

EHDI in Idaho (Early Hearing Detection & Intervention)

Idaho
Sound
Beginnings



Fortunate One, Fortunate Son

Having worked as a pediatric and NICU nurse, I was acutely aware of the laundry list of potential complications and birth defects that can occur with pregnancy and childbirth. Deciding to have children was a leap of courage given all the potential unknowns. I remember when my first son was born; I received the small card that said he passed his hearing screen. Of course he passed I thought, no one has hearing loss in our family so this card was irrelevant and insignificant to my precious newborn and me.

Two and half years later when my healthy, term 9 pound, 15 oz. boy was born the small hearing screen card had a different check mark. It indicated that Ryder referred on his hearing screen. Feeling a little bewildered, but unconcerned, I chalked up the referral to fluid due to his large size. When he referred a second time, I became a bit perplexed but still not hugely concerned thanks to the elixir of maternal hormones flowing through my body. I had an unremarkable, healthy pregnancy and natural delivery. Ryder was not a high risk baby and no one on either side of the family has a history of hearing loss.

I performed my own hearing tests on Ryder and he appeared to respond appropriately. My concerns seemed unfounded... but, thanks to an outstanding discharge nurse, and astute pediatrician, Ryder was scheduled for a diagnostic audiology evaluation 3 weeks after his birth. Thankfully, having these procedures in place overrode the current of information I received from other mothers telling me that their babies referred on the hearing screen and everything was fine...no hearing loss.

Three weeks later when the pediatric audiologist confirmed that Ryder had a bilateral sensorineural moderate-severe hearing loss, I was stunned, devastated and shocked. After my mind slightly recovered from that sickening numbing feeling, a myriad of questions flooded my mind, questions that could only be answered and eased with the passage of time and acquisition of knowledge from professionals and parents.

Today Ryder is a healthy, joyful 2 ½ year old little boy who is a sheer delight to be around. With the assistance of his hearing aids that he received at 6 weeks of age, my husband and I are joyful when Ryder says “is daddy home”, “more books” or “bye-bye pool”.

Hearing loss is indeed easily imperceptible to even the most trained eye. In the trainings I do for Idaho Sound Beginnings, I show a short video clip of Ryder without his hearing aids and another little boy who does not have a hearing loss. They are both about 11 months old. When the audience is asked who the child with the hearing loss is, over and over again the majority agree it is the other child and not Ryder. They are clearly dumbfounded when it is revealed that Ryder who is saying ball, dancing to the music coming from the T.V. and responding to my voice is indeed the child with a marked hearing loss. This clearly shows how invisible and easily overlooked this is. I think of how easily parents can utilize denial.

Had Ryder not had screening at birth, an informed discharge nurse, a concerned pediatrician, and parents who, although entirely unaware of the prevalence of infant hearing loss, realized the importance of following through with professional recommendations, he may not have made it to the next step and would have been another statistic in the pool of babies lost to follow up. Fortunately, Ryder was referred to an excellent pediatric audiologist, was fitted with hearing aids at two months of age and received services from the Idaho Infant Toddler Program and the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind Outreach Program. Ryder is a fortunate one, my fortunate son.