

# NEBRASKA

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DEPT. OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Jim Pillen, Governor

December 31, 2023

Mr. Brandon Metzler  
Clerk of the Legislature  
State Capitol Room 2028  
Lincoln, NE 68509

Subject: Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Report

Dear Mr. Metzler:

In accordance with Nebraska Revised Statute. § 71-4741(1), the Division of Public Health in the Department of Health and Human Services submits the 2022 Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Report. This report provides the number of birthing facilities administering voluntary hearing screening tests during birth admission; newborns screened as compared to the total number of newborns born in such facilities; newborns who passed a hearing screening test during birth admission if administered; newborns who did not pass a hearing screening test during birth admission if administered; and newborns recommended for follow-up care in 2022.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Charity Menefee".

Charity Menefee  
Director, Division of Public Health

Attachment

# Division of Public Health

## Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Report

**December 2023**

Neb. Rev. Stat. § 71-4741

# Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention

The Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program develops, promotes, and supports systems to ensure all newborns in Nebraska receive hearing screenings, family-centered evaluations, and early intervention as appropriate. Approximately one to three in 1,000 babies are born with permanent hearing loss, making hearing loss one of the most common birth defects in America. Early detection and intervention provide the opportunity to engage in early intervention to reduce delays in language acquisition, academic achievement, and social and emotional development.

## Nebraska Infant Hearing Act

The Infant Hearing Act became a state law in Nebraska in 2000 and required the hearing screening of newborns in birthing facilities in Nebraska as a standard of care. Also in 2000, the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services started the Nebraska Newborn Hearing Screening Program. Today the program is known as the Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program and is funded through federal grants. This program strives to fulfill the following four main purposes of the Infant Hearing Act (Neb. Rev. Stat. §71-4735):

- To provide early detection of hearing loss in newborns at the birthing facility, or as soon after birth as possible for those children born outside of a birthing facility.
- To enable these children, their families, and other caregivers to obtain needed multidisciplinary evaluation, treatment, and intervention services at the earliest opportunity.
- To prevent or mitigate the developmental delays and academic failures associated with late detection of hearing loss.
- To provide the state with the information necessary to effectively plan, establish, and evaluate a comprehensive system for the identification of newborns and infants who have hearing loss.

The act also requires birthing facilities to educate parents about newborn hearing screening and any necessary follow-up care. The education includes information about the hearing screening test, the likelihood of the newborn having a hearing loss, follow-up procedures, and community resources, including referral for early intervention and a description of the normal auditory, speech, and language developmental process in children. In addition, the act requires that regulations be promulgated to mandate newborn hearing screening if less than 95% of newborns in the state receive a hearing screening.

# Birthing Facility Screening Programs

Since 2003, 100% of the birthing facilities in Nebraska have been conducting hearing screenings, consistent with the Neb. Rev. Stat. §71-4742 requirement that a hearing screening test be included as part of the standard of care for newborns. In 2021, there were 51 birthing facilities conducting hearing screenings.

Recommending a hearing screening has been operationally defined as educating parents about newborn hearing screening, hearing loss, and normal communication development as required by Neb. Rev. Stat. §71-4740. The Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program provides free print and video educational materials to hospitals to help fulfill this requirement. Print materials are available in 14 languages.

Birthing facilities reported educating over 99% of parents about newborn hearing screening, hearing loss, and normal speech and language development in 2022. The statute also requires the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services to educate parents of newborns not born in a birthing facility about the importance of newborn hearing screening and to provide information to assist them in having the screening performed within one month after the child's birth. This is accomplished through letters, phone calls, and printed materials to parents.

## Parent Education

When an infant is identified as deaf or hard of hearing, parent(s) receive the Parent Resource Guide from the audiologist, and a notification letter is sent to the primary health care provider. Hands & Voices/Guide by Your Side Parent Guides also discuss the Parent Resource Guide with families to provide support and stress the importance of starting early intervention as soon as possible. The Parent Resource Guide was developed by Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention I with the collaboration of many partners and is available in print or online at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/EHDI-PRG>.

## Financing

The NE-EHDI program is fully funded by federal grants from the Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Maternal and Child Health Title V Block Grant. The Health Resources and Services Administration/Maternal and Child Health Bureau grant funds the basic operations of the Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program. The CDC cooperative agreement primarily funds the development, implementation, and maintenance of the integrated electronic data reporting and tracking system. The Maternal and Child Health Title V Block Grant supplements funding for a small amount of the necessary operations costs for the Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program.

# Hearing Screening Results

In 2022, the passage rate for infants that received an inpatient hearing screening in Nebraska was 24,110 (98.1%). An outpatient hearing screening or audiology evaluation is recommended for infants who do not pass the inpatient screening or who do not receive the inpatient screening.

|   |        |
|---|--------|
| Passed the screening or diagnostic testing  | 24,110 |
| Expired inpatient or outpatient   | 122    |
| Pending final screening or diagnostic testing   | 101    |
| Diagnosed deaf or hard of hearing   | 37     |
| Parents refused screening and/or diagnostic testing                                       | 32     |
| Unresponsive (Parents did not complete protocol after communication with NE-EHDI program) | 96     |
| Lost (no response to NE-EHDI letters and phone calls)                                     | 12     |
| Moved out of Nebraska   | 46     |
| Late onset deaf or hard of hearing (passed initial screening)                             | 2      |
| Total Births  | 24,471 |

## Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Projects

### Hands & Voices Guide by Your Side

Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention collaborates with Nebraska Hands and Voices/Guide by Your Side by providing funds through a subaward to assist with family support to families with children that have been identified as Deaf or Hard of Hearing. The Hands and Voices Coordinator also assists with Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention follow-up and educates families about the hearing screening process. This allows families to relate with a parent who has also experienced a child having varying degrees of hearing. There were 15 trained Parent Guides available to respond to the needs of families in Nebraska through this program, and they are actively serving 189 families.

### HearU

The Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Program continued to provide funds for the administration of HearU Nebraska and to help purchase loaner hearing aids in 2022. In 2022 there were 27 hearing aids provided and fitted for 17 children (age range of one-month to 18-years) with “free” hearing aids provided by HearU Nebraska. Since 2008, HearU has provided 920 hearing aids were fitted to 548 children.

## Parent Scholarships to the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention National Conference

Nebraska Early Hearing Detection & Intervention provided scholarships to two families who have children identified as Deaf or Hard of Hearing to virtually attend the Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Annual National Meeting per our HRSA funding requirement. These parents could share their experiences with other Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention stakeholders at the Advisory Committee meeting and the Nebraska Stakeholder meeting, which was held after the virtual Nebraska Early Hearing Detection and Intervention conference.