

What is Language Deprivation? Does It Apply to my Child/Family?

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EHDI Conference
March 7, 2023



Introduction

Every family has a journey.

Every child has a journey of language learning.

This presentation is intended to honor the journey of full language access with the recognition of the fact that not every family or child has that privilege or the opportunities.

Unnecessary But Necessary Statistics

90%

of deaf children born to at least one hearing parent. (Mitchell & Karchmer, 2004)

85%

of deaf children (with a cochlear implant) use spoken language only. (ASHA, 2012)

55%

of deaf children in PreK-12 use sign language (GRI, 2012)

72%

of parents of deaf children do not know sign language (GRI, 2012)

What is Language Deprivation?

Language deprivation occurs due to a chronic lack of full access to a natural language during the critical period of language acquisition (when there is an elevated neurological sensitivity for language development), approximately the first 5 years of a child's life.

Possible features include language dysfluency, fund of knowledge deficits, and disruptions in thinking, mood, and/or behavior

Hall, W.C., Levin L.L., Anderson, M.L. (Feb 16, 2017). "Language deprivation syndrome: a possible neurodevelopmental disorder with sociocultural origins." *Social psychiatry and psychiatric epidemiology*. Jun; 52(6):761-776.

Not only language, but culture.



Linguaculture refers to the notion that language and culture are intertwined and are both needed for the Deaf child in forming a Deaf identity.

Horejes, T. P. (2012). *Social Constructions of Deafness: Examining Deaf Linguacultures in Education.*

Statistics

States with complete data due to LEAD-K laws:
California & Kansas

- **2019 = 70% of deaf and hard of hearing children ages 0-5 in the entire state did not meet language development milestones**
- **2020 = 79% of deaf and hard of hearing children ages 0-5 in the entire state did not meet language development milestones**

Language Deprivation

Among deaf children... incomplete language acquisition is epidemic. Poor language outcomes, though frequently tolerated are not “normal” for deaf people... Early language deprivation seems to cause a recognizable constellation of social, emotional, intellectual and other consequences.

~ Dr. Sanjay Gulati



What Do We Need to Look Out For?

Symptoms of Language Deprivation Syndrome as identified by Dr. Sanjay Gulati

- May superficially appear to use sign language fluently, but on closer examination, shows characteristic linguistic deficits
- Struggles with the concept of time
- Struggles with cause-and-effect
- Lacks awareness of a conversational partner's need for context, and more generally lacks "theory of mind"
- Struggles with abstract concepts
- Has difficulty learning
- Struggles with emotional regulation
- Struggles in relationships
- has a reduced fund of information, but may be "street-wise"
- "Acts" feelings "out"

And as we know from the Deaf Health Equity Center at Gallaudet University

It happens in all races, all geographical locations, and all socioeconomic statuses.

Language deprivation does not discriminate. It is the system that causes discrimination and inequities.

Let's work together to alleviate it.

Kushalnagar, P., Ryan, C., Paludneviene, R., Spellun, A., & Gulati, S. (2020). "Adverse Childhood Communication Experiences Associated With an Increased Risk of Chronic Diseases in Adults Who Are Deaf, American Journal of Preventive Medicine, Vol. 59, Issue 4, pp. 548-554.

The REAL Cost...

- **Washington state case = 1 million paid to a family struggling with placement for optimal language access.**

['Warehoused:' Deaf student wins \\$1 million settlement from Grandview schools | Local | yakimaherald.com](#)

- **Perez v. Sturgis School Districts- millions in damages are expected if the Supreme Court decides in the Perez family's favor that ADA lawsuits are allowed.**

[The Supreme Court Will Decide a Significant Special Education Case \(edweek.org\)](#)

Resources/Opportunities for State-Level Collaboration

- **Family Language Connector Program at the Heritage Sign Languages Center at Gallaudet University**
- **Deaf Mentor/coaches programs**
- **Schools and programs for the Deaf**
- **Visual Communication and Sign Language Checklist**
- **LEAD-K bills/task forces**
- **Deaf community as a whole- state associations and diverse Deaf community organizations**

Thank you for this dialogue

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