



The National Association of the Deaf (NAD) welcomes you and your child! We know you are making important decisions about your child's language and communication. We are ready to be with you every step of the way, whether you are still deciding among different language options, or learning sign language with your newborn baby or with an older child. The NAD wants to support you throughout your family's journey, as your child grows into a thriving and happy adult.

Many of you are hearing parents, and we recognize that sign language and Deaf culture may be new to you. We know that your child may be the first deaf or hard of hearing person that you have met! Your role as a parent and/or guardian is so important as you help your child grow, and we are here to support you. We realize that the information you may have received about sign language, spoken language, auditory training, speech, and more may be a lot to navigate. The information may even be confusing or overwhelming. It is okay to have many questions, and we are here to help you!

Research has shown that if deaf and hard of hearing children do not have full access to language, they may experience language deprivation. Full access to language is critical for all children. It is important that every child be exposed to all forms of language to ensure full access. There is no reason to deprive a child of any access. The use of visual language such as American Sign Language does **NOT** interfere with other forms of learning such as auditory input.

Your child can have it all and benefit! It is important to give your child everything to ensure there is no language deprivation.

While some deaf and hard of hearing children may gain full access to language with the use of amplification devices, not all do. Also, amplification devices do not always work the way they are expected to nor do they work in all environments. On the other hand, every child, especially those who are deaf and hard of hearing, can have full access to a visual language, such as American Sign Language. Regardless of whether your child uses amplification devices, such as hearing aids or cochlear implants, your child will benefit from learning and using a visual language. We have [listed resources here](#) to assist you in learning more.

In our "Implications of Language Deprivation for Young Deaf, DeafBlind, DeafDisabled, and Hard of Hearing Children" position paper, we set forth our principles for appropriate language acquisition for deaf children. You can see these principles explained in more detail in our position paper.

As you may have experienced during your own child's journey through the early intervention process, these principles require a great deal of attention before they are achieved. We invite you to join us in working for equitable access to resources for deaf children. You can contribute by asking providers, schools, and other professionals for information about visual communication and sign language during early intervention. You can ask about deaf mentor programs and request that resources in sign language be provided to the same extent to which they are provided for spoken language. There are many other ways in which you can support language access for your child. If you are interested in learning about more ways you can contribute, join our mailing list to keep updated on the NAD's events. We look forward to supporting you in your family's journey with your deaf or hard of hearing child.