

The “What Else” Checklist

This checklist will help guide you, the Audiologist, in appointments with families. The work you do with families is critical to their success in raising a child who is deaf/hard of hearing (d/hh). In addition to diagnosing hearing loss, this checklist was developed to ensure that families are getting the information and support they need to be effective as parents in the language development and communication access of their children.

This simple checklist can be used by you and your staff to ensure that consideration has been given to:

- Ensuring that your time with a family is utilized most efficiently so their needs are met.
- Supporting the family with the information they need to make informed decisions.
- Supporting the family’s emotional context to the experience.
- Providing additional resources beyond your office that will help the family (community, family-to-family support, etc.).

Remember that silence can be golden. Give the family time to process the details and formulate questions. Waiting for them to talk rather than talking for them is imperative, especially in (potentially) emotional situations. Families report that Audiologists who are sensitive to the holistic experience of raising a child who is d/hh create a more equitable partnership towards success.

The goal of family support is to help parents develop and utilize available intellectual, emotional and material resources that enable them to nurture and support the healthy development of their children.

- Weissbourd, B., *The evolution of the family resource movement. Putting families first: America's family support movement and the challenge of change*, ed. S. Kagan, Weissbourd, B. 1994, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.



Guidelines for Audiologists Providing Informational and Adjustment Counseling to Families of Infants and Young Children With Hearing Loss Birth to 5 Years of Age (<http://www.asha.org/docs/html/GL2008-00289.html>) Used with permission.

PREPARING FOR THE APPOINTMENT

- Verify family members' names and what they prefer to be called.
- Verify the language that will be used during the appointment (i.e. languages other than spoken English). If needed, ensure that appropriate interpreting services have been arranged. Know the policies that govern your practice.
- Inform the family of the purpose of the appointment.
- Ascertain family's priorities for this appointment (consider the family's perspective regarding their child's needs)
- Inform the family of what they will need to bring to their appointment.
- Review information from the previous appointment (if applicable) and follow up on any requests the family has made.
- Suggest the family bring a spouse/friend/team member for support at this meeting, as appropriate.
- Assure time allocated is appropriate in terms of what needs to happen at the visit.
- Obtain written resources for the family on the content areas to be covered (e.g., technology, educational opportunities, parent to parent/peer to peer support, referrals, medical resources, local resources).
- Gather the information and referral sources that you need to make comprehensive, unbiased resources available to the family about language and communication.

DURING THE APPOINTMENT

- Review family questions about last appointment and/or information that was provided.
- Describe the child's hearing loss in a variety of ways to the family (beyond the Audiogram).
- Use layman's terms to discuss today's information. Check with the family to see if they understand the terminology/jargon used today.
- Assist the family in accessing information and referral sources to continue the conversation and make informed decisions about language and communication.
- Ask the family, "Are you getting too much or too little information?" Wait for the answer...
- Ensure the family has sufficient understanding to enable them to describe their child's hearing loss and communication needs to others (e.g., extended family, friends, educators, community members).
- Ask open-ended questions for answers that demonstrate understanding.
- Check in on the emotional state of the family and consider referrals to counseling, as needed.
- Listen to what the family is REALLY asking.
- Explain to the family the types of referrals you will be making. (refer to the "Who Else Checklist")
- Address the family's perspective regarding their child's needs.
- Provide the family with written instructions to guide them in their next steps.
- Provide the information and referral sources that you need to make comprehensive, unbiased resources available to the family about language and communication.
- Provide the family with resources based on today's conversation.

AFTER THE APPOINTMENT

- Note what written information and resources were given to the family today.
- Document what was discussed today.
- Reflect on the following questions:
 - Did I allow the parent to guide what they needed today?
 - Have I considered the family's perspective regarding their child's needs?
 - Have I considered the family's priorities in our discussions?
 - Did I talk about this experience in a 'non-medical' way?
- Think about Family Support during the appointment.
- Provide copies of everything to the family in a timely manner.
- Document your next steps for the family.

THE "WHO ELSE" CHECKLIST

- Support families in connecting with other families who have children who are deaf or hard of hearing and/or parent support organizations.
- Support families in connecting with adults who are deaf or hard of hearing (role models, mentors).
- Explain the early intervention/Part C system to the family and how referrals are made.
- Ensure that the family has been referred to the Part C system.
- Identify other collaborative relationships that could support the family.
- Obtain permission, as appropriate, from the family to make direct referrals to the above resources.