



Dear Colleagues:

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month and the Office of Special Education Programs within the U.S. Department of Education and the Offices of Head Start and Child Care within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services are partnering to join the **American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)** in celebrating this year's theme – “*Communication Takes Care.*” Throughout the month, ASHA partners with national and local stakeholders to engage in a multifaceted public education effort on the importance of communication and to raise awareness about the critical need to intervene early when young children are identified with communication disorders.

This year, we will focus on raising awareness about the use of assistive technology and the importance of frequent hearing screenings. Assistive technology can be as “low-tech” as a step stool to reach a sink or “high-tech” like an electronic communication device but both methods serve the same purpose which is to open the door to learning for many children with disabilities. When a child has significant developmental challenges, assistive technology may be the only way to communicate with peers. Early use of assistive technology to support communication development has proven to support development across all domains. Assistive technology, even when only used for short periods of time, provides for early learning experiences that can promote further development.

Hearing screenings can happen in a variety of programs and settings. We wanted to use this opportunity to raise awareness about the importance of screening children early and frequently, because the earlier a hearing loss is identified, the sooner a decision can be made about the appropriate strategies that will help him or her learn to communicate. Families may want to learn more about how assistive technology can support their child during their everyday routines.

In celebration of Better Hearing and Speech Month, please join us for these *Coffee Break* webinars. There is no registration to join the webinars.

May 16, 2:00 – 2:15 pm ET

Debunking Common Myths about Using Assistive Technology with Young Children

<https://ncham.adobeconnect.com/ncham/>

Captioning Services: <http://www.streamtext.net/player?cvcnt=NCHAM>

May 17, 2:00 – 2:15 pm ET

Don't Wait to Communicate! Augmentative & Alternative Communication (AAC)

<https://ncham.adobeconnect.com/ncham/>

Captioning Services: <http://www.streamtext.net/player?event=NCHAM>

May 18, 2:00 – 2:15 pm ET

Quality Hearing Screening Practices for Children Birth to Five Years of Age

<https://ncham.adobeconnect.com/ncham/>

Captioning Services: <http://www.streamtext.net/player?event=NCHAM>

May 19, 2:00 – 2:15 pm ET

Using a Multi-modal Approach To Support Children with Hearing Loss

<https://ncham.adobeconnect.com/ncham/>

Captioning Services: <http://www.streamtext.net/player?event=NCHAM>

May 20, 2:00 – 2:15 pm ET

Center on Technology and Disability: Free Resources to Support the Use of Assistive Technology in Young Children with Disabilities

<https://ncham.adobeconnect.com/ncham/>

Captioning Services: <http://www.streamtext.net/player?event=NCHAM>



With the use of assistive technology when needed and regular hearing screenings, families, teachers, child care providers and other professionals can ensure that young children get the services and supports they need, as early as possible to help them thrive alongside their peers. Combining the love and knowledge families have of their children with tools, guidance, and tips recommended by experts can make the most of the developmental support children receive.

We hope that you will join us to celebrate Better Hearing and Speech Month by participating in the webinars and using the accompanying resource document to support your everyday work.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth".

Ruth Ryder
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