



Improving Early Intervention Practices: Insights from a Parent and a Professional

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Disclosures

- **Financial disclosure:** Kimberly is the owner and founder of Language First. Erica has no relevant financial disclosures.
- **Nonfinancial disclosure:** Kimberly is a member of the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) and the American Board of Child Language and Language Disorders (ABCLLD). Erica has no relevant nonfinancial disclosures.


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Who Are We?


- Kimberly is a speech-language pathologist, a board-certified child language specialist, and the founder of Language First
- Erica is a mother of a Deaf child, an ASL-English interpreter, and an advocate



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Objectives

- By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:
 - State three barriers that parents of DHH children commonly face
 - Explain how professionals' bias and attitude directly affects service provision
 - State three considerations for professionals working with parents of DHH children in early intervention



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Initial Identification

- Newborn hearing screening – “It’s fine, it’s probably just fluid”
- “She’s probably just a late bloomer”
- “It will come, it will come”

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Suggestions for Professionals

- Don’t be dismissive; validate parents’ feelings
- Take newborn hearing screen results seriously
- The **way** that information is presented is just as influential as whether it is presented at all
- The presentation of information, whether in positive or negative semantics, affects people’s decision-making (Kte’pi, 2020)

Anchoring

A bias in which someone relies too heavily on the initial piece of information offered (i.e. anchor) when making a decision.

EXAMPLE: PARENTS OF DEAF CHILDREN WHO GET TOLD BY ONE OF THEIR PROFESSIONALS THAT THEIR CHILD WOULD LEARN IN ORAL LANGUAGE FLUENTLY.

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Counseling


- ABR – “She has SNHL and needs hearing aids”
- Handed a pamphlet
- My eyes welled up and I didn’t know what was happening
- “Will she need the hearing aids forever?”

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Suggestions for Professionals

- Display empathy
- Provide other sources of information if you aren’t sure yourself
- Connect parents with the state school for the Deaf for resources
- [Course on audiologic counseling by a Deaf audiologist](#)



■ scope of practice
■ scope of competence

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Information and Education

- We were given lots of information on oral English and listening devices, but nobody told us about ASL, not one
- No one mentioned language deprivation

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Suggestions for Professionals

- It is our professional obligation to provide parents with **all** the information
- We cannot gatekeep information because we've deemed it "too much" for parents
- Parents cannot make informed decisions with partial information
- [List of online resources for learning ASL](#)
- [Free virtual ASL sessions for parents](#)
- [Handouts on language deprivation](#)

“

The idea that families can simply engage and seek advice to learn a new language for their child is problematic. There is a need to show that how they access sign language is much a how well they learn to communicate with their child and support from child's teacher.

-Michele Madsen-Nielsen, national speech-language pathologist

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The Innovation Bias

The belief that an Innovation should be adopted without need of its alteration. These innovations "change" fail to see its limitations or weaknesses.

EXAMPLE: PROFESSIONALS AND PARENTS ARE OFTEN IN A RUSH TO IMPLEMENT NEW IDEAS WITHOUT FULLY CONSIDERING OR TESTING CONSEQUENCES THAT MAY OCCUR.

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Deaf Influence

- Itinerant teacher who was Deaf
- She was the first person to make me feel seen/heard

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Suggestions for Professionals

- Help your families find Deaf Mentors, Deaf professionals, and programming lead by Deaf people
- [Deaf Mentor programs by state](#)
- [DHH programming by state](#)
- [Where to learn ASL from Deaf adults](#)

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Accepting Parents' Decisions

- When something is working and the child is doing well
- Pushing cochlear implant
- Not talking to Avery

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Suggestions for Professionals

- The DHH child is the client
- "Though stakeholders widely acknowledge the benefits of informed choice...it appears that the way information is provided is not always consistent with these recommendations" (Kecman, 2009, p. 8)
- Hearing devices are simply technological tools
 - "Their use does not guarantee any specific outcome" (Szkowski, 2019, p. 244)
- Professionals appeared to follow their own philosophies despite what the parents wanted (Eleweke & Rodda, 2000)

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Code of Ethics, Principle I, Rule 1.1: Individuals may make a reasonable assessment of prognosis, but they shall not guarantee—directly or by implication—the results of any treatment or procedure (ASHA, 2016).
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Working with Interpreters

- Talking to interpreter instead of Avery
- Getting annoyed by interpreter switch

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Suggestions for Professionals

- Talk directly to the DHH child when using an interpreter
- Having a qualified interpreter is of the utmost importance
 - Parents or other family members cannot interpret
 - The interpreting process doesn't allow for retention of information
- Ensure the interpreter is fully visible (even on video)

Tip: When talking to a deaf individual through an interpreter, direct your attention to the person signing, not the interpreter.
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“Can you tell them...?”
It's always better if you speak directly to a deaf child. If you don't know a sign or ASL, that's OK! Try your best—it means a lot if you're speaking through an interpreter, you should still look at the child and speak to them, even as the interpreter is signing.
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Parent Burden

- I had to find places to learn ASL on my own
- Parents don't know what they don't know
- Where do they get the information if not from professionals?

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Suggestions for Professionals

- Lessen the parent burden by providing them with a broad range of resources and contact information
- [DHH Commissions by state](#)
- [DHH family services by state](#)
- [List of pro-ASL professionals](#)
- [List of online resources for learning ASL](#)
- [Free virtual ASL sessions for parents](#)


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Questions?

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