



THE GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FACT SHEET

INFANT & CHILD HEALTH UNIVERSAL NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING & INTERVENTION

What is the purpose of the program?

- To ensure that all Georgia newborns are screened for hearing loss at birth.
- To provide parents and other infant caregivers with specific information about the importance of hospital hearing screening for all Georgia newborns.

What does the program do?

Along with the Newborn Metabolic Screening Program and Children 1st, Universal Newborn Hearing Screening and Intervention (UNHSI) program maintains and supports a comprehensive, coordinated, statewide screening and referral system. UNHSI includes screening for hearing loss in the birthing hospital; referral of those who don't pass to diagnostic audiological evaluation, and linkage to appropriate intervention for those babies diagnosed with hearing loss. Technical assistance and training about implementing UNHSI is provided to hospitals, primary care physicians, audiologists, early interventionists, and public health staff. The program is monitored for continuous quality improvement.

How many people are helped by the program?

Approximately 400 to 500 newborns a year are expected to be identified with sensorineural hearing loss and linked to intervention, including amplification. During FY 2000, less than 50% of newborns were screened for hearing loss. During FY 2009, 99% of newborns were screened for hearing loss – over 136,000 babies.

Why is the program important?

The most crucial period for language development is the first year of life. Without newborn screening, hearing loss is typically not identified until two years of age. Universal screening for all newborns prior to discharge from the hospital or birthing center is essential for the earliest possible identification of hearing loss and, consequently, for language, communication, and educational potential to be maximized.

Who is eligible?

All Georgia newborns.

Where are services located?

Statewide, in local hospitals.

Outcome measures:

- At least 95% of all Georgia newborns will be screened for hearing loss prior to discharge from birthing hospitals.
- Infants not passing the initial and a repeat screening receive appropriate diagnostic audiological evaluation before three months of age.
- Infants with confirmed hearing loss are referred to appropriate intervention (i.e., Georgia PINES, Babies Can't Wait, Children's Medical Services) by six months of age.

Legislative authority: O.C.G.A. 31-1-3.2

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