



INFANT HEARING PROGRAM
Windsor-Essex and Chatham-Kent Region
~ Hearing Screening for your New Baby ~

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Dear Physician,

The Infant Hearing Program (IHP) was developed by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) to identify children with permanent hearing loss as young as possible. Implementation of our region began in 2002. To date all three birthing hospitals in Essex/Kent have been routinely screening newborns for permanent hearing loss. The total number of babies screened as of April, 2005 was 16,745. Of these infants, 26 have been identified as having permanent hearing loss.

Screening procedures consist of Automated Distortion Product Otoacoustic Emissions (ADPOAE) and/or Automated Brainstem Evoked Response (ABER) tests in the hospital or community. Infants who do not pass the screening are referred for diagnostic assessment to the Infant Hearing Program trained Audiologists at Windsor Regional Hospital, our designated Infant Hearing Program site. Audiologists at Windsor Regional Hospital have received training specified by the IHP. Persons who have not received training by IHP are not eligible to provide services within the program funding.

Diagnostic assessment includes DPOAE, air and bone-conducted frequency-specific ABER, and high frequency tympanometry. Should the child be identified with hearing loss, the audiologist can identify the type and degree permitting timely and appropriate fitting of amplification. Infants with confirmed permanent hearing loss are referred for medical assessment, initially to the primary care physician, where available. The medical assessment must include evaluation by an otolaryngologist. Given the waiting list of these professionals it is imperative that referrals are made as soon as possible.

Families are also referred to the regional Family Support Worker to assist them in making decisions regarding communication options. In addition, any child under 2 years of age can be referred into the Infant Hearing Program, if for some reason their hearing was not screened in early infancy, or parents have concerns.

It is the goal of the Infant Hearing Program to screen 90% of the babies born in our region and follow-up with assessment as needed. For more information on this program please refer to an article from the Ontario Medical Review (January 2004) that outlines the Infant Hearing Program (www.oma.org/pcomm/OMR/jan/04infanthearing.htm).

If you have any questions regarding the Program please do not hesitate to contact our office at 252-0636.

Yours truly,

Terri Whitfield

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Infant Hearing Program

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