

Utah Schools for the Deaf
Parent Infant Program Orientation Process

1. What is orientation?

Orientation is the period of time from referral until the family begins language-specific services. This time period is designed to introduce the family to early intervention, to hearing loss, to PIP services, and most specifically to the language and communication decisions that must be made for each child. Orientation services are provided through an Individual Family Service Plan (IFSP), and must begin within 45 days of the referral to PIP. Services may include:

1. Introduction to Early Intervention services and programs
2. Explanation of the child's hearing
3. Description of the process of language development
4. General description of language and communication modes
5. Overview of services available from PIP
6. Experiences designed to empower families with knowledge
7. Detailed description of language-specific services and the expectations within each program.

2. Why is orientation needed?

Each child and family is different. No one method is successful for every individual who is deaf or hard of hearing. Families must have a wealth of information in order to determine the best beginning for their child. Families must understand all language and communication options so they are able to respond quickly to the needs of their child once language-specific services have begun. Families need to understand their role in helping their child acquire language.

In addition to these child-specific needs, there is a strong need for USDB to provide a consistent and transparent process for language choice. Families have complained in the past of not receiving enough information about one language method or another, and then feel they were misled into making a premature or ill-fitting decision for their child. USDB is committed to providing quality services for all children who are deaf or hard of hearing throughout the state. In order to meet this commitment, we must demonstrate that the process USDB uses to share information with families about language development is fair.

3. How was this process established?

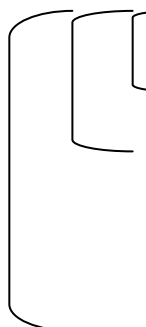
A committee including Early Intervention PIP staff, parents, and adults who are deaf (oral and ASL), and the PIP Program Director Day Mullings met several times throughout the summer to develop this process.

4. How will orientation services be provided?

Orientation services will be provided in a comfortable environment such as the family home or the PIP Demonstration Center. Families will have access to a variety of resources as they move through the steps of orientation. Families will have multiple experiences to help them understand the variety of services that are available from USDB or from their local school district throughout the child's school career.

5. What experiences will families have during orientation?

Each family enters the orientation process with a different set of personal experiences. Some families have deaf children born to deaf parents and know exactly what language and school program they plan for their child. Other families have no personal experience with hearing loss and are unaware of all the potential that their child has. To meet the needs of a variety of families, the Orientation Committee has established three levels of service:

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1. Family Interview
 2. Sections of video describing ASL and Spoken Language services
 3. Observation of preschool classes (neighborhood, ASL/English & LSL)
 4. Interview with adults who are deaf or hard of hearing (ASL/English & LSL)
 5. Demonstration Center visits
 6. Attend a Toddler Group, Playgroup or Parent Support Group
 7. Observe school age classes K-5 (neighborhood, ASL/English & LSL)
 8. Attend social events in the Deaf and Hearing communities (ASL/English & LSL)
 9. Interview parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing (ASL/English & LSL)

Additional experiences may be available for families during the orientation process, including:

1. Attend conferences for parents
2. Observe a therapy session (ASL/English & LSL)
3. Observe a Deaf Mentor session
4. Parent classes
5. Language-specific summer programs
6. Deaf camp
7. Hearing aid and/or cochlear implant consultation (USDB or corporation representative)
8. Inform parents about supportive organizations: ASDC, AG Bell, Hands and Voices, Cochlear Celebration, Deaf Expos, NAD, UAD, etc.

6. Who will provide orientation services?

USDB will send two early intervention specialists into each home throughout the entire orientation process. One of these people will represent ASL/English and one will represent Listening and Spoken Language. Other communication strategies (cued language, contact variety signing, alternative & augmentative communication systems) will be addressed in the context of these two language-based programs. These two people will work together to provide orientation throughout the state. Both will be present for every visit.

We are in the process of identifying staff members who we as an administration feel are best suited to fill these roles. At the present time, we prefer that both individuals be deaf or hard of hearing. We feel this will provide families with an experience that best reflects the great success they can expect from their child.

7. How long should the orientation process take?

The first three years of a child's life are critical for development. At one year of life a child has already developed a sense of the world, which includes experiencing the world through language. Every moment is precious, and time spent in indecision or without language development can have long-lasting impacts. The time frame for the process is dependent on the family's needs, the time they require to gather and understand all the information provided, and the time they need to contemplate on the orientation experiences. The *approximate* time frame for the orientation process is as follows:

1. Decided Families: 2 – 4 visits
2. Inquisitive Families: 4 – 6 visits
3. Undecided Families: 6 – 12+ visits

When a family makes a decision about the language they will begin using with their child, they are transferred from orientation into language-specific services. At this time, ongoing assessment will begin so that families receive frequent feedback about their child's language development. At any point in time, the family may re-evaluate their language decision and make a change in program. A committee has been put together to design the assessment process, and information will be shared as plans are finalized.