

# Explaining your child's hearing loss to the extended family



Having a baby with a hearing loss affects the whole family. Each parent will approach his or her role differently as a result of the diagnosis, and each is likely to feel and react in a unique way. Talk to your partner about how you are feeling and be aware of her or his needs as well. It can also be beneficial to share your feelings with family and friends you trust and love. Being honest and open with family and friends will help them understand that it is okay to talk about your baby's hearing loss, which will help you to deal with the situation better. If you have other children, be aware of their feelings and needs.<sup>1</sup>

Your family and friends can be an important source of support for you and your baby. For example:

- They can babysit for you to give you a break.
- They can spend a lot of time with you and your baby.
- They can be there for you to talk to when you need support.

A support person, for example your own parent, a friend or a relative, is welcome to come to appointments with you. Just let the audiologist or other professional know in advance.



If your family and friends are not familiar with hearing loss and deafness, you may need to help them understand it. As you learn new things you will be able to give your family and friends more information so that they can support you. You could provide them with a fact sheet on hearing loss or show them this resource collection.<sup>2</sup>

Grandparents too have hopes and dreams for their grandchildren. They may feel a sense of sadness when they learn about your child's hearing loss. Their sadness is for both their grandchild and their own child, now a parent, who has to deal with this new challenge.<sup>3</sup>

1 Aussie Deaf Kids, [cited 5 July 2006], *Building blocks – A parent guide for families whose baby has been diagnosed with a hearing loss*, [website <http://www.aussiedeafkids.com>]

2 The National Deaf Children's Society, 2005, *Information for families*, London.

3 Schuyler, V. and Sowers, J., 1998, *For families guidebook*, Infant Hearing Resource, Hearing and Speech Institute, published by Butte Publications, Hillsboro, Oregon, USA.