

# NEWBORN HEARING SCREENING MONTHLY

AN OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF COLORADO EHDI



## Celebrating Best Practices in Newborn Hearing Screening This Holiday Season

As we head into the holiday season, there is no time more fitting than now to say thank you and celebrate the outstanding work that you do as newborn hearing screening coordinators, newborn hearing screeners, audiologists, and midwives. By following best practices in newborn hearing screening, we play a powerful role ensuring families receive accurate information about their baby's hearing. For our November edition, we are featuring a story that highlights the importance of following best practices when doing a newborn hearing screening.

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**PLEASE ENTER 2020 SCREENING DATA INTO THE HIDS DATABASE BEFORE THE END OF THIS HOLIDAY SEASON. DECEMBER IS THE LAST MONTH FOR US TO COLLECT AND REPORT 2020 DATA.**

*By Jim and Stefanie Van Der Kar (Theo's Parents)*

Theo is 4 years old and profoundly deaf. He was bilaterally implanted on his second birthday. Thank you for letting us share our story.

Theo was our first born, and as new parents, we had no idea what to expect. We put a lot of trust and faith in the medical field to guide us. After a rough birth we were surprised when Theo failed his initial hearing screening at the hospital. We were told not to worry and that it was common that fluid and other build up could be present and could take some time to clear out.

We left the hospital with the plan to get his ears re-tested at his 2-day checkup after we met with his pediatrician. When we showed up, Theo was upset and crying as the nurse tried to get him to stay still to get the probe in his ear and get an accurate result. After she struggled to test him twice she said she got a pass and that we were free to go. We left the hospital kind of in awe and a weird gut feeling that wasn't proper, but we really didn't know any better...After all... she said he passed, so we went on our way.

We had a doubt or two about his hearing ability around the 12-15 month mark, but there always seemed to be a reason or exception that would make us say... "No he obviously hears us."

Fast forward to Theo's 18-month checkup where his pediatrician asked about his speech. Since Theo was not producing spoken language, he referred us to Public Health to get his ears checked. Theo failed this test, and we were given a referral to see a child audiologist in Denver. Simultaneously to the referral to public health, our pediatrician/audiologist at the time connected us with Early Intervention so we could start working on his speech development. As we visited the child audiologist over a few different visits, it was clear he had hearing loss, but the extent was unclear, so we scheduled a sedated ABR test. The ABR was performed and proved that Theo had profound bilateral sensorineural hearing loss.

The next 6 months was obviously very difficult for us. Several different professionals that we connected with all drove home the importance of early intervention as it related to hearing loss. Striving to make up for lost time, we pushed to accelerate the time-frame for Theo to get access to sound as soon as possible. We wanted to get him access to sound so we could help his odds of success with spoken language.

We are grateful for the support we received and the community we met once Theo was diagnosed. However, the first 18 months that Theo wasn't hearing he can never get back. His speech development has been significantly impacted by that and while Theo has made phenomenal progress at this point, there's no denying that the late detection made his road harder than it had to be.

## Reflection Questions

- What parts of Theo's story resonate with you the most?
- Do you think best practices were followed when screening Theo's hearing? Why or why not?

**Note:** The updated [newborn hearing screening curriculum from NCHAM](#) recommends ensuring the test environment is quiet before conducting a screening. Also, screening a baby's hearing repeatedly leads to a baby falsely passing their screening. NCHAM recommends waiting at least 4 hours after a failed/referred screening before repeating the test. Then, repeat the test only once.

### Here To Help

For technical questions about hearing screening, please contact:  
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