

One Village at a Time: One State's Story

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In 2006, Arkansas Children's Hospital initiated a contract, school-based audiology program that became known as the EARS Program (Educational Audiology/Speech Pathology Resources for Schools). At that time, only one public school district in the state of Arkansas employed an educational audiologist to provide onsite, school-based audiology services to schools. Since that time, the use of school-based audiology services has grown every school year.

During the 2010-2011 school year, approximately 52 (out of 239) public school districts in the state of Arkansas used school based audiology on a consistent basis (ranging from once a month to everyday of the school year). Additional school districts contracted at least one visit during the school year for school-based audiology services (n= 21 for 2010-2011 school year).

Current Service Delivery Models Used in Arkansas for School-Based Audiology Services

- Audiologist directly employed by school district
- Audiologist directly employed by one school district – other districts purchase her time from that district
- Dually certified audiologist employed by school district as an SLP – contracts time above that for audiology services
- Audiology services are contracted from EARS Program @ ACH

The EARS Program @ ACH is an outreach program of the Audiology and Speech Pathology Department. Currently we provide contract, onsite audiology services as well as specialized speech-language pathology consultation for school districts, educational cooperatives, preschool programs and other educational settings.

School-Based Audiology Services Provided by EARS Program Audiologist may include:

1. Technical assistance to teachers and other school personnel regarding amplification (personal and group amplification)
2. Hearing aid analysis and troubleshooting onsite
3. Assistance in establishing/maintaining an amplification monitoring program
4. Attendance at student conferences for referral and programming as needed
5. Professional development for district personnel on issues such as classroom acoustics and use/maintenance of amplification
6. Hearing evaluations for students who are deaf/hard of hearing and/or for students who have failed hearing screenings
7. Screening for and consultation regarding auditory processing disorders

Specialized Speech-Language Pathology Services Provided by EARS Program SLP may include:

1. Speech and language evaluation and goal writing specialized for students who deaf/hard of hearing
2. Modeling of therapy for students who are deaf/hard of hearing especially in the area of auditory skill development
3. Technical assistance to speech language pathologist who are seeing students who are deaf/hard of hearing regarding implementation of therapy goals that are specialized for these students

Triumphs and Challenges of the EARS Program as a Service Delivery Model

1. The connection that is made between clinical audiology (both ACH and non-ACH audiologists) and school-based audiology enhances the outcomes for the student
2. The audiologists and speech-language pathologists on the EARS team have immediate access to clinical facilities and expertise at ACH – some audiologists and speech-language pathologists on the team serve dual roles (clinical and school-based)
3. Staff often spend a great deal of time (and expense) traveling
4. Some school districts need more onsite service than they are willing to contract for via the EARS program
5. We are "growing" our own school-based audiologists via a 4th year Au.D. student externship funded partially by the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit

The proliferation of school-based audiology services in Arkansas would not have been possible without the support – both conceptually and financially - of the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit.



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