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Director

State of California—Health and Human Services Agency
Department of Health Care Services



ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER
Governor

April 18, 2008

TO: INPATIENT INFANT HEARING SCREENING PROVIDERS, CCS-APPROVED COMMUNICATION DISORDER CENTERS, COMMUNITY PEDIATRICIANS

SUBJECT: INFANT AUDIOLOGIC ASSESSMENTS AND EVALUATIONS BY NEURO-DIAGNOSTIC DEPARTMENTS

Infants who require a diagnostic audiologic assessment through the California Newborn Hearing Screening Program (NHSP) are referred to a CCS-approved Type C Communication Disorder Center or an equivalent facility approved by the baby's insurance. Evaluations are to be completed in a manner consistent with the current standard of practice for infant audiologic assessment.

Professional practice documents from the Joint Committee on Infant Hearing (JCIH), the American Academy of Audiology, the American Speech, Language and Hearing Association and the California Infant Assessment Guidelines issued by the Children's Medical Services Branch, clearly define the necessary steps for the audiologic evaluation of an infant (links to the practice documents are available on the NHSP website at: www.dhcs.ca.gov/services/nhsp-click on Provider Resources located under the Provider heading then click on Best Practices). These documents specify that ear-specific, frequency-specific auditory brainstem response (ABR) thresholds; a measure of middle ear function (bone conduction or high frequency tympanometry), and otoacoustic emissions are the minimum test battery required to accurately assess the hearing status of an infant and subsequently provide the information necessary for amplification assessment. Furthermore, the 2007 JCIH Position Statement specifies that, "Comprehensive audiological evaluation of newborns and young infants who fail newborn hearing screening should be performed by audiologists experienced in pediatric hearing assessment."

The NHSP has received reports of infants who required a diagnostic hearing evaluation that were referred to neuro-diagnostic departments for the assessment. With all due respect to the training, experience and skills of physicians and technicians in neuro-diagnostics, the role of the audiologist is essential to the delivery of the appropriate standard of care that is in compliance with the standards for a comprehensive

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evaluation set forth in the JCIH Position Statement and practice documents referenced above. All infants who require a diagnostic evaluation must be referred to an audiologist experienced in pediatric hearing assessment as defined by the JCIH.

The NHSP Hearing Coordination Center in your region is available to assist in locating appropriate pediatric audiology facilities for NHSP infants (see the Hearing Coordination Center link on NHSP website for contact information). Additionally, your local California Children's Services Program (CCS) is available to assist in the authorization of diagnostic services for infants referred from the NHSP.

If you have any questions regarding this policy you may contact V. David Banda, Chief, Hearing and Audiology Services Unit at (916) 323-8091.

Sincerely,

Original Signed by Marian Dalsey, M.D., M.P.H.

Marian Dalsey, M.D., MPH, Chief
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cc: V. David Banda, Chief
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