PROGRAM OPERATIONS

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Initial IFSP Checklist for Families of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Children: Special Considerations

This checklist is designed to help your family navigate the IFSP process with a focus on language access, communication, and your child's overall development. It highlights key considerations specific to deaf and hard of hearing children so you can make informed decisions, ask meaningful questions, and ensure the IFSP reflects your child's strengths, your family's priorities, and real-life communication needs.

At every step of the IFSP process, your family's voice and choices matter most.
You have the right to shape the plan so it reflects your child's identity, communication access, and future possibilities.

◯ Make sure the IFSP reflects your child's full language environment that your child experiences on a regular basis

The IFSP should clearly describe:

- ◯ The languages used in your home or anywhere your child is in on a regular basis (such as daycare)
- ◯ Your family's experience with deafness or hearing loss
- ◯ Information about your child's access to sound and communication

Why this matters: This information helps ensure services are based on how the child actually accesses language in daily life, not based on assumptions about language or communication.

◯ Look closely at assessments and evaluations

For deaf and hard of hearing children, strong IFSPs include:

- ◯ Separation of languages when evaluating skills (for example, ASL and spoken language measured independently)
- ◯ Use of normed, evidence-based assessment tools
- ◯ Awareness of multicultural and multilingual differences that may affect results

Why this matters: Accurate assessments ensure the IFSP reflects the child's true abilities and needs, supporting appropriate and accessible services.

◯ Ensure goals support the whole child

Effective IFSP goals for deaf and hard of hearing children should:

- ◯ Address language and communication development clearly
- ◯ Consider culture, identity, and belonging
- ◯ Reflect your child's hearing levels and developmental needs
- ◯ Include family support and access to resources
- ◯ Be specific and measurable so progress is visible

Why this matters: Whole-child and clearly defined goals ensure the IFSP supports meaningful development in everyday life.

◯ Confirm services include deaf-specific expertise and access

The IFSP service plan should consider:

- ◯ Involvement of qualified deaf and hard of hearing professionals or deaf adults
- ◯ Access to ASL and/or spoken language services, based on family priorities
- ◯ Services delivered in natural environments where real communication happens every day

Why this matters: Including deaf-specific expertise and accessible language models ensures consistent and meaningful opportunities to develop language and communication skills in real-life environments.

◯ Plan early for advocacy, transition, and community connection

Families benefit when the IFSP includes:

- ◯ Advocacy support at state or regional levels
- ◯ Conversations about future opportunities, not just limited service options
- ◯ Family-to-family networking and connections with the Deaf community
- ◯ Access to resources such as:
    - Deaf adult mentors
    - ASL classes
    - Deaf community events
    - National and regional deaf organizations and family support networks

Why this matters: Early planning for transition and advocacy empowers families with knowledge and access to resources that expand opportunities and promote long-term language, identity, and belonging for their child.