



**Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.**  
State Superintendent of Schools

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December 1, 2020

The Honorable Larry Hogan  
Governor  
State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Bill Ferguson  
President of the Senate  
State House, H-107  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones  
Speaker of the House  
State House, H-101  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Hearing Aid and Language & Communication Video Loan Bank (MSAR #12245)

Dear Governor Hogan, President Ferguson, and Speaker Jones:

Section 8-606 of the Education Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland requires the State Superintendent to submit a report to the Governor and the General Assembly regarding the Hearing Aid Loan Bank Program (now the Maryland Hearing Aid and Language & Communication Video Loan Bank Program) on or before December 31 of each year. The annual report shall include specific information to the program implementation by the Maryland State Department of Education.

The completed report is attached for your review. Should you have questions or need additional information, please contact Zachary Hands, Director, Education Policy and Government Relations, at [Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov](mailto:Zachary.hands1@maryland.gov), or at (410)-767-0504.

Best Regards,

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.  
State Superintendent of Schools

# Maryland Hearing Aid and Language & Communication Video Loan Bank

*2020 Annual Report*

Submitted to:  
The Maryland General Assembly  
December 31, 2020



**Maryland State Department of Education**  
**Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This Annual Report for the Maryland Hearing Aid and Language & Communication Video Loan Bank (Loan Bank) serves to inform the Maryland General Assembly of the status of the program. The report includes details regarding the numbers and ages of children served this year, the counties from which referrals were generated, the length of each original loan and/or loan extension, the number of children who subsequently received permanent hearing aids or a cochlear implant, and projected program enhancements for 2020. The current program application, program brochure, and policies and procedures are included in the Appendices of this report.

Pursuant to SB 677 (2019), the Loan Bank operated under its expanded responsibilities for the first full calendar year in 2020. Expanded responsibilities include: expanding the age of eligibility for Maryland students still in high school from 18 to 21; increasing the loan time from six months to one year with a one-year extension; and offering video learning materials to assist parents of children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing to learn the language and communication method(s) they choose to use with their child.

As it has since its inception in 2002, the Loan Bank continues to provide hearing aids to Maryland children and families who are unable to obtain them in a timely fashion to ensure that infants, toddlers, children, and youth in the State have the tools they need to access spoken language and communication. During the 2020 calendar year, eleven hearing aid loans were initiated to six children/youth and their families and three hearing aids loaned in 2019 continued to be used by three children and youth. The language and communication video loan program received one request.

### **Overview**

Infants and toddlers who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing do not have full access to communication through the auditory channel of hearing, which can lead to delays in acquiring and using language. Even mild hearing loss can significantly affect receptive and expressive language and educational performance. Providing accessible language input is key to a solid foundation for development.

The National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders reports that the earlier deafness or hearing loss is identified and intervention is initiated, the better the chances a child will acquire language, whether it be spoken or signed. Some children benefit from the use of amplification technology, such as hearing aids and cochlear implants, that provides access to the sounds of spoken language. For these children, the introduction of amplification, along with the use of intervention strategies designed to maximize understanding and use of speech, supports emerging language skills, cognitive skills, and healthy social/emotional development, all of which are essential in forming a solid foundation for school readiness, learning, and success. Many children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, whether or not they use amplification, also benefit from access to visual language. This often occurs through the use of American Sign Language (ASL), a visual-spatial language that is the first language of many Deaf people in the United States. Families may also use Cued Speech, a system of hand shapes and placements that combine with the mouth movements of speech to represent the phonemes of spoken language, or other visual communication strategies to support their child's language access. Because early intervention, language access, and family engagement are critical to the life-long success of Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children, the Loan Bank serves as an important Statewide resource.

The Hearing Aid Loan Bank (HALB) was established in 2002 to create a bridge between early identification and early intervention for infants and toddlers with hearing loss and to provide essential services to meet the needs of young Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing children in the State of Maryland before they enter the formal educational environment. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), Division of Early Intervention and Special Education Services (DEI/SES) continued to operate the HALB beyond the sunset of the original statute in 2004, and in 2011, Senate Bill 754 formally established the HALB within the MSDE to serve infants and toddlers with hearing loss.

Because children who do not hear well in the school setting are at risk for academic and social difficulties due to missing crucial but subtle information, the legislature passed a bill in 2016 extending the maximum age of eligibility from 3 to 18 years. This change allowed the program to assist older children who need access to amplification to fully participate in school and other settings. School-age children who benefit include those with late-onset or late-diagnosed hearing loss, children whose families are uninsured/underinsured, and those who need new hearing aids before they are eligible for replacement under insurance coverage.

In October 2019, Senate Bill 677 became law, renaming the program The Maryland Hearing Aid and Language & Communication Video Loan Bank. The mandate of the project expanded to include provisions to loan video resources to help families learn the language and communication options (specifically, listening and spoken language, American Sign Language, and Cued Speech) that they may wish to use with their children. Families may request videos from the Loan Bank, which will be sent to them for an initial loan period of one month with the option to renew pending availability. The Loan Bank website also contains links to other resources for families to access directly at no cost. Other provisions of the legislation extended the age of eligibility from 18 to 21 for individuals still enrolled in high school and increased the initial loan and extension periods for hearing aids from six months to one year.

The Loan Bank is operated by the DEI/SES through the use of Federal Special Education discretionary funding. A School-Age Performance Specialist within the DEI/SES is designated as the Program Manager to oversee program operations, provide supervision, and ensure that information about services and supports are shared with local school systems, local Infants and Toddlers programs, and other community stakeholders. A licensed audiologist is hired as a consultant to manage inventory, fulfill requests for loaned hearing aids, and communicate information about the program with community audiologists and other professionals.

### **Program Data**

The program began its 17<sup>th</sup> year of operation in January 2020. This 16<sup>th</sup> Annual Report for the Maryland Hearing Aid Loan Bank, now the Maryland Hearing Aid and Language & Communication Video Loan Bank, describes the status of the program between January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020. At the time of this report, six families requested and received eleven hearing aids in 2020. In addition, three hearing aids loaned to two children or youth in 2019 were used during 2020, including one loan of two hearing aids made after submission of the 2019 annual report. Most loans in 2020 include two hearing aids, providing amplification for both ears; two children borrowed a bone conduction hearing aid. Each child was eligible to retain the loaned hearing aids for up to one year. A loan extension may be granted after the initial loan, for a one-year interval.

**Demographics of Loan Bank Participants**  
**January 1 to December 31, 2020**

**County of Residence**

| <b>County of Residence</b> | <b>Families Served</b> | <b>Hearing Aids Loaned</b> |
|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| Carroll                    | 1                      | 2                          |
| Charles                    | 1                      | 2                          |
| St. Mary's                 | 1                      | 2                          |
| Baltimore City             | 1                      | 2                          |
| Prince George's            | 1                      | 2                          |
| Baltimore                  | 1                      | 1                          |
| <b>Total:</b>              | <b>6</b>               | <b>11</b>                  |

**Age of Child**

| <b>Age of child at time of request</b> | <b>Number of children</b> |
|--|---------------------------|
| Less than 12 months                    | 0                         |
| 12 – 24 months old                     | 1                         |
| 24 – 36 months old                     | 1                         |
| 3 – 5 years old                        | 2                         |
| 6 – 9 years old                        | 1                         |
| 10 – 17 years old                      | 1                         |
| <b>Total Families Served</b>           | <b>6</b>                  |

**Duration of Loan**

| <b>Month Loan Originated</b> | <b>Number of Aids Loaned</b> | <b>Length of Loan (in Months, at time of report)</b> |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| January                      | 3                            | 2 aids – 10+ months<br>1 aid - 1 month               |
| February                     | 2                            | 2 aids – 8+ months                                   |
| March                        | 4                            | 4 aids – 7+ months                                   |
| April                        | 0                            | -  |
| May                          | 0                            | -  |
| June                         | 0                            | -  |
| July                         | 0                            | -  |
| August                       | 1                            | 1 aid - 2 months                                     |
| September                    | 0                            | -  |
| October                      | 1                            | 1 aid - 1 month+                                     |
| November                     | -                            | -  |
| December                     | -                            | -  |
| <b>Total</b>                 | <b>11</b>                    |  |

Between the dates of January 1, 2020 and December 31, 2020, there were three requests for loan extensions of at least three months from a loan initiated in 2019.

**Returned Hearing Aids**

Two families returned two hearing aids that were loaned in 2020. Three of the hearing aids loaned in 2019 are still in use. In addition, three families returned a total of five hearing aids that were loaned in 2019. Twelve hearing aids are currently being used.

**Hearing Aid Loan Distribution Summary: January 1 to December 31, 2020**

Eleven hearing aids were loaned to six eligible children. Three additional hearing aids that had been loaned in 2019 were used by two children during 2020.

## **Language and Communication Videos**

Language and communication videos were added to the Loan Bank’s mission in the fall of 2019 to assist families to learn skills in support of their children’s development. A loan process was developed and information about the expanded resources was shared with various stakeholders. One request for language and communication videos was received in 2020.

### **Cost Impact**

The chart below lists the actual costs by line item for SFY 2020 and projected costs for SFY 2021, including staff salaries for one program manager and one part-time audiologist, equipment and supplies (such as digital hearing aids), program outreach, program enhancement, and administrative support costs.

| <b>Costs</b>           | <b>SFY 2020 Actual</b> | <b>SFY 2021 Projected</b> |
|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| *Program Manager       | \$6,527.70             | \$6,527.70                |
| Audiologist Consultant | \$17,655.00            | \$24,750.00               |
| Equipment              | 0                      | \$5,000.00                |
| <b>Total</b>           | <b>\$24,182.70</b>     | <b>\$36,277.70</b>        |

Other operating expenses of the Loan Bank, including postage/shipping of hearing aids and other materials, photocopying of outreach materials for distribution to stakeholders, website support, and administrative support, are provided by the DEI/SES.

## **Community Partnerships**

The Loan Bank is a key part of the network of programs and agencies that address the needs of children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing and their families. Each year approximately 80 infants are identified as Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing through the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI) newborn hearing screening program administered by the Maryland Department of Health. After confirmation of their hearing status, children are referred to their local Infants and Toddlers Program to receive early intervention services. Through a collaborative partnership, the EHDI program, the Loan Bank, and Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program provide a valuable service to infants and toddlers with hearing loss and their families. The program manager and audiologist share information about the program with the multiple stakeholder groups throughout the year. The Loan Bank is regularly discussed at the EHDI Advisory Council, the annual statewide EHDI conference, the Governor’s Office of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Advisory Council, and the Maryland State Steering Committee for Programs for Students who are Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing. Additionally, the DEI/SES has posted guidance on early intervention services for young children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing and their families that can be found at: <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/TAB/18-02%20DHoH%20TAB%20rev%2010%202019%20-%20508.docx>

## **Program Enhancements**

### **Implement Language & Communication Video Library**

**Goal:**

Create a collection of videos and other resources that may be loaned to families to help them learn about the language and communication options they may wish to use with their children and develop their own knowledge and skills in those languages and/or methods.

**Progress Update (January 1 - December 31, 2020):**

The video loan program was implemented beginning in the fall of 2019. The availability of the resources was shared with local special education leaders, audiologists, deaf educators, and other stakeholders across the State. Program staff will continue to disseminate information about the program and monitor feedback.

### **Update and Maintain Hearing Aid Inventory**

**Goal:**

Continue to increase the number of state-of-the-art digital hearing aids available in the Loan Bank inventory, ensuring the availability of appropriate technology for users across the full age range served by the program and with a variety of hearing levels.

**Progress Update (January 1 - December 31, 2020):**

New hearing aids purchased during 2019 were fully utilized to fulfill loan requests. Returned hearing aids are serviced under the extended warranties before being loaned out again. The program audiologist continues to track requests to determine if additional inventory is required to meet needs.

### **Increase Public Awareness and Utilization**

**Goal:**

Increase community awareness of the availability and benefits of utilizing the Loan Bank by Infants and Toddlers Programs, school-based programs, medical professionals, and community agencies serving children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing and their families across the State, particularly in less densely populated areas of Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore and publicize the availability of the language & communication video loan program to families and professionals.

**Progress Update (January 1 - December 31, 2020):**

Information regarding the Loan Bank is posted on the Maryland State Department of Education website at [www.marylandpublicschools.org](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org). Links to the applications for hearing aids and language & communication videos are available to the public on the website. In addition, information about the Loan Bank and its resources, including applications, are available on the Maryland Learning Links website <https://marylandlearninglinks.org/the-maryland-hearing-aid-and-language-and-communication-video-loan-bank/>. The Loan Bank is also linked from the Maryland State Infant Hearing Advisory Council and the Maryland Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing websites. This interagency collaboration and support facilitates the delivery of services to families throughout the State.

## **Summary**

The Loan Bank provides a vital and successful service to infants, toddlers, and school-age children and youth up to age 21 with hearing loss, and their families. The Loan Bank has assisted 337 families across the State since May 2003 and has loaned approximately 587 hearing aids to children and youth over the last 17 years. The 2020 addition of a language and communication video loan program enhances this service by providing resources to assist families in the development of communication skills that support their child's development. The MSDE recognizes the importance of laying an adequate foundation for school readiness, educational development, learning, and success. Through early intervention services provided by the Loan Bank, children are supported in developing language skills, which in turn support access and equity in learning, educational progress, and achievement. School-age children and youth who receive loaned hearing aids have enhanced access to communication, learning, and peer interaction. The Loan Bank meets critical needs for Maryland families.

The MSDE remains committed to the implementation of the Loan Bank through enhanced program support and funding. We are grateful to the Maryland State Legislature for the continued support of the program, and we look forward to a continued partnership on behalf of Maryland children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing and their families.

## **Testimonials**

*"I thank you truly for all your help and support. My health insurance is expensive and doesn't cover the entire cost of the hearing aids. Thank you for being part of my son's healthy development and future opportunities!"*

*Parent*

*"We want to thank the Loan Bank for letting us borrow hearing aids. The service meant so much to us! Our son was able to have access to this important technology at an early age, which allowed him to reap early benefits from speech development. Thank you so much!"*

*Parent*

*"Mom has insurance, but it doesn't cover the total cost of hearing aids, and she needs time to get additional funds. We are so grateful for this service! Thank you for all of your help!"*

*Audiologist*

## **Appendix**

### **Appendix: Program Brochure**

# Language: The key to development

Communication access lays the foundation for development in all areas (cognitive, linguistic, social, and academic) for young children and enables older children to grow and thrive in school and other settings. For children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, ensuring accessible language and communication from the start allows the child to develop his or her skills and relationships.

Based on their child's needs and their family goals, parents may choose to communicate with their Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing child using:

- A visual language such as American Sign Language
- Listening and spoken language strategies to develop the spoken language(s) of the home
- A visual communication method, such as Cued Speech, that provides access to the spoken language(s) of the home
- A combination of these approaches

For many children, amplification (via hearing aids and/or cochlear implants) is an important part of their language access and development.

**The Maryland Hearing Aid and Language & Communication Video Loan Bank provides families with resources to support their child's language access and development. Families may borrow videos and other resources that help them learn the language(s) and/or communication methods they choose to use with their children. Loaner hearing aids are available to families who do not have insurance coverage, need a trial period before obtaining amplification technology, or are experiencing other difficulties or delays obtaining hearing aids for their children.**

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## Maryland Hearing Aid *and* Language & Communication Video Loan Bank

*Supporting Language Access*

**For Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing  
Marylanders from Birth through 21**



# The Maryland Hearing Aid and Language & Communication Video Loan Bank



## Who is eligible?

Maryland residents who:

- Have been confirmed by an audiologist to be Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing
- Are under age 21 and have not yet graduated from high school
- (For loaner hearing aids) Are experiencing barriers or delays to purchasing, obtaining, or replacing aids or need aids on a trial basis.

**There are no income qualifications for the program and all resources are provided free of charge to families. Families may access hearing aids, language and communication videos, or both.**

<https://www.marylandlearninglinks.org/the-maryland-hearing-aid-and-language-and-communication-video-loan-bank>

## How do families access hearing aids and videos from the Loan Bank?

### Hearing Aids

The Loan Bank has an inventory of hearing aids appropriate for children with varying levels of hearing loss, including specialized devices for unilateral and conductive loss.

Submit the application found on the Loan Bank website to receive loaner hearing aids. The application includes sections to be completed by the family and by the audiologist.

**How do the hearing aids get to the family?** Because hearing aids are highly technical, prescribed electronic devices, they are sent directly to the audiologist for programming and fitting, as needed. The family will also obtain ear molds through their audiologist.

**How long can a child keep hearing aids from the Loan Bank?** The standard length of time is 12 months with up to a 12-month extension.



### Language and Communication Videos

The Loan Bank includes videos and other resources on language development in children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing. It also contains materials to help families learn the language or communication method(s) they choose to use, including:

- American Sign Language
- Cued Speech
- Listening and spoken language strategies

Visit the Loan Bank website at to complete the request form. The requested items will be sent to you. The Loan Bank website also contains links to materials that you can directly access on the internet at no cost.

**How long can a family keep language and communication videos?** The standard loan period is one month. Loans may be extended on request, pending requests from other patrons. When you are finished, mail the materials back to the Loan Bank.

## What other supports and services are available for children and families?

**Early Intervention:** Young children (birth to 3) who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing and their families are eligible for early intervention services through the Maryland Infants and Toddlers Program (MITP).

- For information about early intervention or to refer a child for services, visit <https://referral.mditp.org>
- For MSDE's guidance on best practices in Early Intervention for children who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing, see <http://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/TAB/18-02-DeafHardHearing.pdf>

**Special Education:** Children age 3 through 21 who are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing may be eligible for Special Education. Contact your local school to begin the evaluation process.

**Maryland School for the Deaf:** Children and families from across the State may receive services, such as home visits, American Sign Language instruction, and educational programming from the Maryland School for the Deaf. Visit [msd.edu](http://msd.edu) for more information.

