# The Hearing Dad

# TOP 10 THINGS

## YOU CAN DO WHEN YOUR CHILD IS DIAGNOSED AS DEAF

## 1 Take a Breath and Process the Emotions

Learning that your child is deaf can trigger a wave of emotions: shock, grief, confusion, maybe even guilt or fear for the future. These feelings are natural. Give yourself permission to feel them — then give yourself permission to move forward.

This diagnosis doesn't change your child's capacity for joy, love, communication, or success. Deafness is not a limitation; it's a different way of interacting with the world. Many Deaf and hard of hearing individuals live rich, full lives with meaningful relationships, careers, and identities. Take heart: your child's journey is just beginning — and so is yours.

## 2 Learn About Deafness and Hearing Loss

Start gathering reliable information. Deafness isn't a one-size-fits-all experience. Some children are born profoundly deaf; others may have mild to moderate hearing loss, or hearing that fluctuates. Causes range from genetic to environmental, and the implications differ for each child.

Learn about terms like sensorineural vs. conductive hearing loss, unilateral vs. bilateral, and pre-lingual vs. post-lingual deafness. Understanding the nature of your child's hearing profile can help you better advocate for their needs and explore the best support options.

## 3 Connect with Other Families

One of the most powerful steps you can take is to meet others who have walked this path. Other parents of deaf children can offer insight, encouragement, and reassurance that professionals alone cannot provide.

*Look for:*
- Local parent support groups through early intervention programs or children's hospitals
- National organizations like Hands & Voices or AG Bell
- Online communities on Facebook, Reddit, or nonprofit forums

These connections can ease your isolation and remind you that you are not alone. Many of these parents will become your greatest allies and teachers.

## 4

## Explore Communication Options

There are multiple ways deaf children learn to communicate, and no path is inherently better than another — the “best” choice is what fits your child and your family’s values. Be open-minded and patient as you learn about:

- American Sign Language *(ASL)*: A full, rich visual language with its own grammar and culture.
- Spoken Language / Auditory-Verbal Approach: Focuses on developing listening and spoken skills, often using hearing technology.
- Cued Speech, Total Communication, Bilingual-Bicultural *(Bi-Bi)*, or SimCom *(Simultaneous Communication)*: These combine elements of speech, sign, and other supports.

Don’t feel pressured to choose immediately or permanently. Many families evolve their approach over time. The key is language exposure — early, consistent access to a language your child can fully understand.

## 5

## Schedule Comprehensive Evaluations

The diagnosis may start with an audiologist, but that’s only part of the picture. Schedule thorough evaluations to understand your child’s unique needs, including:

- Diagnostic audiology
- Speech-language assessment
- Vision screening *(many deaf children rely more on vision, and dual sensory loss — such as in Usher syndrome — needs to be ruled out)*
- Genetic testing *(if appropriate)*
- Developmental assessments
- ENT or neurological consults *(depending on cause and context)*

This information helps build a roadmap for services and support tailored to your child.

## 6

## Get Started with Early Intervention

The first three years of life are a critical window for language and cognitive development. In the U.S., every state offers free or low-cost early intervention services for children with hearing loss under IDEA *(Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C)*.

*Your child may qualify for:*

- Speech-language therapy
- Deaf mentorship or ASL instruction
- Parent coaching
- Audiology and hearing technology support
- Developmental and educational playgroups

Contact your state’s Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program or your pediatrician for a referral. These services are collaborative — you're not just getting therapy; you're gaining tools to support your child every day.

## 7 Consider Hearing Technology

If your child has access to some hearing, hearing technology may help them connect more easily with spoken language and sound-based environments. Every child's hearing profile is unique, so choosing the right technology should be a personalized process guided by your audiologist and medical team.

*Some common options include:*

- **Hearing Aids** These amplify sound and are often used for children with mild to moderate hearing loss. Today's digital hearing aids are highly customizable and can connect to Bluetooth devices or remote microphones.

- **Cochlear Implants** For children with severe to profound sensorineural hearing loss who receive limited benefit from hearing aids, cochlear implants may provide access to sound through direct electrical stimulation of the auditory nerve. These devices require surgical implantation and are followed by ongoing therapy and mapping sessions.

- **Bone-Anchored Hearing Devices** *(BAHDs)* These devices transmit sound through bone conduction, bypassing the outer and middle ear. They can be useful for children with conductive hearing loss, single-sided deafness, or anatomical differences of the ear.

- **FM/DM or Remote Microphone Systems** Especially helpful in classrooms or busy environments, these systems send a speaker's voice *(like a teacher's)* directly to your child's hearing device, improving clarity and reducing background noise.

It's important to remember that hearing technology is a tool, not a solution by itself. Consistent use, proper fitting, and language exposure — whether spoken, signed, or both — are what make technology truly effective.

## 8 Build a Support Team

You don't have to do this alone. Build a trusted circle of professionals and advocates, including:

- Audiologists
- Speech-language pathologists
- Teachers of the Deaf *(TOD)*
- Early interventionists
- Pediatricians
- Deaf adults and mentors
- Special education advocates

You are the constant in your child's life — but these team members help ensure consistent growth, access, and support across home, school, and community settings.

## 9

## Advocate for Your Child’s Rights

Your child has a legal right to access communication, education, and public spaces.

*Learn about:*

- IFSPs *(Individualized Family Service Plans)* for children under 3
- IEPs *(Individualized Education Programs)* for school-aged children
- 504 Plans for accommodations
- ADA and IDEA protections

You don’t have to be an expert overnight but familiarize yourself with key terms and resources. Attend school meetings prepared. Ask questions. Don’t be afraid to speak up. You are your child’s voice — and your advocacy will set the tone for how others treat and support them.

## 10

## Focus on Your Child, Not Just the Diagnosis

In the flurry of appointments, tests, and paperwork, don’t forget: your child is still your child.

They laugh, explore, cuddle, play, and dream just like any other child. Deafness is a part of their story, but it’s not the whole story. Celebrate their milestones. Share your joy. Let them lead you in unexpected, beautiful directions.

There is no perfect path — only your path. Trust your instincts, ask for help when needed, and take each day one step at a time..

## There is life after diagnosis.

It’s full of wonder, growth, connection, and community. With love, information, and support, you and your child can navigate this journey with confidence. Having raised 2 children with hearing loss, I can help you.

Contact me at bill@thehearingdad.com to schedule a consultation today and get personalized support, understanding, and practical guidance designed to help you reach your goals.