

# Alberta's Early Hearing Detection & Intervention (EHDI) Program Overview

January 2019

## About Alberta's EHDI Program

Alberta's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program is a new provincial population-based screening program implemented through Alberta Health Services (AHS) in partnership with Alberta Health and other key stakeholders.

### EHDI Program Goals 1-3-6:

- **Screen** infants for hearing loss no later than **1 month** of age
- **Diagnose** permanent hearing loss no later than **3 months** of age
- Ensure access to **intervention** no later than **6 months** of age

Achieving these targets enables infants with permanent hearing loss and their families to access the supports needed to optimize speech, language, learning and developmental outcomes sooner.

### Incidence of PCHL

Permanent congenital hearing loss (PCHL) is one of the most common congenital conditions found in newborns. About two to three of every 1000 babies born will have PCHL. Based on 2016 birth numbers, about 109 to 163 babies are born in Alberta each year with permanent hearing loss.

### Who is Eligible?

All infants born in Alberta or born to parents living in Alberta are eligible for screening within 90 days of birth.

Infants born with bilateral aural atresia or presenting with meningitis will bypass hearing screening and be referred directly to audiology services for diagnostic assessment.



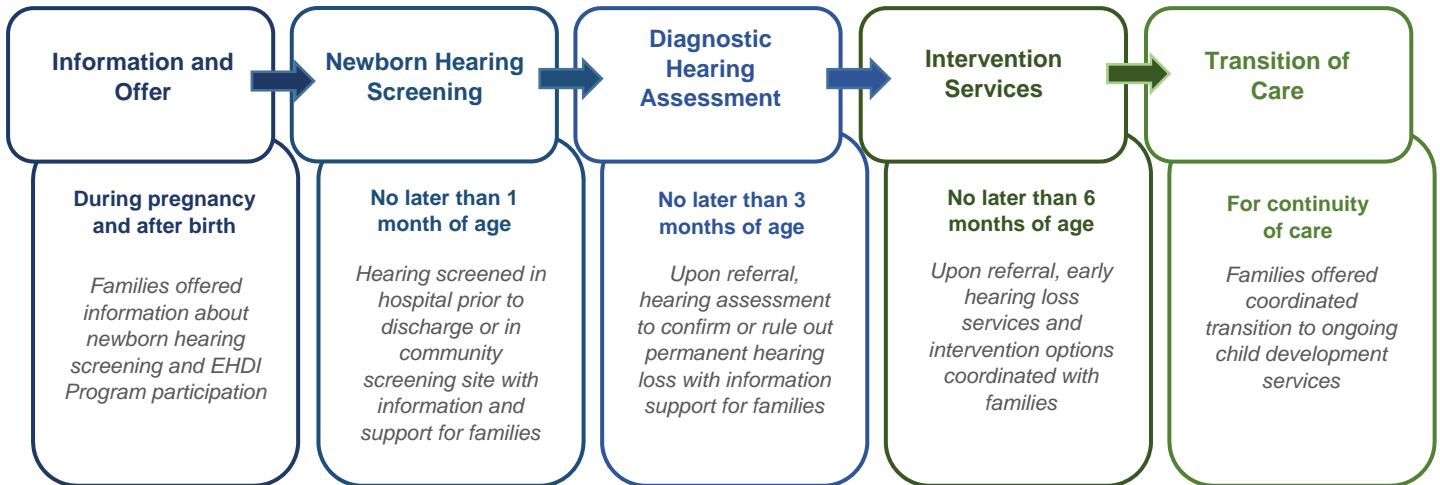
## EHDI Program Implementation

Newborn hearing screening through the EHDI Program is offered, *free of charge*, at most hospitals with over 200 births per year and targeted community-based screening sites. All Neonatal Intensive Care Units (NICUs) in Alberta offer hearing screening to all eligible infants. Diagnostic Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) hearing assessments are also available in all 5 AHS zones (North, Edmonton, Calgary, Central and South).

A list of sites currently offering screening and diagnostic services can be accessed through the service listing at [AHS.ca/ehdi](https://www.ahs.ca/ehdi).

### EHDI Program Pathway & Approach

Once fully implemented, Alberta's EHDI Program Pathway will reflect a series of fully integrated and coordinated services.



- To date, standardized protocols and procedures have been developed for the Information and Offer, Newborn Hearing Screening and Diagnostic Hearing Assessment components of the pathway.
- Standardized hearing screening and diagnostic equipment provided to all sites offering services.
- Standardized education and training provided to EHDI Hearing Screeners and Audiologists.



### Work in Progress

#### Program Pathway:

- The focus of the program's work is now on the creation of standardized, evidence-informed approaches for Intervention Services and Transition of Care.

#### Data Management:

- A dedicated team is working on an information technology and data management structure to track all aspects of the program.