The Family Sign Language Program provides Sign Language instruction for eligible families with children who are deaf or hard of hearing 0-3 years of age.

The goal of this program is to introduce family members to Sign Language, enabling them to communicate with their child at the earliest age possible. Extended family members and caregivers are encouraged to participate.

Families will receive a total of 20 weeks of instruction tailored specifically to them. The first 10 weeks are provided in the family’s home; the second 10 weeks may be in the home, online, or in a group setting with other families. Classes will be scheduled at a time convenient for the family.

Family Sign Language Program tutors follow a specially devised Family Sign Language Program curriculum and are trained in the provision of Sign Language instruction.

The curriculum will address not only the learning of sign vocabulary, but the application of the signs to everyday family life. As part of the classes, FSLP tutors will also share their knowledge about Deaf culture and will teach the family ways of making their family communications more visual and accessible for their child.

"The Family Sign Language Program has been wonderful. With such a late diagnosis of hearing loss for our son, the program was eager to connect our family with an excellent teacher. The program, and specifically the teacher we are working with, has been very flexible, patient, and kind. The Family Sign Language Program's devotion to sharing this beautiful language is such a blessing to our family."

-- Chrissy M. (Mom)
The Family Sign Language Program is open to all families residing in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts who have a child who is deaf or hard of hearing between the ages of 0-3 and is enrolled in Early Intervention services.

To sign up for the Family Sign Language Program either the family or the Early Intervention Provider needs to contact us. The family and Early Intervention provider will be asked to complete a program intake form.

Once the information has been received, your family will be matched with a tutor in your area and then you will be able to start classes!

Our goal is to get families through the paperwork process quickly so they can start classes as soon as possible.

Who is the tutor that will be sent to our home?

Family Sign Language Program tutors are adults from the community who are specially trained to recognize child development and language needs. The tutors will use the Gallaudet University Regional Center’s FSLP curriculum and are also trained to use familiar objects in the child’s natural environment as tools for teaching communication skills. FSLP tutors serve as excellent cultural and linguistic role models for families.

Family Sign Language Program

Please take the time to read through this informational brochure about the Massachusetts’ Family Sign Language Program. If you have any further questions please feel free to contact us at anytime.

How much does it cost?

This program is coordinated by the Gallaudet University Regional Center at Northern Essex Community College through a contract with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Classes are provided at no cost to families who:

- Live in Massachusetts;
- Have a child who is deaf or hard of hearing aged 0-3;
- Are currently receiving services through an Early Intervention Program.

What is American Sign Language?

American Sign Language (ASL) is a complete, complex language that uses signs made with the hands and other movements, including facial expressions and postures of the body. It is the first language of many deaf North Americans, and one of several communication options available to deaf people. ASL is said to be the fourth most commonly used language in the United States.

What are the benefits of learning to sign with my child at an early age?

Language acquisition at a very early age is critical for every child who is deaf or hard of hearing. It leads to the development of literacy skills needed throughout the child’s life. Caretakers should introduce deaf and hard hearing children to language as early as possible. The earlier any child is exposed to and begins to acquire language, the better that child’s communication skills will become.

Have more questions? Please contact us:

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