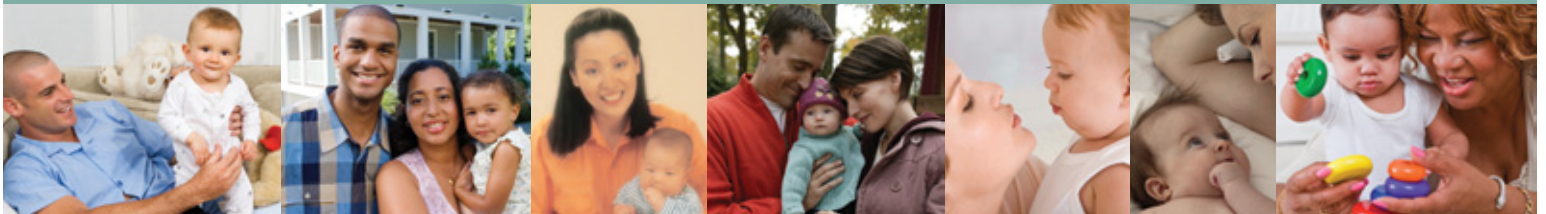


Decision Guide to Communication Choices



For Parents of Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

"I wish I knew when my son was little that the decisions I made for him were my decisions for that time. I wish I knew I could change course and that was okay. It would have taken a lot of pressure off. I wish I realized that as he grew older, he would become the decision-maker and I would become his consultant and biggest fan."

Candace Lindow-Davies, Luke's mom, © 2008 MN - Hands & Voices

National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities
Division of Human Development and Disability



This pamphlet will help guide you through the steps in deciding about communication. Deciding which communication method(s) will be best for your child can be stressful. The right choices are up to your family. Discovering what works for your child is truly a work in progress. Your child's needs, and those of your family, along with your long-term goals for your child, may change with time and you'll want to review your choices regularly. The communication method you choose first may not be your last or only choice.

The keys to making a good decision for your child and your family are:

- Knowing all of the options,
- Learning all you can about those options, and
- Resisting pressure to make a decision until you have enough information and you feel ready to choose.

Learn all you can about the different communication options. You can get information from organizations that support children with hearing loss. You may also want to talk to professionals, other parents of children with hearing loss, and adults who have grown up with hearing loss. Check out books, journals, and quality web sites, too. A list of resources at the end of this pamphlet will help you get started.

This pamphlet will guide you through three steps:

1. Find your starting point in the decision-making process,
2. Identify and explore your decision making needs, and
3. Plan your next steps.

Step One: Find your starting point

This step will help you describe your starting point in exploring communication options. Please remember, this decision about communication involves the whole family.

How far along are you with your decision?

- I do not know what my options are.
- I am considering the options.
- I am close to making my choice(s).
- I have already made my choice(s).

Are you leaning toward certain communication option(s)?

- No
- Yes. Which option(s)? Why?

Step Two: Identify and explore your decision-making needs

This step will help you move forward in the decision-making process. It will help you assess the knowledge you already have about the communication options and weigh the advantages and limitations of each one. It will also help you evaluate your support system and identify any pressure you might be feeling to choose certain options.

Families that answer "No" to one or more of the questions in this section may be more likely to:

- Delay their decision,
- Feel regret about their choice or
- Blame others for bad outcomes.

Therefore, it is important to focus carefully on your needs. Ideally, after working through this guide, you will be able to answer "Yes" to each of the questions posed. Likewise, if you've already made your decision, you should be able to answer "Yes" to each question.

A. Support

- Do you have family members, caregivers, and others who support you and who can help you make an informed choice for your child and family?
 Yes No
- Are you choosing without pressure from others?
 Yes No

You may use separate sheets if you need more space.

From whom have you received support?	Name:	Name:	Name:
Which option does this person prefer?			
Is this person pressuring you?			
How can this person support you?			
What part of the person's background affects their opinion?			

Advantages and Limitations of Communication Options

This chart helps you work through your needs in the four categories (A, B, C and D) in Step 2 above.

You may use separate sheets if you need more space.

	Advantages: Reasons to choose this option	How much it matters. Add ★ to ★★★★★	Limitations: Reasons to avoid this option	How much it matters. Add ★ to ★★★★★
Option 1				
Option 2				
Option 3				
Combination of Options				

vs.

B. Knowledge

- Are you confident that you know all the options available? Yes No
- Have you considered the advantages and limitations to each option for your family? Yes No
- Have you looked for more information or talked with others who can help you find more information? Yes No

In the Advantages and Limitations table above: List the options and the main advantages and limitations that you already know. Underline the advantages and limitations that you think you are most likely to experience.

C. Values

Are you clear about which advantages and limitations matter most to you? Yes No

In the Advantages and Limitations table above: Use stars (★) to show how much each advantage and limitation matters to you. Five stars (★★★★★) means that it matters "a lot." Zero stars means it matters "not at all."

D. Certainty

- At this point do you feel confident that you know enough about each option and how it might affect your family? Yes No

In the Advantages and Limitations table above: Circle the option or combination of options with the advantages that (1) matter most to you and (2) you believe are most likely to happen.

See **Step Three** on next page...

Step Three: Plan the Next Steps Based on Your Needs

This final table will suggest specific steps that may help you feel confident about your decision. Don't give up. Keep looking for the resources you need to get to a level of comfort with this process. You will begin developing an understanding of your long term goals for your child, which may in turn shape your decisions and provide motivation. *You can do it!*

If you are having difficulty	What you can do
Do you feel you do not have enough support?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss your options with a trusted person • Find out what help is available to support your choice
Do you feel pressure from others to make a specific choice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on the opinions of others that matter most to you • Share your guide with others • Ask others to complete this guide • Find a neutral person to help you and the other people involved
Do you feel you do not have enough facts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find out about the advantages and limitations • List your questions and note where to find the answers
Are you not sure which advantages and limitations matter most to you?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review the stars in the Advantages and Limitations table to see what matters most to you • Find people who know what it is like to experience the advantages and limitations • Talk to parents who have made the decision • Read stories of what mattered most to others • Discuss with others what matters most to you

Are there other factors that make the decision difficult? If so, list them here:

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Here are some of the resources available to help in your decision-making process:

- Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program at Centers for Disease Control and Prevention www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/ehdi/default.htm
- National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management www.infanthearing.org
- Boys Town National Research Hospital and National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders (NIDCD) www.babyhearing.org/
- Hands & Voices www.handsandvoices.org

Disclaimer:

We provide links to other web pages if you want to learn even more about a topic. One of these pages is on the CDC web site and others are on outside web sites. Links to organizations outside of CDC are included for information only. CDC has no control over the information at these sites. The views and opinions of these organizations are not necessarily those of CDC, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), or the U.S. Public Health Service (PHS).

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