

Communication Options for your Child who is deaf or hard of hearing

A broad continuum of communication and learning options exist for children who are deaf or hard of hearing. Some families choose exclusively spoken language, while others choose exclusively signed language; and there are also various combinations of spoken and signed languages. As a parent, you should choose the communication option that will work best for your child and your family.

Auditory-Oral (Deaf) Education and Auditory-Verbal Therapy

These approaches are based on the principle that most deaf and hard-of-hearing children can be taught to listen and speak with early amplification, early intervention and consistent training to develop hearing potential. Primary emphasis is placed upon audition (hearing) to acquire speech. Studies have shown language skills – including phonologic systems and syntax – are based on auditory function. Auditory-oral education allows a child to process information cognitively and auditorially and then apply that knowledge to reading – thus increasing literacy rates.

Sign Language: American Sign Language (ASL)

American Sign Language is recognized as a language in its own right and does not follow the grammatical structure of English; it has its own grammar and syntax. ASL uses hand signs, gestures, and facial expression as a communication method. It is taught as a child's primary language, often with English taught as a second language. ASL is used widely within the Deaf community; a group that has developed a separate culture and identity from mainstream hearing society. Children can learn sign at almost any time in their development.

Total Communication (TC)

This technique combines auditory training, the teaching of spoken language and signing exact English (SEE). SEE is a manual code for English, which tries to achieve a one-to-one correspondence with English words and syntax.