



April 2, 2020

Dear Providers,

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Tennessee Department of Health (TDH) Newborn Hearing Follow Up Program is providing guidance on newborn hearing screening. The initial hearing screening for infants born in Tennessee is required by state law and should be completed during the initial stay at the birthing hospital. If a baby does not pass the initial hearing screen, follow up screening should be provided in the hospital setting before discharge. If a baby refers on the follow up screening, diagnostic testing should be conducted by 3 months of age at an outpatient facility. It is not recommended for families to return to the birthing hospital for rescreening. Testing results should be reported on the dried blood spot card and submitted to the Tennessee Department of Health.

The Newborn Hearing Follow Up Program is aware that some audiology diagnostic facilities may close for certain periods of time or limit appointments due to COVID-19. These changes may impact a birthing facility's ability to arrange diagnostic follow up testing before the family leaves the hospital. To help ensure that those babies who refer newborn hearing screening receive diagnostic testing, these steps should be followed:

1. For newborns who referred hearing screening but do not currently have diagnostic testing scheduled due to facility closures, ensure that families are aware that diagnostic testing is still needed and facilitate follow-up as soon as possible.
2. If possible, schedule newborns now for future diagnostic testing and communicate details about the appointment with the families and primary care providers.
3. Audiology facilities that have closed should develop a plan for rescheduling infants as soon as the facility resumes operation.
4. Results of diagnostic testing are required to be reported to TDH. However, given the current situation TDH will allow more time for reporting results. For diagnostic appointments that have already been scheduled, TDH will not send a follow up letter inquiring about results until June 1, 2020.
5. Audiology facilities that remain in operation should follow CDC's COVID-19 guidance for clinics and healthcare facilities (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/healthcare-facilities/index.html>).

Please follow all CDC and TDH guidelines regarding patient services during this time. For more information please review the following:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>

We realize this is a challenging time. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us if we can be of any assistance. Thank you for everything you do for families in Tennessee.

Best Regards,

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*Hearing screening is required by Tennessee Code Annotated Title 68, Chapter 5, Part 9, Sections 901-906, Rules and Regulations 1200-15-01 (Claire's Law, July 2008).