



DEAF FRIENDLY FAMILIES

BLUE
PRINT

Deaf
Children
Australia.

Inclusion starts at home. Deaf adults told us what helped them feel included in their families when they were children.

Many habits and attitudes start in the home. Inclusion is no exception. Putting a few simple strategies in place at home can show kids what an inclusive environment looks like, and flow out to help build inclusive clubs, groups, and communities.

We spoke to deaf adults to discover what they appreciated most in their family as they were growing up. We've put together a summary of what they told us to guide families with including their deaf child at home.

Communication

Deaf adults felt included and valued as children when people:

- **gained their full attention before speaking or signing**
- **kept cups, beards, and hands away from their mouths while speaking to help with lip-reading**
- **taught their brothers and sisters to communicate with them**
- **kept background noise low**
- **informed the deaf child about or involved them in conversations**
- **recognised that deaf children sometimes do not understand what has been said and happily repeated themselves if asked**
- **explained jokes they did not understand.**

Expectations

Deaf adults felt empowered as children when:

- **they were treated the same as their siblings in everyday activities**
- **they were made aware of the expectations their families had for them**
- **their families believed in their abilities and encouraged them to be independent and aim for success.**

The television

Deaf adults felt the importance of equal access to information and resources was demonstrated by:

- **having accurate subtitles on TV programs**
- **efforts to maintain the quality of subtitles, such as adjusting the aerial to improve reception quality**
- **family members only watching TV programs with subtitles**
- **family members telling them what was happening if the program didn't have subtitles**
- **parents showing them, at a level they could understand, how to lobby for improved subtitling.**

Visual alerts

Deaf adults felt empowered as children when:

- a flashing door bell was installed at home so they knew someone was at the door
- a flashing light was installed to let them know the phone was ringing
- family members let them know someone was knocking on the door or the phone was ringing (if they did not have flashing lights).

The phone

Deaf adults felt empowered as children when:

- their family had a TTY installed at home
- families would use the National Relay Service (NRS) to talk to them instead of asking another family member to interpret
- family members were happy to tell them who was on the phone.

The internet

Deaf adults felt empowered as children when:

- the family had a reliable internet connection
- families used internet-based systems for communication
- families had regular discussions around new technologies.

The dinner table

Deaf adults felt empowered when:

- they had equal access to conversations at the dinner table
- family members signed as best as they could while at the dinner table
- they were placed where they could see everyone easily and clearly
- family members spoke one at a time or raised a hand to show they wanted to speak (so the deaf child knew who was speaking and where to look so they could follow the conversation).

Family arguments

Deaf adults felt involved and considered as children when:

- families recognised how witnessing arguments might affect them. In this situation, families would empower their deaf children by explaining what the argument was about, what it meant, and the outcomes.

The extended family

Deaf adults felt empowered as children when:

- they were told when people would be visiting
- extended family were aware of deafness and their communication needs and tried to involve them as best as they could
- they were involved in family get-togethers by being included in conversations
- they were told family members' names.



DID YOU KNOW?

Around 95% of DHH children are born into hearing families, who often feel isolated and confused. We help them navigate their new world.

Blueprint isn't just for sports clubs. If you offer activities or programs for children or young people, we'd love to have you on our side!

For further information about
Deaf Children Australia.
www.deafchildrenaustralia.org.au
03 9539 5300
info@deafchildren.org.au

Deaf Children Australia uses the term 'deaf' to refer to all degrees and types of hearing loss.
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