

(Approved by the Board of Directors of the Educational Audiology Association June 2012)

Counseling¹

As professionals providing hearing health care to children and their families, school-based audiologists routinely provide counseling that is family centered. This may be information counseling and/or personal adjustment counseling. Referrals to other professionals in the local community are made when more involved counseling is indicated.

The goal of family centered counseling is to provide information and support to families of infants, toddlers and children with hearing loss so that they can make informed decisions regarding their hearing health care service options. These services may include (re)habilitation programs, support groups and products (e.g., hearing aids, hearing assistance technology) as well as potential educational services (e.g., speech therapy, special education services), and accommodations to participate in learning activities (e.g., priority seating, classroom acoustics modifications). As children mature, counseling efforts center more on the child with hearing loss and less on the family.

Information counseling informs individuals with hearing loss and their families of:

- diagnostic hearing tests results,
- treatment plans,
- prognosis, and
- services and supports that are available.

Often, much of this information is delivered at the time of diagnosis, an emotional time for most families. Therefore, information should continue to be discussed over a number of sessions and reinforced with written materials, media and conversations with other parents or individuals impacted by hearing loss. Over time this information assists families when making decisions about the types of services and supports they need, identifying what is available in their local communities and beyond, and determining how services are obtained.

Personal adjustment counseling is necessary from time to time in order for individuals with hearing loss to achieve independence and to define and solve hearing loss related difficulties themselves. The school-based audiologist can facilitate and support ongoing personal adjustment counseling through their multiple visits with students (and families) throughout the school year.

Occasionally a child, or family, is unable to make the appropriate, informed decisions necessary for lifestyle adjustments that facilitate success for individuals with hearing loss. Issues such as an inability to decide on a communication mode (sign, listening and spoken language or a combination), unrealistically high or low expectations, or whether hearing aids will be used, will require involvement with the early intervention or educational team. Other problems such as emotional withdrawal or behavior problems may signal the need for a referral to a mental health professional for more in-depth assessment and counseling. Knowledge of the availability of local counseling services is crucial.

¹ This document is part of the School-Based Audiology Advocacy Series. Please see additional statements on School-based Audiology Services, Assessment, Auditory (Re)habilitation, Classroom Acoustics, Classroom Audio Distribution Systems, Educational Audiology Services Under IDEA: Pertinent Regulations, Educational Audiology Services Under 504, Educational and Clinical Audiology Partnership, Hearing Assistance Technology, Hearing Screening, Noise and Hearing Loss Prevention, Response To Intervention, Role in EHDI and On-Going Hearing Loss Surveillance in Young Children, and References and Resource Materials.