
- You know your child best, so you know better than anyone else how she/he learns. Tell her/his teachers how she/he learns best. Write it on her/his IEP.
- Teach your child to take care of her/his hearing aids or cochlear implant.
- Children who are hard of hearing will find it much more difficult than children who have normal hearing to learn vocabulary, grammar, word order, idiomatic expressions, and other aspects of verbal communication. For children who are deaf or have severe hearing losses, early, consistent, and conscious use of visible communication modes (such as sign language, fingerspelling, and Cued Speech) and/or amplification and aural/oral training can help reduce this language delay.

Resources

Crossroads Resource for Deaf Education in Texas  [https://texasdeafed.org](https://texasdeafed.org)

Special Education Legal Framework  [https://framework.esc18.net/display/Webforms/ESC18-FW-Summary.aspx](https://framework.esc18.net/display/Webforms/ESC18-FW-Summary.aspx)

Texas Project First  [http://www.texasprojectfirst.org](http://www.texasprojectfirst.org)

Center for Parent Information and Resources  [http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/hearingloss](http://www.parentcenterhub.org/repository/hearingloss)

Texas Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services  [http://www.dars.state.tx.us/dhhs](http://www.dars.state.tx.us/dhhs)