



Arkansas Department of Health

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Governor Sarah Huckabee Sanders
Renee Mallory, RN, BSN, Interim Secretary of Health
Jennifer Dillaha, MD, Director

Dear Dr _____

The Infant Hearing Program at the Arkansas Department of Health continues to monitor the progress of timely Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) activities statewide. Birthing hospitals are doing a great job screening 98% of Arkansas babies for hearing deficits at birth. Unfortunately, there is still a great deal of room for improvement in meeting the recommended guideline of having timely diagnostic audiology evaluations by three months. Currently, only about 7% of babies who screened positive meet the standard of being evaluated by three months of age. This leads to delays in getting all deaf and hard of hearing (D/HH) babies enrolled in early intervention services before six months of age, adversely impacting their development.

We need your help to meet Joint Committee on Infant Hearing guidelines! A copy of the Arkansas Department of Health's *Primary Care Physicians' Guide for Infant Hearing Screenings* is enclosed as a resource to assist in navigating the EHDI process in accordance with current guidelines.

A failed hearing screen should be viewed as a potential **"Developmental Emergency"** until normal hearing is documented, or an audiological diagnosis is made. **Most importantly, repeat screening should *only* be performed in babies less than one month of age, regardless of the physical exam.** Please refer all infants who fail the screen for a Pediatric Audiological Evaluation if they are older than one month of age as well as **any** infant with two abnormal screens for diagnostic evaluation without repeating further screening test. It is vital for parents to understand the importance of completing this evaluation before 3 months of age.

After a diagnosis of D/HH is made, these babies need re-evaluation by a pediatric audiologist every 6 months and enhanced developmental screening by the primary care physician. We hope timely evaluation will increase the percentage of D/HH babies receiving early intervention by six months of age, and ultimately improve developmental outcomes for children in Arkansas. For further information visit: <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/PEHDIC/Pages/Early-Hearing-Detection-and-Intervention.aspx>.

If you would like our ADH team to visit your practice to do a presentation/training for you and/or your staff, please let us know. Our team can provide such training by real time video as well. I am available to address any questions by email.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Steve Schexnayder", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Steve Schexnayder, MD
Medical Director for Child and Adolescent Health
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