

The Impact of Deafness

- ❖ Deafness is an invisible disability that impacts language and speech development as well as social/emotional development.
- ❖ Children with hearing learn language incidentally, primarily by listening.
- ❖ By age 5, most of the syntactical structures and phonemes are in place, though errors are common, in children with hearing.
- ❖ Children who are born deaf, without early intervention, would enter kindergarten with fewer than 50 concepts and virtually no language or communication systems.
- ❖ Children with hearing develop social skills by listening. Socially appropriate behavior, language, and emotions are often communicated with the use of intonation and vocal inflection. Our 'tone of voice' tells others if we are angry, sad, excited, or doubtful.
- ❖ Children who are deaf do not hear 'tone of voice' and have no idea what sarcasm is or what idioms mean. They take language communicated to them in a literal way. Every word, phrase, and idiom that we speak, in every possible syntactical configuration or phrase, must be taught to them.
- ❖ Children who are deaf must be taught everything by rote. Nothing can be left to incidental learning.
- ❖ Statistics gathered by the Gallaudet Research Institute from a national survey completed annually for the past 150 years indicate that it takes children who are deaf approximately 3½ to 4 years to learn what a hearing child learns in one year.
- ❖ This extended time to learn is not in any way tied to intellectual ability, but is solely the function of the amount of time it takes to teach each morsel of information. Hearing children learn the same information in a third to a fourth of the time simply by listening.