



Quality ChildCare

For Registered Home-Based Providers

LEARNING TO GROW ★ WINDWARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE Vol. VI, No. 7

10 Hallmarks of Quality Child Care

- ★ Build trusting relationships
- ★ Provide consistent care
- ★ Support children's health
- ★ Provide a safe environment
- ★ Provide positive guidance
- ★ Provide a language-rich environment
- ★ Foster curiosity and development through play
- ★ **Individualize care and learning activities**
- ★ Partner with parents
- ★ Pursue personal and professional growth

This Month's Hallmark of Quality Child Care

Individualized Care and Learning Activities

Middle Ear Infection, Hearing, and Language Development

A middle ear infection is one of the most common illnesses reported in young children. It is important to be aware that a middle ear infection can impact a child's hearing, causing a temporary mild or moderate hearing loss, which may delay speech and language development.

Middle ear infections (also called *Otitis Media*) occur as a result of fluid in the middle ear. When there is fluid in this space, it can cause the bones in the middle ear not to vibrate properly, and it reduces sound traveling through the middle ear, affecting a child's ability to hear. Imagine hearing with a plugged ear or listening to sounds under water.

The early years are when children are learning to speak and understand words, so a mild or moderate hearing loss can impact the young child's ability to understand language and sort out speech. This may lead to subsequent speech and language difficulties.

To track your child's development, use a milestone checklist to monitor the child's development, such as the CDC's Developmental Milestones (<https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/index.html>), or get more information from the Hawai'i Department of Health's Newborn Hearing Screening Program. <https://health.hawaii.gov/genetics/programs/nhsp/>

If you have a concern that the child has an ear infection and/or hearing loss, share your concern with the child's parent and encourage him or her to contact the child's health care provider as soon as possible. The health care provider will be able to advise a treatment plan for the child. Remember that catching problems early can help to avoid developmental delays.



In this newsletter, we will present information on how language develops at each age level – infants, toddlers and preschoolers, and how a mild or moderate hearing loss can affect this development. In addition, we will present tips for minimizing ear infections, as well as strategies to promote language development in hearing children as well as those with a hearing loss.

Infants

Keep in mind that even infants are susceptible to ear infections. Here are some ways you can help minimize the risk of ear infection in an infant:

- Encourage breastfeeding by setting up a comfortable, private area for moms to nurse.
- When bottle feeding, keep baby in an upright or slightly reclined position.
- An infant should not be put to bed with a bottle, nor should a bottle be propped. These practices may cause the liquid from the bottle to go up a small tube leading to the middle ear, causing middle ear fluid and infection.
- Keep children away from smoke. Cigarette smoke increases a child's chance of middle ear infection.

Teaching sign language has been found to benefit both normal hearing babies as well as those with a hearing loss. See the *Featured Activity* section of this newsletter for tips and resources for teaching sign language to children, as young as six to eight months.



Toddlers

The toddler years are when children experience growth in language skills. Although every child develops at his own pace, most toddlers are alert to the people around them and pick up on the language they hear. Toddlers are also beginning to develop a sensitivity to the sounds in language and the ability to detect and discriminate between different sounds. A mild or moderate hearing loss may affect his ability to gain this critical skill, which is crucial for learning to read.

Here are some things you can do to ensure that any toddler, especially one who may be experiencing mild or moderate hearing loss, has opportunities to develop language:

- Choose a quiet place for activities that require the child to listen and communicate.
- Cut down on background noise. Turn off music and televisions, fix noisy appliances such as air conditioners, and close windows and doors when it is noisy outside.
- Be within three feet and at the child's eye level before speaking; when talking make sure he is looking at you.
- Use verbal cues such as moving your hands and showing pictures in addition to using speech.
- When the child says something, respond to what he is talking about immediately and with interest.

Preschoolers

Language skills developed in the preschool years serve as an important foundation for reading and writing. A hearing loss can delay the process of developing these critical skills. One strategy to help a child with a hearing loss is to immerse him in language-facilitating activities, such as reading books daily to the child.

Reading Rocket offers the following tips when reading to a child with a hearing loss:

- Read the same story again and again. This will help the child catch words he may have missed before.
- Make sure the child can see your face and the pictures. This will help him follow the story, even if he doesn't catch all the words.
- Have the child turn pages, touch the pictures, and lift the flaps. This will give him practice using his hands, which gets him ready to sign.
- Use simple sign language as you read. See the Resources section of this newsletter for a book on teaching sign language.
- Read slowly to the child, pausing at times to ask questions (e.g., "What do you think will happen next?").

Additional Resources

Kubler, Annie. (2005). *My First Signs*. Child's Play International.

Rebello, Lane. (2018). *Baby Sign Language Made Easy: 101 Signs to Start Communicating with Your Child Now*. Rockridge Press.

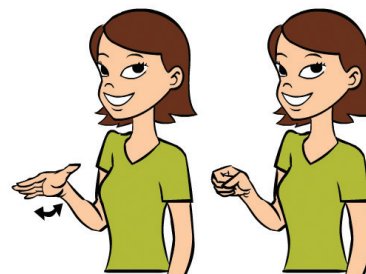
Hawai'i State Department of Health, Newborn Hearing Screening Program. (2016). Can Your Baby Hear? Retrieved from https://health.hawaii.gov/genetics/files/2013/04/2013_Hearing_Brochure_Hagadone1.pdf



Featured Activity: Using Sign Language

Developmentally, children can learn to use their hands to "talk" before they are able to talk. Using sign language with children can help minimize their frustrations as they can communicate their needs. Here are some recommended steps for teaching sign language to young children:

1. View a resource such as www.babysignlanguage.com to familiarize yourself with simple signs to teach baby.
2. Say a word and make the gesture at the same time. For example, when you hand your baby milk, say "milk" while making the sign for it (an open and closed fist/milking gesture).
3. Pair the sign with the word every time you say it – remember repetition is key.
4. Start with useful and practical signs. For example, for infants teach the sign language for words like 'milk,' 'eat,' 'more' and 'all done.'
5. Find opportunities to sign with the child throughout the day -- during routine activities like mealtimes, and indoor and outdoor play times.





Citations:

Roberts, J.E., & Zeisel, S.A. (2000). *Ear Infections and Language Development*. American Speech-Language Hearing Association and the National Center for Early Development & Learning. U.S. Department of Education.

Reflection Sheet, Award Book, and Training Certificates

- Providers who fill out the caregiver's reflection sheet and return it by the posted deadline to the Learning to Grow Program are *guaranteed* a children's book in return. A postage-paid envelop is provided.
- Providers who thoughtfully complete the reflection sheet **question #5** can be awarded a certificate indicating one hour of training completed. Training hours will align with the topic areas required to meet DHS requirements.
- Reflection sheets do not need to be returned by the due date in order to earn the certificate. However, the supply of award books is limited and after the due date, award books will be sent only as available.
- Indicate on Question #8 if you would like to receive free technical assistance or support related to a child care issue.



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