

*Can My  
Baby Hear?*



Dear Parents,

Congratulations on your new baby! This pamphlet will tell you about the Newborn Hearing Program and answer questions about babies who may be "at risk" for hearing loss.

You may also talk to your doctor about the program or contact:

NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
AND SENIOR SERVICES  
SPECIAL CHILD, ADULT AND EARLY  
INTERVENTION SERVICES  
PO BOX 364  
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625-0364  
1-609-984-1343 (VOICE or TTY)

### **WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE NEWBORN HEARING PROGRAM?**

The purpose is to find out if your baby has a hearing loss which could interfere with the development of language, speech, learning and socialization.

### **WHY IS HEARING IMPORTANT TO LANGUAGE AND SPEECH DEVELOPMENT?**

Your baby begins to understand and develop language and speech from birth. A baby needs to hear to develop speech and language normally. Early identification and treatment of hearing loss are essential so that speech, language, and learning can develop as normally as possible.

### **HOW DOES THE NEWBORN HEARING PROGRAM WORK?**

In the nursery or birthplace a nurse or trained professional checks your baby's medical history and talks to you about your family's medical history. This person is looking for information connected with hearing loss. The information is called "indicators."

When it is time for your baby to go home, the nurse or trained professional writes the information on a form, and also enters some information into a computer. Your signature will be needed on the form, which will remain in your baby's chart.

If any indicators are found, your baby will be given a computerized hearing screening (ABR or OAE) before leaving the hospital or before one month of age. For religious reasons, you may choose to NOT have the hearing screening done, but your signature will still be needed on the form.



## WHAT INDICATORS ARE RELATED TO HEARING LOSS IN NEWBORNS?

A baby is "at risk" for possible hearing loss if one or more of these indicators are present:

- ⇒ family history of hereditary sensorineural hearing loss in childhood, not due to accident, illness, ear infections, or old age
- ⇒ severe medical problems at birth
- ⇒ defects of the head or neck
- ⇒ conditions related to hearing loss, e.g., Waardenberg, Klippel-Feil, or Down syndrome
- ⇒ meningitis (infection of the spinal canal and brain)
- ⇒ treatment with a machine to help severe breathing problems
- ⇒ highly elevated bilirubin (severe "yellow" jaundice)
- ⇒ medicine which can affect hearing
- ⇒ infections related to hearing loss, e.g., rubella, toxoplasmosis, cytomegalovirus

## IS A HEARING TEST A GOOD IDEA FOR ALL BABIES?

**Yes!** Hearing loss can occur even when an indicator is not present at birth. Later on, babies may develop ear infections which can cause hearing loss. Ear infections need to be treated by your doctor. After an ear infection is clear, your baby's hearing needs to be checked to be sure it returned to normal. It is a good idea to test a baby's hearing whenever there is any concern.

*IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT YOUR BABY'S EARS OR HEARING, DON'T WAIT! IT IS IMPORTANT TO BEGIN TREATMENT RIGHT AWAY!*



## HOW CAN I TELL IF MY BABY HAS AN EAR INFECTION?

### Common warning signs for a baby:

- rubbing/pulling/scratching the ears
- head shaking
- poor attention
- fussy/cranky behavior
- changing response to sound
- fever
- runny ears
- delayed language and speech development

### Common warning signs for an older baby:

- complains of ear pain
- makes errors following directions
- complains of ringing in the ear
- watches TV or listens to the radio at very loud levels

*SOME BABIES WITH EAR INFECTIONS DO NOT SHOW ANY OF THESE WARNING SIGNS!*

## WHO WILL TEST MY BABY FOR HEARING LOSS?

An audiologist is trained to use special equipment to test babies for hearing loss. You may choose an audiologist recommended by your child's doctor to do the testing. You may also contact a speech and hearing clinic, your local health department, or Special Child, Adult and Early Intervention Services at (609) 984-1343 (VOICE or TTY).

## HOW WILL MY BABY'S HEARING BE TESTED?

A baby's hearing can be tested at any age. There are several different ways to test a baby's hearing. Very young babies or babies with developmental delays are tested best with computerized tests (ABR and/or OAE). These tests give good information about hearing when a baby cannot respond to a "behavioral" test.

Babies who have reached a six-month learning age can be tested with a "behavioral" hearing test. A behavioral hearing test is usually performed by an audiologist trained to work with babies. The audiologist presents sounds at different pitches and loudness levels in a very quiet room and watches the baby's reactions to the sounds.

An audiologist can tell you which test is best for your baby.

## WHAT IF I CAN'T PAY FOR A HEARING TEST?

Hearing tests are done on a sliding fee scale at a limited number of places in New Jersey. You can call Special Child and Adult Health Services for names and phone numbers.

*YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT YOUR BABY'S HEARING ARE VERY IMPORTANT.*

*TO HELP YOU NOTICE YOUR BABY'S DEVELOPING SKILLS, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING GUIDE TO HEARING BEHAVIOR..*

