

BEST PRACTICES FOR ADDRESSING HEARING NEEDS IN SCHOOL

All newborns are screened for hearing problems, but sometimes problems may develop as a child grows older. Proper hearing is important for language skill and social skill development as children grow older. In class, children need to be able to hear so they can participate and stay on track in class. Some schools offer in-school hearing screenings through partner organizations. Children who do not pass a screening may have to visit a hearing specialist or audiologists. School nurses and pediatricians can also help identify if students are having trouble hearing because of ear infections or ear wax, which are both common and treatable.

- If your school provides on-site screenings, **notify parents and receive consent**. Letters should be sent to parents explaining the services provided and health education information on why hearing problems are a health barrier to learning. Instructions for filling out consent forms should also be included, especially if the form asks for insurance information.
 - **Provide incentives** for returning consent. Call parents to thank them for handing in the correct paperwork. You can provide children with a sticker when they return consent forms or enter all families who return a form into a prize raffle.
 - **Remind parents** when the screenings will take place so students are in attendance!
- Work with the school nurse to identify **community partners** that provide hearing resources for children. Some organizations can conduct screenings in schools if your school has a high prevalence of hearing problems.
- Teachers should **communicate with parents** if a child complains of hearing problems or you notice a child is having trouble hearing in class. Encourage a parent to call their child's pediatrician who can conduct a hearing screening and identify what may be causing the hearing problem.
- **Hold parent workshops on health barriers to learning**. Help parents understand the connection between health problems, like hearing deficiencies, and classroom learning. Underline the importance of annual health check-ups and common signs and symptoms that may identify health problems. It is important to detect hearing problems early!