



*Supporting family engagement in early  
intervention:  
Empowering families through strength  
based services*

**Karen Hopkins and Tabitha Belhorn**



*Steps* ALONG  
THE  
*Journey*











Wires...tests....DEAF?



Routines IFSP Cochlear Implants LSL Visual strategies  
Communication Opportunities Deaf Deaf Culture  
appointments choices ABR goals  
Sign Support resources audiologist  
outcomes  
Oral ASL  
therapy  
appointments evaluations  
Schools for the Deaf  
LSLS  
Listening and Spoken Language assessments  
Deaf Culture routines  
Deaf  
OAE  
Auditory strategies Hard of Hearing Cued Language  
Options Sign IEP Visual  
appointments  
Therapy Auditory Verbal Home Visits  
American Sign Language



We encourage you to slow things down....just a bit.....



# Early Interactions

- Attachment
- Bonding
- Eye Contact
- Touch.....



Permission to “just be a parent.....”



**"Alone we can do so little;  
together we can do so much."**

**-Helen Keller**





# **Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

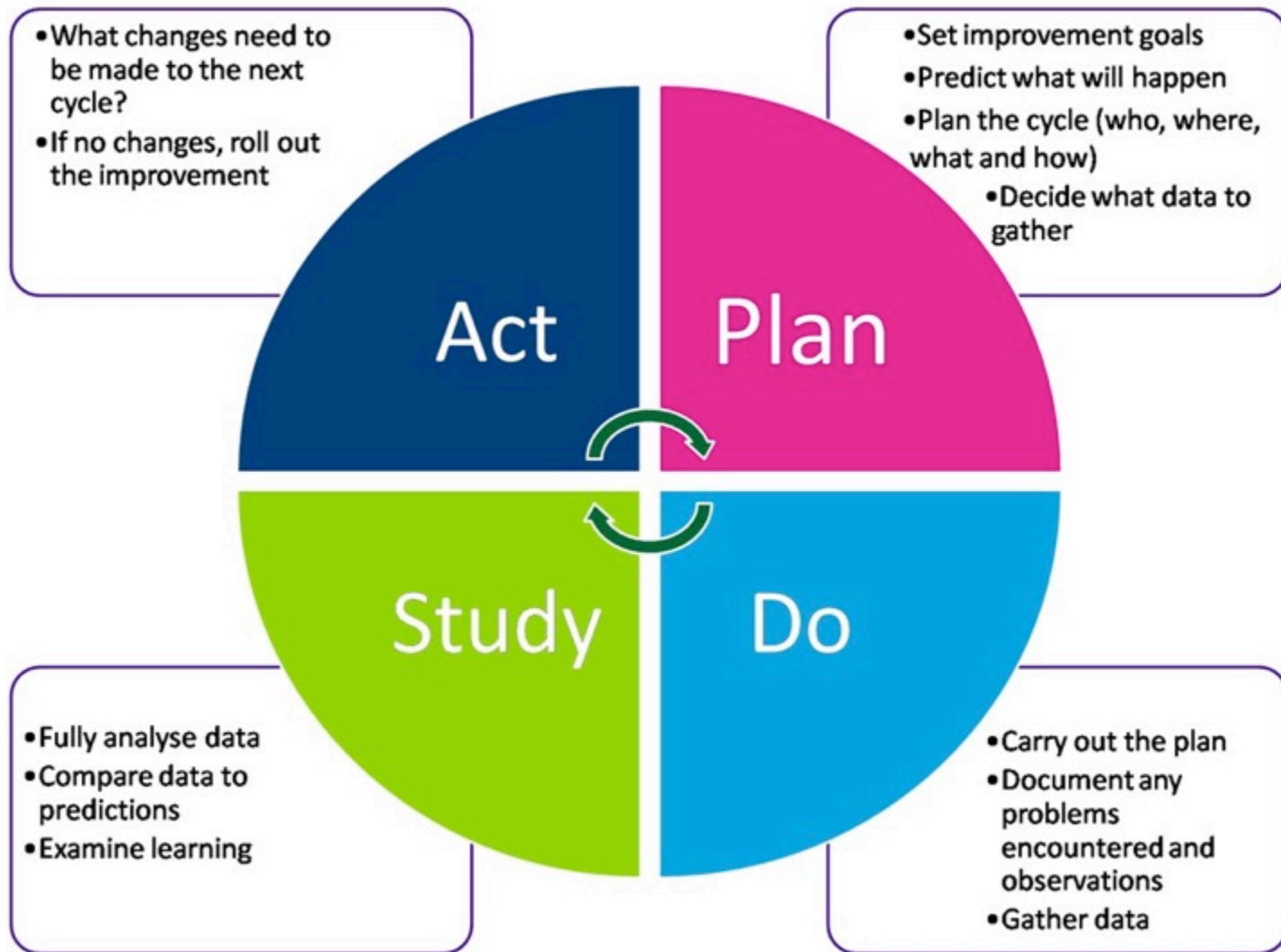
MECDHH is Maine's deaf education agency that provides early intervention through Grade 12 information, support and educational programs for deaf and hard of hearing children and their families.

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# Memorandum of Understanding with Maine's Department of Education







# Purpose

“To develop one family-centered early intervention and communication opportunities exploration process for families who have deaf or hard of hearing children throughout Maine.”



“All families of infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing will have access to a early intervention provider that specializes in working with deaf children.”



# Collaborative Approach to Early Intervention

*“All children who are deaf or hard of hearing have a full team of early interventionists supporting their family”*

- Parent to Parent Support
- Deaf/HH Support
- Teacher of the Deaf
- Infant Mental Health Specialist
- Occupational Therapist
- Physical Therapist
- Service Coordinator
- Social Worker
- Special Educator
- Speech Language Pathologist





# Early Intervention in Maine

Maine utilizes the Routines-Based Early Intervention Model  
(McWilliam, 2010)



# Routines Based Interview

- Fully understand the family environment.
- Conduct assessment that's truly family-centered.
- Develop clear, specific, measurable outcomes that directly address the family's priorities and help children develop skills relevant to everyday life.
- **Provide coordinated, streamlined services. – Primary Service Provider**
- Empower families to continue intervention between visits.
- Support early childhood educators

R.A. McWILLIAM

## Routines-Based Early Intervention

Supporting Young Children  
and Their Families



# Communication Opportunities Exploration Process

After intake, Routines Based Interview, evaluations, and the initial IFSP, families begin their process with an early interventionist (Primary Service Provider) who supports the family through the initial exploration of communication opportunities while honoring the early bonding process of families with their babies.



# 6 Visit Process

## Early Visits 1-3



- Relationship building
- Support early interactions, attachment and bonding between baby and parent/caregiver.
- Discuss foundations of language and early communication strategies.
- Clarify audiological testing



## 6 VISIT Process (Early Visits 1-3)

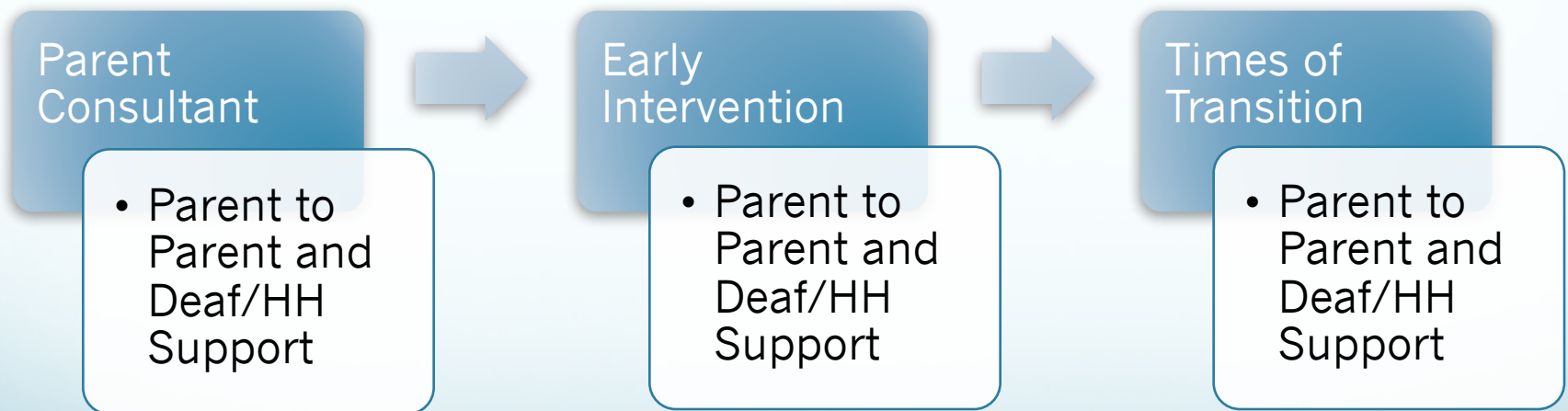


- Provide an unbiased overview of all communication opportunities
- Highlight the variety of available resources
- Provide an overview of hearing assistive technology
- Introduce Maine Hands and Voices, Guide by your Side and Deaf Guide Programs

# Windows of Opportunity for Referrals for Parent and Deaf/HH Guide Support

“All families will have the opportunity to meet deaf and hard of hearing adults”

“All families will have the opportunity to receive parent to parent support”



# Strength Search (a learning tool)

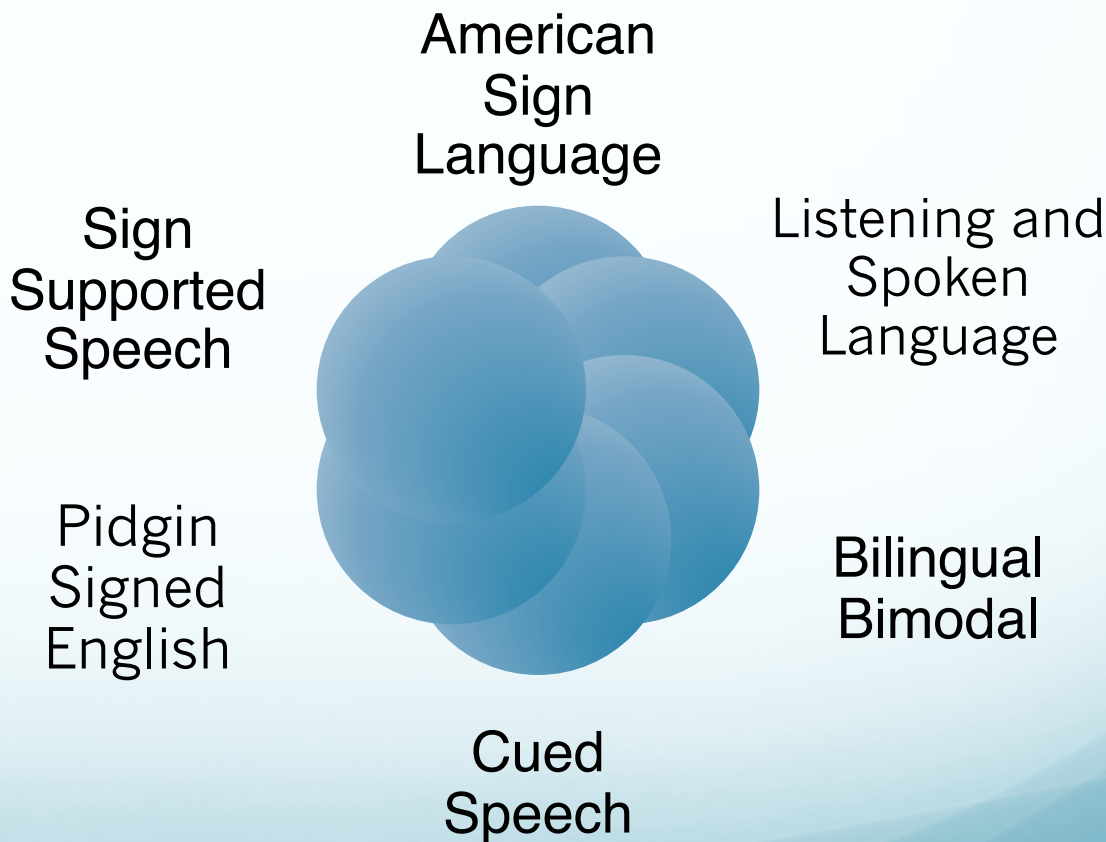
- Tell us about your baby
- *Who* are the members of your family
- *What* are your interests (jobs or hobbies)
- *Where* do you get support (friends, neighbors, church)
- *How* do you like to go about tackling a challenge
- *When* do you prefer that others assist you
- *Why* do you prefer certain formats to learn new info

# 6 VISIT PROCESS – (Next Visits 4-6)

Explain, demonstrate, compare and contrast communication opportunities the family has expressed interest in exploring.

Explain the role of professionals who work with children specific to each communication opportunity.

Utilize Part C coaching opportunities for joint visits with professionals to provide more in depth information about specific opportunities.





# Communication and Language Webs

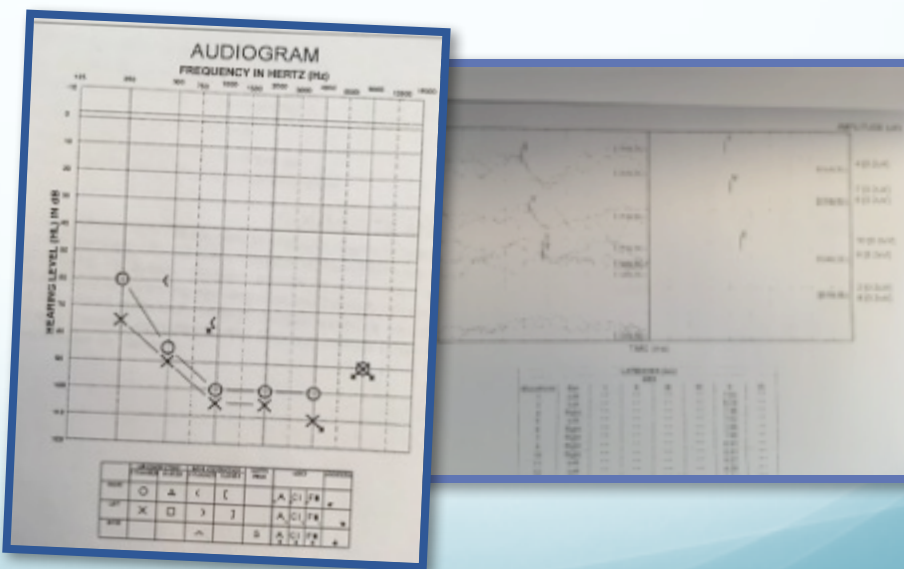


# 6 VISIT PROCESS – (Next Visits 4-6)

Explain child specific hearing assistive technology and equipment management.



Provide child specific resources regarding hearing levels and implications.



Review outcomes and complete a communication plan.

# Checking Back In (a learning tool)

- ✓ What did they tell you
- ✓ What made sense
- ✓ What was confusing
- ✓ What info do you need
- ✓ What will be helpful



Sometimes you just need to go to the beach.....

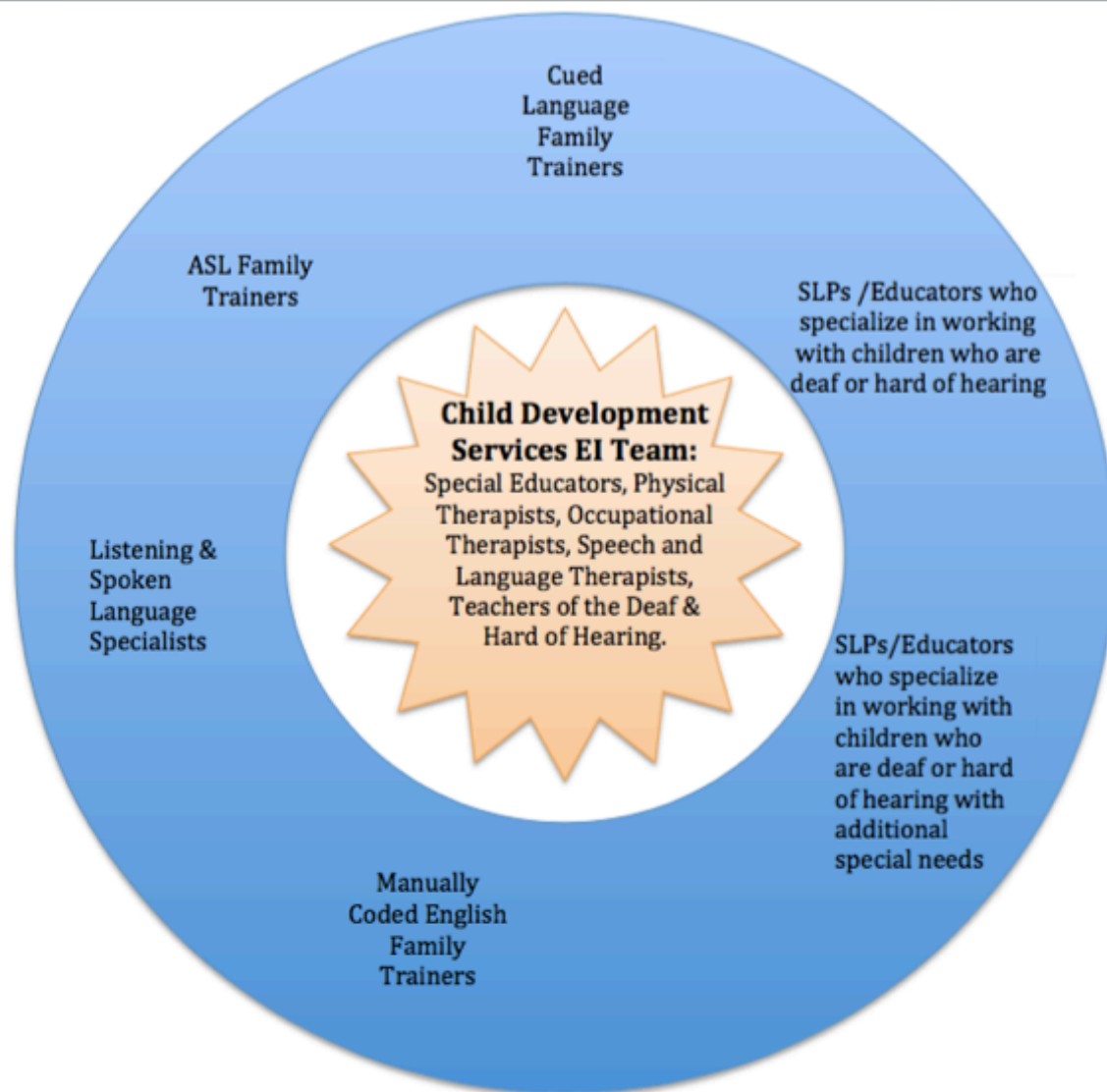




# Joint Visits

As families look deeper into various communication opportunities, we bring in specialists, Deaf adults and other parents to offer their perspective. This provides families the opportunity to journey through different options and explore.





## Community of Practice

For children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing, birth to age 5.

Individualized Approach....each child and family  
are different









# Early Intervention Process

*Six Visit Process* leads to a Communication and Language plan

- Families identify beginning communication approach
- Communication/Language plan written in family's handwriting
- Communication opportunities journey explained
- Meeting parents and Deaf/HH adults

## **Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP) Written**

- ☐ Family outcomes
- ☐ Most appropriate providers
- ☐ Deaf/HH inclusion
- ☐ Parent Support inclusion

# Communication Plan

## Part C Communication Plan

### I. Consider the child's home language and communication.

Step 1. We use the following (check all that apply) as the primary language in our home:

Receptive	Expressive	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	American Sign Language (ASL)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Signed language other than ASL _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spoken English
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Spoken language other than English _____
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other: _____

### II. Consider the child's language and communication opportunities.

Step 2. We would like information, at this time, on the following communication opportunities:

<input type="checkbox"/>	American Sign Language
<input type="checkbox"/>	Auditory Oral
<input type="checkbox"/>	Auditory Verbal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Bilingual Bimodal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cued Speech
<input type="checkbox"/>	Pidgin Signed English (e.g. Manually Coded)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other, please explain: _____

### III. Consider the advantages and limitations of communication opportunities.

Step 3. We have considered the personal advantages and limitations of the communication options we are exploring for our family.



- I. Considering the home language
- I. Considering the child's language and communication opportunities.
- I. Consider the advantages and limitations of communication opportunities.
- I. Consider the personal journey to communication.
- I. Consider statewide resources and supports.
- I. Consider language and communication development.

# Reflecting Together

It is important to allow time for families to explore...reflect...change...question...



# Empathic Responses

- Reflecting back  
~ It sounds as if ...
- Extending, clarifying  
~ Tell me more.
- Questioning open ended  
~ What did you think?
- Summarizing, synthesizing  
~ It appears that ...



# Empathic Responses ~ continued

- Checking perception  
~ You seem to be...
- Acknowledging  
~ I can appreciate that.
- Encouraging expression  
~ How did you feel?

## • **Being quiet**

*Listening and Talking, E. Cole,*

*1992 A.G.Bell*





Remember...its a journey....



# Ongoing Assessments

Ongoing language assessment and progress monitoring provides a framework for reviewing the family communication plan and outcomes. This process should be **parent led and parent inspired**.

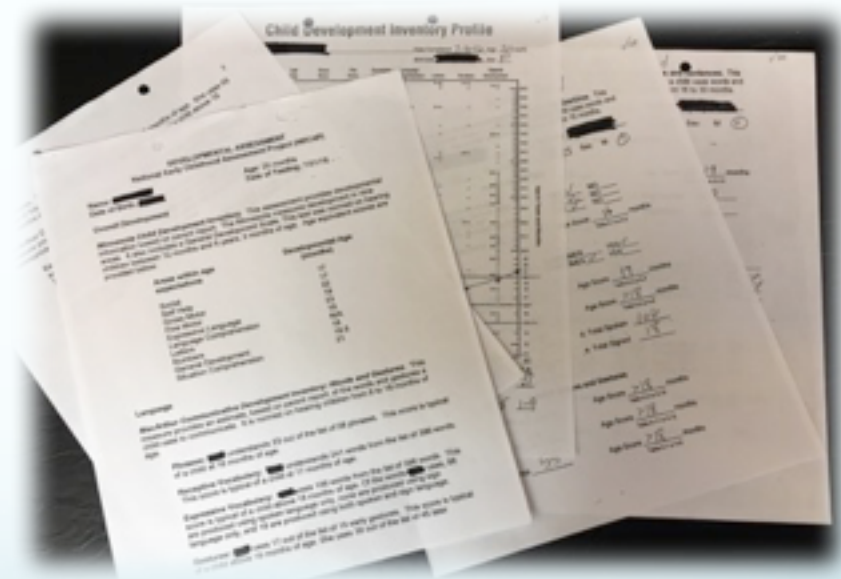
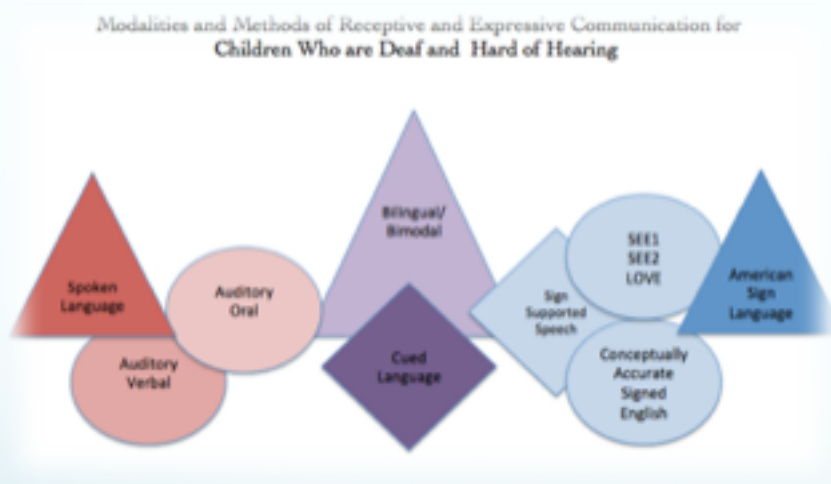


- Measure of Engagement, Independence and Social Relationships
- SKI-HI - Language Development Scale
- MacArthur-Bates Developmental Inventory
- Other ongoing language assessments
  - CASLLS -
  - VCSL – standardized visual communication sign language checklist

# Semi-Annual Reviews

Review Communication Opportunities

Review Assessment Results



Together the team updates family outcomes and communication plan prior to six month review and annual IFSP.

# Recognizing Info & Insight

- How was information exchanged?
- What strengths did you notice?
- What insights were shared?



# Promoting Strengths in Families and Professionals

Listen

~ Don't tell

Think with them

~ Not for them

Give information

~ Don't insist they use it

Develop options

~ Not ultimatums





# Promoting Strengths ~ continued

Look for the positive  
~ Not the negative

Don't say "you're wrong"  
~ Determine why they feel they are right

Congratulate their success  
~ Don't ask for applause

Follow their agenda  
~ Not yours



## A final thought from a parent...



“What we really want, really need as parents, is opportunities to contact other families with deaf children, help in making regular contact with adults who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing, information that is accurate, honest, unbiased and fair, and then the emotional support to make decisions.....”



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