First Sound Program

First Sound is South Carolina’s Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) program mandated by legislation since 2001 for all hospitals with an annual average of 100 or more births. Currently, all 41 birthing hospitals in South Carolina (SC) actively perform hearing screenings on newborns prior to discharge. First Sound uses the national 1-3-6 targets: Screened by 1 month, confirmed by 3 months and early intervention by 6 months.

Early identification of hearing loss makes access to appropriate early intervention services during the critical window of a child’s language development possible. Early intervention for deaf and hard of hearing children maximizes their potential for academic achievement and a quality of life equal to their hearing peers. It also leads to long-term savings in special education expenses and public assistance in adulthood.

Highlights

• Approximately 51,686 infants were screened for hearing loss prior to hospital discharge in SC in 2018. An additional 185 infants delivered outside of a hospital were screened for hearing loss.
• At 97.4%, the First Sound Program surpasses the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) benchmark goal of 95% of newborns screened annually.
• Since the start of the program in 2001, 1,577 infants have been identified with hearing loss.
• A Learning Community was convened as a grant project and focused on increasing parent and professional awareness of EHDI goals and improving communication with parents and providers.
• First Sound collaborated with family support organizations to organize the “2019 4th Annual Back to School Bash for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students”

Future Direction

• First Sound will continue working towards increasing the number of infants identified with hearing loss and receiving early intervention services in a timely manner through the following activities:
  o Collaborating and connecting families with family support organizations.
  o Conducting outreach and training activities with professionals to increase awareness of program goals and objectives
  o Continuing quality improvement activities
  o Collaborating with other DHEC programs
First Sound by the Numbers

Newborn Hearing Screening Rate

![Graph showing newborn hearing screening rate from 2016 to 2018.]

Infants with Confirmed Hearing Loss by 3 Months

![Graph showing infants referred for early intervention services by percentage from 2016 to 2018.]

Early Intervention for Infants With Permanent Hearing Loss - Referred

![Graph showing early intervention referred rates from 2017 to 2018.]

Early Intervention for Infants With Permanent Hearing Loss - Received

![Graph showing early intervention received rates from 2017 to 2018.]

Factors Contributing to Delayed Access to Early Intervention

![Graph showing factors contributing to delayed access to early intervention services.]

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*2018 data is provisional and subject to change.