



2022 LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: FIRST SOUND

South Carolina's Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) Program

The First Sound program, established by state law in 2001, conducts surveillance for the statewide mandate that all infants are screened for hearing loss at birth and, if applicable, receive diagnostic and intervention services. South Carolina is one of 48 states in the U.S. to have such legislation.

Approximately 2-3 of every 1000 children born in the United States have some degree of hearing loss in one or both ears. More than 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents who, without early identification, would be unaware of the child's hearing loss until the child started showing signs of developmental delays for speech and language. Signs typically occur at approximately 2 years old, after a considerable amount of the critical window (birth-3 years old) for language development has passed.

Highlights

- Experienced minimal impact to overall data in first year of COVID-19 pandemic
- Identified 1,870 infants with hearing loss at birth since the start of the program in 2001
- Provided trainings to hospitals, audiologists, and internal stakeholders
- Partnered with Beginnings SC and SC Hands & Voices (family support organizations for Deaf and Hard of Hearing) to host the 6th Annual Back to School Bash for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Students
- Partnered with Beginnings SC to conduct hearing screening training to an early childhood center with 10 participants
- Purchased a hearing screener to pilot with the newborn postpartum home visitation program
- Purchased three diagnostic units to place in audiology facilities to increase access to care
- Partnered with Beginnings SC and The CARE Project to plan virtual retreats and collaborations for parents and professionals
- Partnered with SC Birth Defects Program to reduce the number of infants lost to followup through data sharing

Future Direction

- Strengthen the ability of the First Sound program to make direct referrals to early intervention and family support organizations to increase the number of infants identified with hearing loss and who are enrolled in early intervention services by 6 months of age
- Reduce the number of infants lost to follow up through partnerships with internal programs such as WIC and Newborn Post-Partum Home Visitation
- Expand diversity of family engagement in the early hearing detection and intervention systems through collaborative partnerships with deaf and hard of hearing family support organizations
- Expand outreach to external stakeholders through a series of The CARE Project virtual retreats for parents and professionals
- Continue partnership with Beginnings SC conducting hearing screening training to additional early childhood centers across the state.

Goals

The 2007 Joint Committee on Infant Hearing (JCIH) established the "1-3-6 Plan" for Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) programs:

- 1 — All infants should have access to hearing screening no later than 1 month of age.
- 3 — All infants who do not pass the hearing screening/rescreening should have diagnostic audiologic evaluation confirmation of hearing status by 3 months of age.
- 6 — All infants with a confirmed hearing loss should receive early intervention services as soon as possible following diagnosis but no later than 6 months of ages.

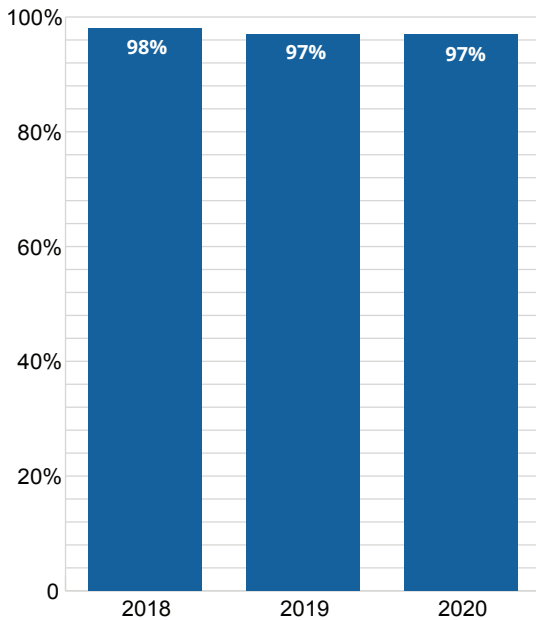
For the past 20 years, First Sound has worked with state stakeholders and federal partners to meet national goals and objectives for EHDI programs.



South Carolina By The Numbers

SC Newborn Hearing Screening Rate

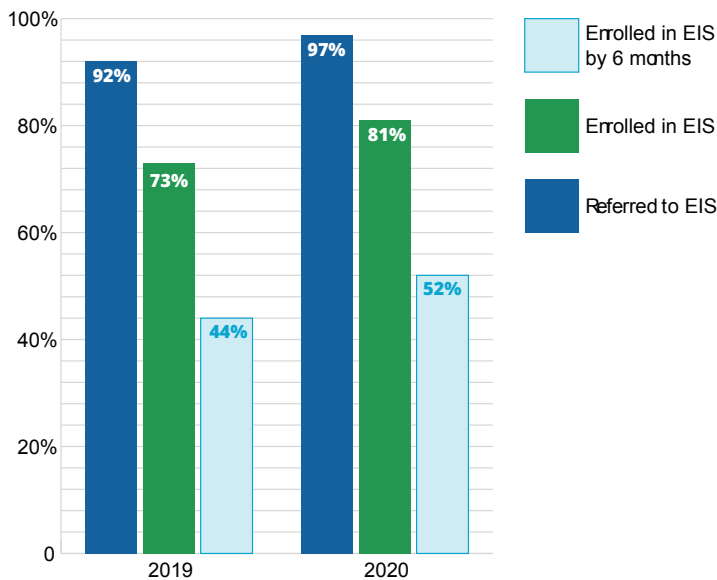
AAP Benchmark: 95% | 2019 National Average: 97.7%



The South Carolina newborn hearing screening rate among infants born in 2020 was 97%. The 2020 rate is above the American Academy of Pediatrics benchmark value of 95%. Of note, South Carolina maintained a high screening rate during the first year of COVID-19.

Early Intervention for SC Infants with Permanent Hearing Loss

AAP Benchmark: 100% | 2018 National Average: 67%

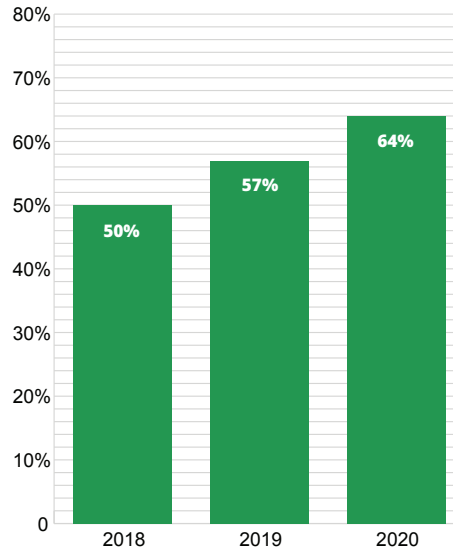


The percentages of South Carolina infants who were identified with permanent hearing loss referred for early intervention services (EIS) and receiving EIS have increased. The percentage of infants with permanent hearing loss receiving EIS by 6 months of age has also increased since 2019 at 52% in 2020.

The implementation of virtual visits for EIS likely contributed to the increases demonstrated during the first year of the pandemic. South Carolina fell short of the American Academy of Pediatrics standard of 100% but exceeded the 2019 national average of 45%. Factors contributing to delays in EIS for infants with hearing loss include parent withdrawal, unsuccessful attempts to contact the family, and multiple referrals prior to enrollment.

SC Infants with Hearing Loss Where Loss is Confirmed by 3 Months

AAP Benchmark: 100% | 2019 National Average: 79%



The percentage of South Carolina infants with neonatal hearing loss that was confirmed by 3 months of age steadily increased from 2018-2020. In 2020, 64% of infants with confirmed hearing loss in South Carolina were diagnosed by 3 months.

While below the American Academy of Pediatrics standard of 100% and the 2019 national average of 79%, the number of babies identified by 3 months increased in 2020 despite the challenges of presented by the first year of the pandemic. The majority of South Carolina audiologists remaining open for limited services in the first months of the pandemic and considering newborn hearing screening follow-up an essential service is likely to have contributed to this improvement.

Affirmations

My name is Alyssa and I live in Lexington County. I am 12 years old, I wear two cochlear implants, and I am a 6th grader in middle school. I love school so much because I make lots of new friends. I am in Honors [classes], and I have great classes like PE, Orchestra, and Drama. I have good grades and I am a hard, smart worker. When I had Drama, it was perfect because we did some plays and learning how to pronounce every word you say clearly helped me understand what I am saying and what other people are saying.

I love playing sports and when I get older, I want to play on the Gamecocks Women's Basketball team.

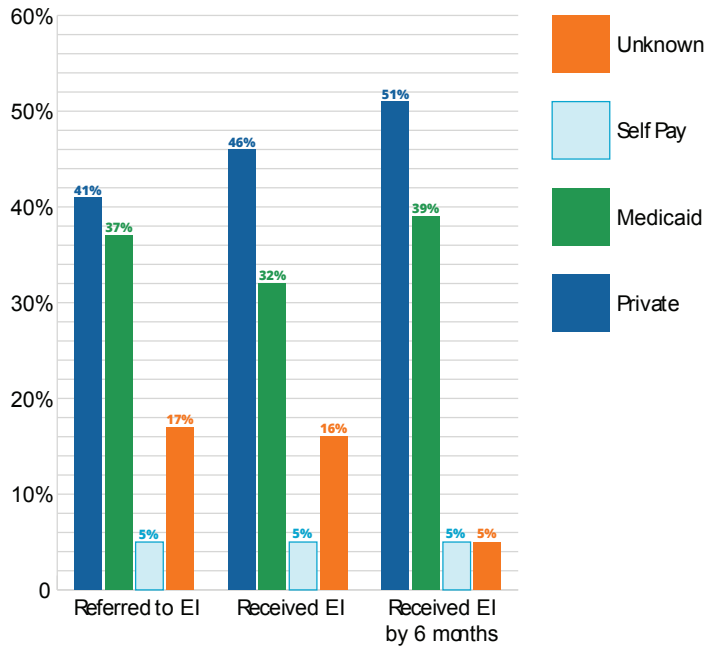
I love being Deaf. Here are my words for D/HH people - "No matter what everybody says about your hearing, you are great in any kind of way and be you."

Thanks, Alyssa,
Lexington County

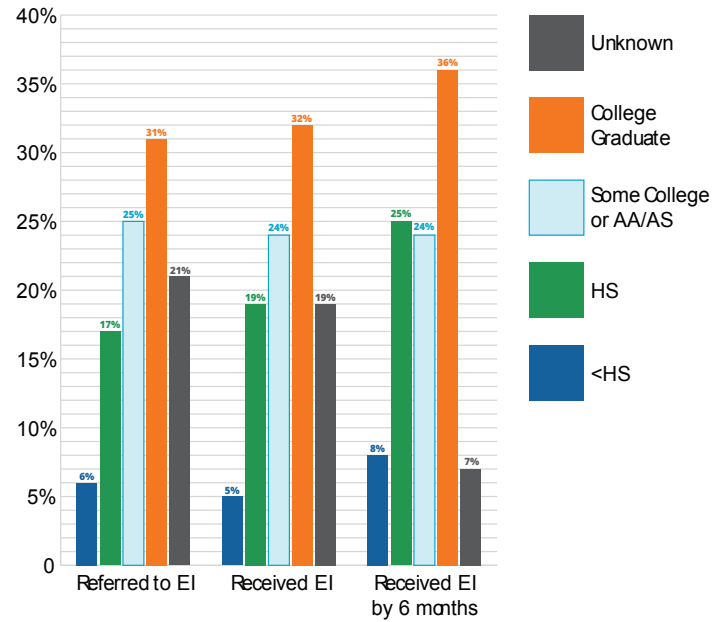


Demographics of Confirmed Hearing Loss and Early Intervention Services (EIS)

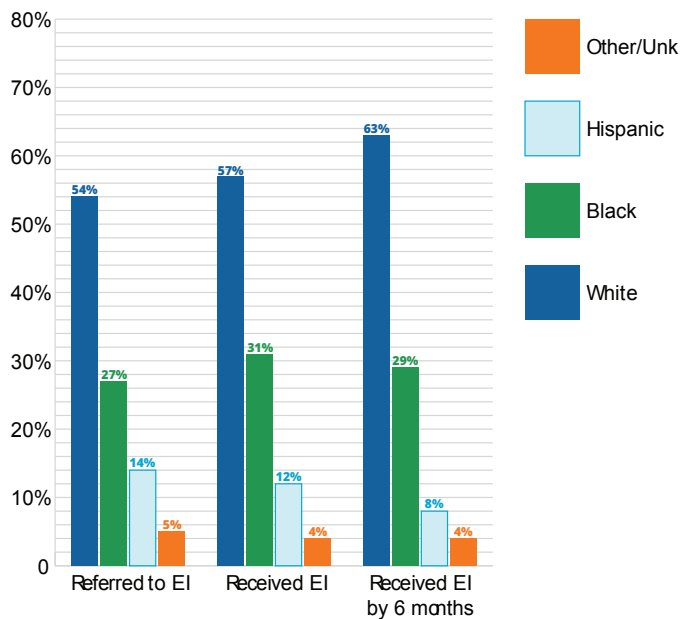
Type Of Insurance



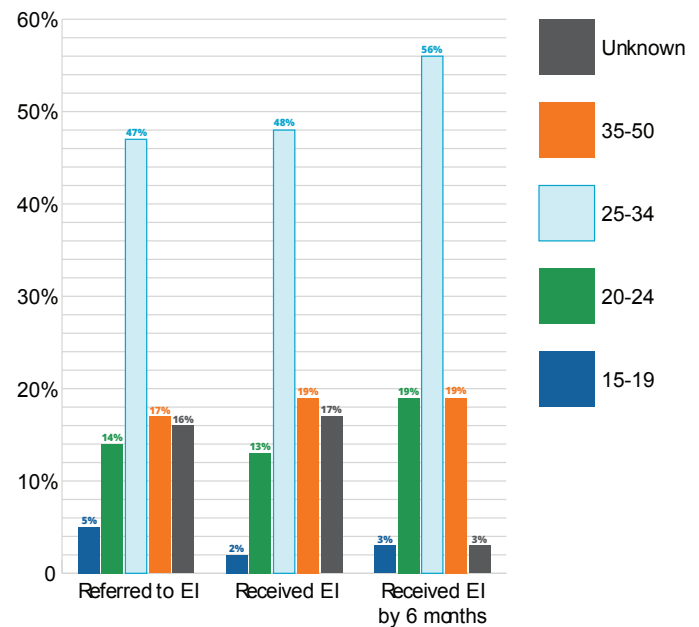
Maternal Education



Race/Ethnicity



Maternal Age



Affirmations

I am still reaping the benefits of [newborn hearing screening program] to this day. I was born in 2002 and thanks to the (then) new legislation I was screened for a hearing loss at birth. Early detection helped my parents prepare for the hard road and decisions ahead; I was tested, and the testing showed that I did in fact have a severe bilateral hearing loss.

Thanks to my parents' decisions I became implanted, began speech therapy, and was able to "catch up" to all the other peers in my class at an earlier date. That is something I am thankful for to this day, because the further back for becoming implanted is pushed, the longer it takes for one to achieve (spoken) communication. Thanks to the newborn hearing screening program, teachers, and doctors, I am now in the professional field and have many hearing friends and coworkers that I can effectively communicate and interact with.

Thanks,
Jay, Richland County

