



Exploring Communication Opportunities: Cued Speech

Families who have just found out that their child has a difference in hearing levels, which some people call *hearing loss, deaf, or hard of hearing*, often have many questions about how their child will learn to communicate. Becoming a successful communicator and learner is a journey for each child with a hearing difference and their family. Each family will have communication *choices, or opportunities*, to consider as *roads* to explore on this language journey. Each road on your journey of language and communication represents a different way you can share thoughts, ideas, experiences, and feelings with your child. Each provides unique ways to communicate with your child and nourish your child's brain with language.

One of these roads, or ways to communicate, that you can explore is *Cued Speech*.

What is Cued Speech?

- Cued Speech is a visual communication system that makes speech sounds visible for a child with hearing differences. It uses eight handshapes in four different placements near the face in combination with mouth movements of speech to make the sounds of spoken language look different from each other. For example, without using your voice, say the words “mom”, “mop”, “Bob”, “bop”, “mob”, “bomb”. They all look the same on our lips when we say them. However, with Cued Speech, they are all cued with different handshapes to show the difference between the /m/, /b/, /p/ speech sounds used in the words. This takes the guesswork out of speechreading.
- The Cued Speech system was originally created to provide deaf children with visible access to spoken language. The handshapes show the speech sounds that cannot be seen on the face or lips. The system also enables parents and family members to cue the language(s) they already speak fluently. Children then internalize the appropriate phonemic language base for literacy, for learning to read.
- No hearing is required to learn Cued Speech because the speech sounds are all shown visually through handshapes, hand placements, and mouth movements. All these together work to make a spoken language clear to the child. Many children can benefit from Cued Speech, no matter what their hearing levels are.
- Cued Speech does not require the use of speech or voice to communicate clearly. However, it may lead to increased lipreading skills and clearer speech because speech sounds that the child may not be able to hear, are made visible.
- Cued Speech may be used by children who have some hearing, but who may not be able to hear certain speech sounds. Cued Speech shows those missing sounds visually. Cued Speech may be used by children who use cochlear implants, especially when they are first starting to listen with their processors, when their processors are off during bathing or swimming, when they first wake up, or when the processor has a dead battery. Language access is still available when it is being visually cued.

Using Cued Speech

- Cued Speech may be used by Speech-Language Pathologists, Teachers of the Deaf/hard of Hearing, parents and family members to teach correct pronunciations of words, rhythm and tone of voice, and patterns of spoken language. Cued Speech is an efficient way to show differences in pronunciation that fingerspelling or speechreading does not easily convey.
- Cued Speech may be used to support the learning of phonics (connecting speech sounds to printed letters) when young children are learning to read.
- The Cued Speech system has been adapted to be used with approximately [60+ different spoken languages and dialects](#) and continues to adapt more. So, if the language of the home is Spanish, then family members can cue Spanish to support the child learning their home language.
- The Cued Speech system can be learned during a weekend and then, once parents and other family members learn the system, practice increases accuracy and speed. This is much like learning to type. The family does not need to learn new vocabulary in another language. The family cues the language they already speak. Fluency and speed increases with practice.
- Babies will learn any language that is used around them in meaningful ways, all the time, every day. Ideally, everyone around the child should cue what they are saying so that the child can “see” spoken language and learn it visually.

How Does Cued Speech Help Children Learn Early Literacy Skills for Reading?

- Children with typical hearing who are learning to read usually know the spoken language that they are learning to decode. When children who are deaf or hard of hearing are immersed in Cued Speech at home and in school, they develop inner voices and internalized “speech patterns” that are very similar to children who have typical hearing.
- Cued Speech also helps children see the ends of words that typically are not heard but are very important. Examples of word endings that change meanings are talk, talks, talked, talking (-s, -ed, -ing). Cued Speech shows the word endings clearly and efficiently. The task of learning to read is then the same as for children with typical hearing.
- Consider visiting the National Cued Speech Association’s [Deaf Children’s Literacy Project](#) to learn more about how Cued Speech supports the development of literacy skills.
- Providing all young children with opportunities to explore their world, listen to and tell stories, learn new words, and share ideas in conversations will help children learn to read and understand printed language.

How Can You Learn More About Cued Speech?

As you start to explore Cued Speech as a communication opportunity for you and your child, there are many supportive Minnesota programs and people who can share more information and resources with you.

1. Many families find it helpful to connect with other parents and families of young

children who have hearing differences to learn about different communication journeys.

- [Parent Guides from MN Hands & Voices](#) share information and support with fellow Minnesota families of children with hearing differences. They can also help you connect with other families individually or through fun family activities provided virtually and/or in person in communities around Minnesota.
 - With your permission, your child’s IFSP/IEP team members, including early intervention providers, Teacher of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, and/or your child’s audiologist may also be able to help connect you with other families of young children with hearing differences in your community.
2. Although there are not many parents in Minnesota who currently use Cued Speech, there are state and national family networks that could be helpful resources from which to get more information. Check out the [Cued Speech Association of Minnesota website](#) and the [National Cued Speech Association website](#) to connect with other families and professionals who use Cued Speech and find information about how to learn the Cued Speech system.
 3. You may find it helpful to connect with Deaf or Hard of Hearing adults who use Cued Speech as part of their communication with others and learn about their lived experiences. [Deaf/Hard of Hearing Guides from MN Hands & Voices](#) can help with connections, talk about their own life experiences, and share resources, too.
 4. Your child’s IFSP/IEP team members, early intervention providers, Teachers of the Deaf/Hard of Hearing, Speech Language Pathologists, and audiologists can also share information with you about Cued Speech and help support your child’s communication development. (See the Special Note below.)
 - One very helpful resource person would be an IFSP/IEP team member or service provider who has specialized training and expertise in using Cued Speech along with spoken language to support the communication development of young children with hearing differences.
 5. There are many online information resources about Cued Speech as a communication opportunity for young children with hearing differences. A list of several selected websites you might explore has been included at the end of this document beginning on page 5.

A Special Note:

If you are not yet connected with Minnesota Infant and Toddler Intervention Services or Preschool Special Education Services for young children and their families, you can learn more about how to [Get Help for Your Child](#) on the [Help Me Grow MN](#) website. In addition, education leaders from the MN Department of Education and the MN Low Incidence Projects have shared an introduction [Letter for Families of Young Children with Hearing Differences](#). The letter provides more information about Help Me Grow MN and services that are offered free of charge to all eligible children and families through local public school districts across Minnesota, regardless of family income or immigration status.

Questions to Think About as You Consider Your Communication Journey Using Cued Speech

1. The primary goal of Cued Speech is to help children who are deaf or hard of hearing access clear and complete visual communication as early as possible. Cued Speech uses eight handshapes, hand movements, and mouth shapes to make the sounds of the language look different from each other. It is not a separate language, like American Sign Language, but rather supports the family's spoken language in the home by making their speech sounds visible. Cued Speech may also be used to help children learn letter sounds (phonics) when learning to read. Does that seem to support your own current communication goals for your child and family?
2. Do you have family members and/or friends in your community who can help you as you help your child learn Cued Speech along with spoken language? What kinds of assistance would you like to have right now?
3. Every child and family are unique. Families, medical and audiological care providers, education professionals, and family-to-family program staff can work together in different ways to help children. What information and supports would be most helpful for you and your family as you start out on a Cued Speech communication road?
4. As families support their children's language development and communication, they learn helpful strategies from professionals and other parents on how to make their home a good language learning environment for young children. Families try to use those strategies with their child during all their daily family routines and activities.
 - What are your thoughts and feelings about learning new strategies that might change how you typically do some things in your home?
 - How do you and other family members prefer to learn new things?
 - Who might be the primary caregiver(s) who will learn and use these strategies with your child first?
 - How might other family members or childcare providers help?
5. Children who are learning to understand spoken language visually with the help of Cued Speech may attend school in a variety of educational settings. They may attend a school program specifically for children who have hearing differences, or they may attend a neighborhood school with support from a Teacher for Deaf-Hard of Hearing and a Cued Speech transliterator.
 - What are your educational goals for your child?
 - What additional information about educational services would be helpful to you?

Remember:

Babies' brains need lots of *language nutrition*.

Your child's brain is ready and eager for you to share your love and the gift of language with them. You have started on a journey of learning and communication with your child. The journey may be familiar to you, or it may be unexpected. But, just by starting out and learning more, you are doing great things for your child and family!

There is help available for you and your family.

There are information resources that can help you learn about different ways to communicate with your child, and there are many caring people who can help you and your child on your journey.

Each family is unique.

There is no one "right" communication choice that is "the best" for all children and families. Each child is unique and needs different things. Parents and families are also different and have their own hopes and dreams for their child. They have their own family cultures, ideas, and preferences for how to communicate with their child. Some families choose one main way of communicating while other families make other choices. Your communication decisions for your child and family are respected and valued.

Be flexible.

As you learn more about hearing, hearing differences, hearing technology, your child's development, and different opportunities to support your child's language development and learning, your communication choices may change over time. Start your journey with what feels right for your child and family and be open to learning more over time. Together with fellow family members and supportive professionals, follow your child's lead and watch how they grow and develop.

Selected Online Information Resources About Listening and Spoken Language

[BEGINNINGS for Parents of Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing](#)

- [For Parents/Families](#)
- [Video samples \(including cued speech\)](#)
- [Resource: Language and Communication Chart](#)

[Hands & Voices Communication Considerations A-Z](#)

- [Cued Speech Communication](#)

To connect with other parents who use Cued Speech with their children who have hearing differences, contact the [National Association of Cued Speech](#)

To meet other families and professionals using Cued Speech in Minnesota, contact the [Cued Speech Association of Minnesota](#).

To learn about how Cued Speech supports language development of English, Spanish and other spoken languages, as well as the perspective of deaf or hard of hearing native cuers, check out these at [the National Association of Cued Speech Resources website](#).

To learn about how some families choose to sign American Sign Language and Cued Speech for a spoken language such as English or Spanish, check out [CueSign, Inc.](#) Some families decide to learn both. Some families choose to learn to sign first, but then wish to add Cued Speech or vice versa. Some families choose to learn to cue first and then their children or teens learn sign language later.

To see deaf native cuers interact with their baby using Cued Speech, visit the [Cue Cognatio](#)

YouTube channel.

Watch [parent interviews video at Cue Cogntion YouTube channel](#) about why they chose Cued Speech for their deaf children and an explanation of Cued Speech.

To learn more about how Cued Speech supports literacy development skills, visit the National Cued Speech Association's [Deaf Children's Literacy Project](#)

The Communication Opportunities resource series was written in collaboration with representatives of the MN Low Incidence Projects, the MN Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing, MN Hands & Voices, and the MN Deaf Mentor Family Program. All the articles in the series can be found on the MN Low Incidence Projects-EHDI webpage [Communication Opportunities](#). Unless otherwise specified, information in this resource is not reflective of official policies or recommendations of the MN Low Incidence Projects, the BrightWorks, the MN Department of Education, or local education agencies. The Minnesota Low Incidence Projects is made possible with a grant from the MN Department of Education. The source of the funds is federal award Special Education-Programs to States, CDFR 84.027A.

Resource links for printing purposes

A list of full website addresses used throughout this document for printed copy version of handouts:

- **60+ different spoken languages and dialects:** <https://cuedspeech.org/learn/find-your-cued-language/>
- **Deaf Children’s Literacy Project:** <https://cuedspeech.org/advocacy-services/dclp/>
- **Parent Guides from MN Hands & Voices:**
<https://www.lssmn.org/mnhandsandvoices/about-us/deaf-and-hard-hearing-guide-program>
- **National Cued Speech Association website:** <http://www.cuedspeech.org/>
- **Deaf/Hard of Hearing Guides from MN Hands & Voices:**
<https://www.mnhandsandvoices.org/about-us/deaf-and-hard-hearing-guide-program>
- **Get Help for Your Child:** <https://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/GetHelpChild/index.html>
- **Help Me Grow MN:** <https://helpmegrowmn.org/HMG/index.htm>
- **Letter for Families of Young Children with Hearing Differences:**
https://www.mnlowincidenceprojects.org/documents/ehdi/communicationOpp/EI_Family_letter_MDE_LIProjects_Aug2019.pdf
- **BEGINNINGS for Parents of Children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing:** <https://ncbegin.org/>
- **For Parents/Families:** <https://ncbegin.org/who-we-serve/parentsandfamilies/>
- **Video samples (including cued speech):** <https://ncbegin.org/who-we-serve/parentsandfamilies/helpful-videos-for-parents.html>
- **Resource: Language and Communication Chart:** <https://ncbegin.org/who-we-serve/parentsandfamilies/communicating-with-your-child/language-and-communication-chart.html>
- **Hands & Voices Communication Considerations A-Z:**
<https://www.handsandvoices.org/comcon/index.html>
- **Cued Speech Communication:** <https://handsandvoices.org/comcon/articles/cuedspeech.htm>
- **National Association of Cued Speech:** <https://cuedspeech.org/>
- **Cued Speech Association of Minnesota:** <https://www.cuedspeechminnesota.org/>
- **The National Association of Cued Speech Resources at CueSign, Inc. website:**
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9hSpfkWBIU>
- **Parent Interviews at:** https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZ-Kc7qum1s&list=PLU_I5vdmrcqAthFde4BKv1jtv-K6gMyfL
- **Deaf Children’s Literacy Project:** <https://cuedspeech.org/advocacy-services/dclp/>
- **Communication Opportunities:**
<http://www.mnlowincidenceprojects.org/Projects/ehdi/ehdiCommunicationOpp.html>