

Identifying Vision Concerns in Infants & Toddlers who are Deaf/Hard of Hearing

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How can you tell if an infant/toddler may have a vision issue?

- Cultural considerations
- Participating in a signed conversation
- When in a lesson
- When in motion
- Physical aspects/ behaviors
- Accidents/Illnesses
- Family history/stories
- Etiologies

Cultural Considerations

Deaf/Hard of Hearing Culture

- Consider ‘typical’ eye gaze of DHH individuals
- Consider cultural expectations of eye contact in visual sign language
- Consider typical distance between communication partners in signed conversations





Participating in a Signed Conversation

- Asks communication partner to repeat often
- Seems to “miss the point” and misses the bouncing back and forth of conversation
- Disengages, doesn't pay attention, drops out of the conversation
- Difficult with turn taking in conversations, monopolizes conversation
- Is labeled as “snobby” or “rude” because the student misses attempts at gaining attention

When in a Lesson

- Holds materials either very close or far away from face
- Holds materials or tilts head at an angle
- Sits very close to the teacher/board or always sits in the back of the room
- Reacts when lights are dimmed for film or smart board viewing



When in Motion

Younger, Emerging
Risers

- Misses milestones related to movement/core strength
- Uses a 5-point crawl technique (head on floor)
- Scoots on bottom
- Rolls from place to place





When in Motion

Older, Ambulatory Children

- Trails the wall, lockers, desk with fingers
- Looks down for information at feet
- Gait/stance is wider than typical
- Shuffles feet
- Acts like a "wallflower", hangs back, scans the environment for visual information before entering



When In Motion

Older, Ambulatory Children

- Bumps into things and people
- Has a high startle response, especially when touched or waved to in front of face
- Appears "clumsy" or uncoordinated
- Has difficulty in physical education/dance/sports classes
- Cannot walk a straight line/balance beam



Physical Aspects/ Behaviors

- Rubs eyes often
- Eyes tear often
- Excessive blinking
- Wears sunglasses often
- Wears hat with brim (even indoors)
- Eccentric viewing (indirect eye contact)
- Reacts when things are "out of place"
- Jumps as if things suddenly appeared
- Doesn't respond to people waving to get attention

Accidents/Illnesses

- High fever/ Meningitis
- Traumatic Brain Injury
- Autoimmune conditions
- Stroke
- Near drowning incident
- Chemotherapy/Ototoxic complications




Family History/Stories





- Parent(s) with identified with a specific syndrome
 - Usher Syndrome, Waardenberg Type II
- Siblings both Deaf/HH, one confirmed with Usher Syndrome or Retinitis Pigmentosa
- Place of origin
 - Deaf from Dominican Republic, Puerto Rico, Caribbean Islands, Louisiana with larger Deaf populations in a concentrated area
- Social History Info
 - Child missed particular milestones
 - Walked late, spoke late



Etiologies with known impact on hearing & vision

- Usher Syndrome
- CHARGE Syndrome
- Congenital Rubella Syndrome
- Others...



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