



## ISSUE BRIEF

Iowa Department of Public Health  
Fiscal Year 2011



# Hearing Aid & Audiological *Services for Children*

## *Background*

Based on national statistics, every year approximately 120 children will be born in Iowa with a congenital hearing loss. Another one to three children per 1,000 will be diagnosed with a progressive or late onset hearing loss each year. Hearing loss can affect a child's ability to develop speech, language, and social skills. Eighty percent of a child's ability to learn speech, language and related cognitive skills is established by the time the child is thirty-six months of age, and hearing is vitally important to the healthy development of such language skills. The earlier a child who is deaf or hard-of-hearing obtains support services, the more likely the child's speech, language, and social skills will reach their full potential.

## *Issue*

Iowa law requires universal newborn hearing screening. The goal of the universal hearing screening of all newborns and infants in Iowa is early detection of hearing loss to allow children and their families the opportunity to obtain early intervention services. Research has concluded that children born with a hearing loss who are identified and given appropriate intervention before six months of age demonstrated significantly better speech and reading comprehension than children identified *after* six months of age (Yoshinaga-Itano et al., 1998). That being said, children are being identified at a young age, they have medical insurance, but their plan does not cover the cost of hearing aids.

## *Legislative Action*

Seventeen states have passed legislation to require insurance coverage for hearing aids for children. Requirements for health benefits plans vary state by state for ages covered, amount of coverage, benefit period, and provider qualifications. The range in cost was 5 to 39 cents per member per health plan.

There is no law in Iowa which requires hearing aid coverage for children. Instead, since 2007, the Iowa legislature has appropriated between \$180,000 to \$220,000 to the Iowa Department of Public Health to pay for hearing aids and/or audiological services for children who are not covered by health insurance.

## *Iowa Program Data*

During the fiscal year ending June 2011, Iowa taxpayers spent \$137,964.38 to provide hearing aids, accessories and audiological services (e.g. diagnostic testing) to 127 Iowa children. The following tables





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## Iowa Program Data cont.

provide averages for claim payments, the ages of children served, the insurance status of those children served through this program and a list of top ten provider offices with the highest reimbursement for FY 11. This number is down from the previous year. It is important to point out that state funding for this program was cut in January 2011 and was not restored as in the previous fiscal year.

Averages Derived from the 2011 Claim Payments	
Number of claims processed	141
Gross dollars paid	\$138,792.62
Net dollars paid	\$137,964.38***
Number of children with claims paid with all dates of service	127*
Number of children with claims paid with dates of service in FY10	115**
Total number of children enrolled during FY10	129
Average number of claims for all children	1.2
Average dollars paid for all children	\$1,086.33
Average dollars paid per claim	\$978.47
Children with insurance payments	8

\*\*This total does not include the processing and paying claims fees.

\*\*Out of the children served above, 12 children had services from the claims listed above before 07/10/10 = \$64.94 for services paid. These children were enrolled in 2010, but the providers did not submit their claims for payment until the 2011 fiscal year.

\*\*\*Fourteen children originally enrolled in the program did not receive funding because their insurance paid the costs of hearing aids or audiological services, the child was not a resident of Iowa or the family did not follow through with the application process.

The following is a table that includes the ages of children served. It is important to point out that 76 children served with this program were under the age of 10, a time when language development is so important.

Age	Children Served	Percent	Dollars Paid
0-2	18	13%	\$17,767.89
3-5	23	16%	\$22,607.65
6-10	45	38%	\$52,910.62
11-15	23	16%	\$22,066.36
16-20	18	17%	\$22,611.86



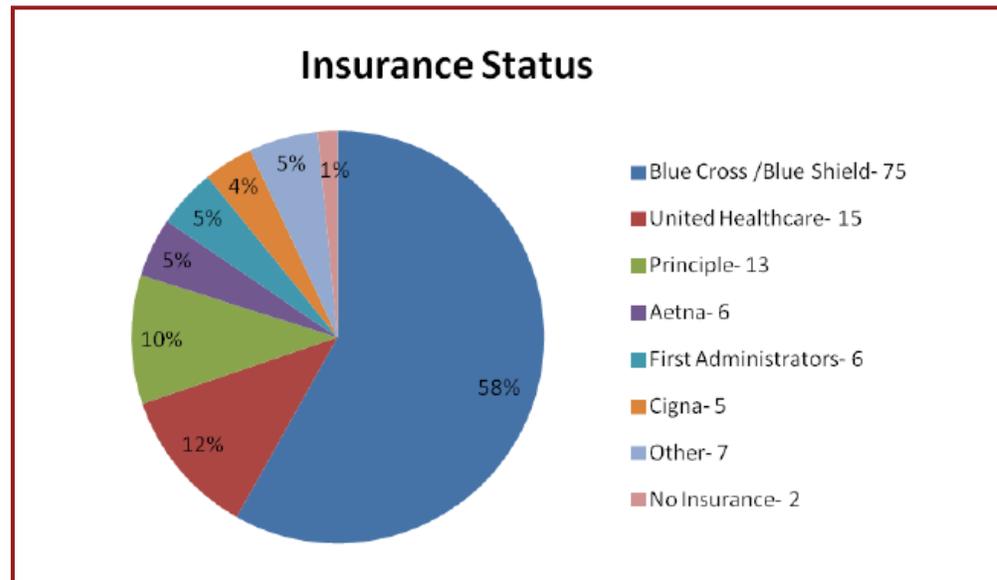
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The following chart illustrates the insurance status of children served under the Hearing Aids and Audiological Services program. Only 1 percent of the children eligible for funding did not have private medical insurance or qualify for public health insurance. That means that 99 percent of the children eligible for this program had medical coverage at the time of enrollment although most policies did not cover the costs for hearing aids or audiological services.

## Insurance as Reported on their 2011 Application Form



Research shows at least 40 percent of children with a hearing loss need insurance coverage for hearing aids (National Center for Hearing Assessment and Management, 2010). For some families, purchasing hearing aids is a financial hardship and families are left faced with tough decision.

## Acknowledgements

The IDPH EHDI program would like to thank all of the audiologists and hearing aid dispensers who work tirelessly with families to help them access funding to obtain hearing aids and accessories for the children they serve. We would also like to thank the EHDI Advisory Committee Members and the organizations they represent for their ongoing guidance with this program. Finally, thank you to the legislators and advocates who worked very hard to assist families in getting hearing aids, accessories and audiologist assessments for children diagnosed with hearing loss. You are making a difference. Just ask any one of the parents whose children benefited from this funding.



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## *A Family's Story*

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**As recalled by a parent of a child who benefitted from the program ...**

*The first day her hearing aids were fitted, as Isszy left the audiologists office she got outside the building and looked up at Colin and clearly said, "Daddy, I hear you walk!" with a sense of wonderment and delight!*

*Jennifer's final thoughts are echoed by so many other parents involved with the program. "We are grateful for the Audiological Program. Without it, we might not have been able to get Isabelle hearing aids. Without the financial assistance, I don't know how we would have managed. The program itself has been monumental for us. I fear Isabelle would have gotten further and further behind. With help, Isabelle and others like her are able to achieve more."*