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Receptive Language

What are some strategies for building receptive language skills for a child who is deaf/hard of hearing (d/hh)?

- Receptive language is the input of language and what a child understands when they are hearing, reading, or visually seeing.
- **Positioning:** Get face-to-face, so your child can see gestures and facial expressions. This will enable them to learn and associate visual cues with language and meaning. Ideally, keep the child within 3 to 9 feet of the speaker so they don't miss any communication.
- **Reduce background noise:** Shut off the TV and other noise-making devices, and if possible move to a quieter area. Paying attention to background noise will allow you to make other adjustments to improve communication (such as positioning or acoustic highlighting).
- **Acoustic Highlighting:** Added emphasis on an identified target (a sound or word that your child has missed or said incorrectly). A target can be important sounds, words, parts of phrases, or grammar. Example: say "Cat" with emphasis on the T.
- **Wait Time:** Initially, the wait time may feel unnaturally long. Give a longer pause while waiting for your child to respond. Hold an expectant facial expression to give your child the time to process the information.
- **Bombardment:** Exaggerated, repeated, simplified communication to teach the meaning of a specific word. Especially useful in play, communicate the new word, a familiar word, then new word again. Example: When stacking blocks, communicate "up, block, up," repeat "up" every time you add another block. Repeat for several minutes so the child has the opportunity to learn the meaning of the new word.
- **Facial Expressions and Body Language:** Making eye contact helps people focus on conversation with body language and facial expressions, which help convey feelings and comprehension.
- **Parallel Talk:** Use simple language to narrate what your child is doing. Describing what they are touching, seeing, feeling, smelling, and hearing increases exposure to language.
- **Sound Isolation:** Teach your child to say a sound of a word on its own, before teaching the whole word. Babies and toddlers do this when learning to speak. They typically will learn the vowel sound first, then the first sound of the word, then the last. Example: When learning the word "cat" they will say "aaa" first, then "caa," finally they advance to the whole word "cat."