

Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Nurse Home Visiting Referral Overview

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OHA EHDI Program Overview

The Oregon Health Authority (OHA) Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program works to ensure that children who are deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) are identified early to begin developing language and communication skills as early as possible. The OHA EHDI program does this by ensuring all newborns in Oregon receive a hearing screening. For babies who do not pass their hearing screening, EHDI ensures follow up diagnostic audiology appointments, Early Intervention (EI) status, and connects families and caregivers with resources and tools. The program works with hospitals, midwives, audiologists, early interventionists, public health nurses, primary care providers, parent mentors and families, and community members to achieve the national EHDI 1-3-6 goals:

- 1** - Newborn hearing screening by **1** month of age
- 3** - Diagnostic hearing evaluation for children who do not pass their hearing screening by **3** months of age
- 6** - Identified D/HH children are enrolled in EI services by **6** months of age

Public Health Nurse Programs and EHDI

Prior to referring to public health nurse home visiting programs, the OHA EHDI program works to contact families needing follow up through letters, phone calls, text

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messages, and communications with the child's primary care provider (if known) and the birth facility. In 2024, Oregon had around 40,000 births, of which roughly 1,500 children receive follow up communication from the OHA EHDI program to encourage further testing. For children needing initial or additional hearing testing, referrals to public health nursing programs occur only if the OHA EHDI program is unable to contact the family. For all children identified as D/HH (average of 85 children per year from 2022-2024), the OHA EHDI program submits referrals for services to counties with public health nursing programs.

To summarize, referrals sent from the OHA EHDI program to public health nurse home visiting programs fall into three categories:

1. Infants who missed their newborn hearing screening.

- Children that missed their initial newborn hearing screening should be referred to a local screening facility.

2. Infants who referred/did not pass their newborn hearing screening.

- Children that referred/did not pass their initial newborn hearing screening should be referred to a local screening facility to complete a re-screening. If the child does not pass their re-screening or they have been recommended for diagnostic testing due to identified risk factors, they should be referred to an audiologist for a follow up diagnostic test.

3. Infants that are identified as D/HH.

- Children that are identified as D/HH may benefit from nurse home visiting services and should be encouraged to enroll in EI services and offered support coordinating medical and educational services.

As required in [Program Element 42](#), Public Health Nurse Home Visiting Programs must receive notifications (referrals) made by OHA for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention as described in ORS 433.321 and 433.323 and report back to OHA on any follow-up actions.

Follow Up for Children Identified as Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Following reporting of a hearing difference diagnosis by the diagnosing audiologist, the OHA EHDI Program has automated referrals to three free programs:

1. [Hands and Voices Guide By Your Side](#) program – provides parent to parent support for newly identified D/HH of hearing children.
2. [County Early Learning](#) programs – connects families to EI program administered by Oregon Department of Education.
3. Public health nurse home visiting programs – if available and eligible, provides nurse home visiting services.

In addition to those programs, parents and caregivers of children who are identified as D/HH of hearing may be following up with a variety of other providers and programs including:

- Audiologists – help support family on determining next steps related to hearing and developing language and communication skills, including fitting and monitoring hearing devices.
- Ear, Nose, Throat doctors – help support family on determining next steps forward including authorizations for assistive hearing devices and other medical needs.
- Geneticists – help advise family on if the hearing difference is related to other health issues.
- Other medical specialists – some children have complex medical needs and other conditions that require them to coordinate with many providers.
- [Oregon Family to Family Health Information Center](#) - provides free one-to-one support, training, and printed materials to families and caregivers of children with special health needs navigating complex health care systems.

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- [Bridges Oregon](#) – a local Deaf-led organization that offers free services and support to Oregonians who are D/HH of hearing.

What is included in an EHDI nurse referral?

OHA EHDI nurse referrals are sent via email to a nurse home visiting contact for each respective county. Each email will contain a description of the follow up category, two of the closest testing facilities to the child (if applicable), child's name, child's date of birth, child's biological sex, mother's name, address, phone number, preferred language, identified risk factors, and primary care providers (if known).

Important tips when talking to families about hearing status

- Hearing differences are not typically noticeable to parents and caregivers until after developmental delays have already occurred. A hearing screening test can help identify a hearing difference early and make sure families and caregivers are connected to resources and supports that keep their child's development on track.
- A newborn hearing screening is a test done shortly after birth to check a baby's hearing. It's quick, safe, painless, and helps determine whether more testing is needed.
- If a child refers/did not pass their initial newborn hearing screening test, it's important to emphasize the importance of following up with another screening and/or a diagnostic audiology appointment so that a hearing status determination can be made. There is no need to alarm the family but make sure to mention that more testing is needed to determine a child's hearing status without downplaying the results. Encourage additional diagnostic testing with a trained audiologist and refrain from commenting on possible reasons for not passing result.
- The first few weeks and months after learning about a child's hearing difference can be a busy and overwhelming time for parents and caregivers with many

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emotions and questions. Some families may take some time to adjust to the diagnosis and may want to seek additional opinions from additional providers.

- After birth, babies begin learning language right away which helps develop social, cognitive, language, and communication skills. Children who are deaf and hard of hearing may experience delays in these skills due to lack of language access (spoken and/or signed) and can benefit from support offered by EI programs. The goal of EI programs is to support a child's development as early as possible while the baby's brain is growing and developing.
- Research has shown that children who are D/HH who start intervention services by 6 months of age are less likely to experience developmental delays and EI services can help support a family's needs.

Closing an EHDI Nurse Referral

After follow-up with the family, nurse home visiting contacts should email the OHA EHDI email box, Oregon.EHDI@odhsoha.oregon.gov, to provide a status regarding enrollment in home visiting services: enrolled, declined, services not offered (e.g. waitlist or doesn't meet program eligibility requirements), or unable to contact. For children needing another hearing test, please report back on whether or not the family was contacted and share any information about follow up steps and plans to complete additional testing that were discussed with the family Nurse Home Visiting contacts should report back on the referral status within 30 days of receiving the referral. Following final status determination, no additional reporting is needed to the OHA EHDI Program.

Questions about the OHA EHDI Program?

Contact the OHA EHDI Program at Oregon.EHDI@odhsoha.oregon.gov or 888-917-4327.

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