



San Francisco Department of Public Health Office of Childhood Hearing

The Office of Childhood Hearing (OCH) will primarily serve children of low-income families. There are three main goals of OCH:

1. Assess the necessity of children from low-income (Medi-Cal eligible) families for further Medi-Cal services (e.g. audiology testing, ENT exams, pediatric primary care visits).
2. Improve community and clinical-based hearing screening practices
3. Hearing loss prevention and education.

The two community based hearing screening programs under the OCH: Early Childhood Education Audiometric Screening (ECEAS) and School-based Audiometric Screening (SAS).

The families who have low-income have limited access to primary healthcare. The ECEAS and SAS programs help identify these children with hearing loss. Clinics who serve low-income families are highly impacted. This can overwhelm their staff causing a decrease in performance. OCH will be a resource for clinical staff members in a manner of quality improvement. To help with this issue OCH will send out information on proper hearing screenings and any new information. OCH will also assist with a course on, "Play Audiometry", open to Child Health and Disability Prevention program (CHDP) providers and Child Healthcare Project (CHP) staff.

It is well known that hearing is vital to speech-language development, communication and learning. Children with hearing difficulties due to hearing loss or chronic ear infections continue to be under identified and underserved population. The earlier hearing loss occurs in a child's life, the more serious the impact on the child's development. The earlier the problem is identified and intervention started, the chances of that child falling behind developmentally are slim. The four major ways hearing loss can affect children are:

1. It causes delay in the development of receptive and expressive communication skills.
2. The language deficit causes learning problems that result in reduced academic achievement
3. Communication difficulties often lead to social isolation and poor self-concept
4. It may have an impact on career choices.



Programs within the Office of Childhood Hearing:

1. *Early Childhood Education Audiometric Screening Program (ECEAS)*

- The populations targeted for this program are children who are from low income households, between the ages 3 years-old – 5 years old.
- The SFDP Certified Audiometrist will make an annual visit to approximately 40 of the low-income childhood education sites between the months of September and May, to perform a hearing screening.
- Low-income families are a venerable population, who can benefit from this program. They have less access to primary physicians as the higher income families.
- If a child is given a referral the Audiometrist will collaborate with the school site and parent to get a follow up appointment with a physician.

2. *School-based Audiometric Screening Program (SAS)*

- The populations targeted for this program are children in grade levels kindergarten or 1, 2, 5, 8, and 10th.
- This program is to help private schools adhere to the State's guidelines of audiometric screening, under the California Code of Regulations (CCR, Title 17, Section 2951).
- School-based audiometric screening is recommended because some children do not receive adequate screenings through their primary medical care.
- Early detection and intervention for hearing and speech services preserve language development
- The SFDPH Certified Audiometrist will make an annual visit to the schools within the Arch Diocese of San Francisco located in the city of San Francisco, for a low nominal fee between the months of September and April.
- If a child is given a referral the Audiometrist will collaborate with the school and or parent to get a follow up appointment with a physician.

3. *Primary Care & Quality Improvement in Hearing Screenings*

- Provide an annual refresher course of "Play Audiometry: for MCAH staff members, First Five staff members and community.
- Collaborates with Primary Care, Head Start and SFUSD on distributing updated audiometric screening procedures and protocols, parent education of speech and language development
- Collaborates with University of California, San Francisco and University of the Pacific on program planning by reviewing yearly data on children who are given a referral that do or do not complete a follow up appointment with an Audiologist, ENT or Primary care Physician.