



Dear Family,

Congratulations on becoming a parent! Welcoming a child into your family is one of the most exciting and intense experiences a family can have, one full of hopes and dreams and sometimes challenges, too. Many new experiences await you and your child, family, and friends.

By now, you know that your child has a hearing difference. (Some people may use the term hearing loss.) You may have lots of questions and many different feelings. Please know that you are not alone. There are people who can support you on this journey, including family members and friends, other families of children who have hearing differences, deaf or hard of hearing adults, members of faith communities, and health and education professionals across Minnesota.

The amazing little brains of babies and young children are learning every day from every experience and every person around them, especially from family members and caregivers. For babies and young children who have hearing differences, the first years of life are an especially critical time for their development of language and communication skills, social interaction with others, and readiness skills that form the foundation for later learning in school. It is never too early for your baby to start learning!

Help Me Grow Minnesota provides information and resources for Minnesota families to understand developmental milestones and learn how to get help for their child if there are concerns. **Help Me Grow** was developed through an interagency initiative of Minnesota's Department of Education, Department of Health, and Department of Human Services. **Help Me Grow** partners with all local school districts in Minnesota. The local school districts also partner with local service providers who help support families. You can find more information about **Help Me Grow Minnesota** at <https://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/index.htm> webpage.

Sometimes babies and young children need extra help to grow and learn. As your child's first and most important caregiver and teacher, you may want to receive additional information and support for yourself and your family as you help your child. In addition to providing families with information about child development, **Help Me Grow** serves as a referral connection to Minnesota's early intervention services for families of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with special needs.

These services are called **Infant and Toddler Intervention Services** (for children from birth through 2 years of age) and **Preschool Special Education Services** (for children ages 3 to 5 years). These services are provided free of charge to all eligible children and families through local public school districts across Minnesota, regardless of family income or immigration status.

If you have any concerns about your child's growth and development, **Help Me Grow** can help your family take the lead in seeking additional supports or referring your child for a comprehensive, confidential, developmental screening or evaluation at no cost to you. You can find more information about getting help for your child at the online resource **Help Me Grow—Get Help for**

Your Child at <https://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/GetHelpChild/index.html> webpage. You can also call **1-866- 693-GROW (4769)** to ask for assistance. Your child's clinical audiologist and other health care providers can also help you with referrals for additional information and supports for children with hearing differences and their families. Health care providers, as well as other professionals who serve young children and families, are required by law to refer all young children who have developmental concerns for possible early intervention services. Typically, your child's clinical audiologist will refer your child for possible early intervention services through **Help Me Grow Minnesota**. **Help Me Grow** will then send the referral to a

representative of your local school district's **Infant and Toddler Intervention Services** or **Preschool Special Education Services** who will contact you directly about next steps.

Compassionate professionals from your school district's **Infant and Toddler Intervention Services** and **Preschool Special Education Services** are committed to providing families of young children who have special needs with the unique information, resources, services, and supports each family may need to help their child with special needs grow and learn. Soon after receiving the referral, an early intervention or preschool special education staff member from your school district will contact you. They will talk with you about your child and any concerns you may have. They will tell you more about the possible services and supports that are available to eligible children and families.

They will talk with you about next steps if you would like to consider receiving these support services for your child and family. As a parent or primary caregiver, you are the most important member of your child's support team. Educational service providers are committed to supporting you in ways that will be helpful for your individual child and your unique family.

We also are here to support you in this journey. If you would like more information about support services for young children who have hearing differences and their families, or if you have any other questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us.

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