

Mission:
To protect, promote & improve the health
of all people in Florida through integrated
state, county & community efforts.



Rick Scott
Governor

John H. Armstrong, MD, FACS
State Surgeon General & Secretary

Vision: To be the Healthiest State in the Nation

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FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH FOCUSES ON EARLY INTERVENTION DURING BETTER HEARING AND SPEECH MONTH

TALLAHASSEE—May is Better Speech and Hearing Month and the Florida Department of Health is connecting infants with hearing loss to programs that can help prevent language delays. This year's theme is "Early Intervention Counts," and the department has programs in place to detect possible hearing or speech problems in infants.

"Early detection of hearing loss and speech conditions can help children receive the services they need to help them listen, speak and learn," said State Surgeon General and Secretary of Health Dr. John Armstrong. "Our department's Children's Medical Services Newborn Screening Program, paired with the Early Steps Program, does wonderful work to open opportunity for all of Florida's children."

In 2014, newborn screenings led to the successful diagnosis of hearing loss in 333 Florida babies. Florida's Newborn Screening Program tests all newborns to find those who may not be able to hear. The test is safe, painless and can be done in about 10 minutes, with results available before the baby leaves the hospital. If an infant or toddler is diagnosed with a hearing impairment, he or she may be referred to Early Steps providers.

Early Steps serves families with infants and toddlers, birth to 36 months of age, who have developmental delays or an established condition that is likely to result in a developmental delay. Early Steps has service coordinators who develop a plan based on each child's needs and the concerns of the parents or caretakers.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) promotes Better Speech and Hearing Month and encourages parents to monitor their child's time spent with personal technology. In order for children to learn to communicate properly, parents should ensure technology is not overtaking time for talking, reading and other verbal communication. In addition, ASHA urges parents to preserve their child's hearing by enforcing safe listening practices, such as taking listening breaks and listening at a safe volume.

To learn more about Children's Medical Services Newborn Screening program, visit www.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/childrens-health/newborn-screening/nbs-hear.html. For more information about the Early Steps Program, visit www.floridahealth.gov/AlternateSites/CMS-Kids/families/early_steps/early_steps.html.

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