# The Impact of Combined Hearing and Vision Loss

## Why it is important to consider vision and hearing together.

One of the key ways babies learn is by exploring the world around them using all of their senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, taste). When babies begin to crawl, their world gets bigger as they move around and play in new places. Older babies also like to try out new skills, point to people and objects they find interesting, and “talk” about what’s going on around them. Toddlers continue exploring by moving and playing with objects of all shapes and sizes, trying things out, and repeating what they hear.

## Having a vision loss or a hearing loss makes learning more difficult.

When babies can’t see all the people and things around them (or don’t see them the same way other babies do) the world can be an unusual and even scary place. Having a hearing loss also makes learning more difficult. When babies can’t hear (or don’t hear well) they must rely more on vision to learn about their world. They are less likely to experiment with their voices and may become discouraged or angry when people can’t tell what they want or need.

## When an infant or toddler has a combined vision and hearing loss, the challenges are multiplied, even if the child is not totally deaf and/or totally blind.

Babies with combined vision and hearing loss may be afraid to touch things or move around. They may make unusual noises or act in unusual ways when trying to let people know what they want. Some babies act out almost constantly while others withdraw. Parents, brothers and sisters, babysitters, and friends may become frustrated because they don’t know what to do.

Combined vision and hearing loss causes unique learning needs, but techniques to promote learning have been developed and proven to work. If you know an infant or toddler with combined vision and hearing loss, help is available. It doesn’t matter if the child spends his or her time at home or in a day care setting. It doesn’t matter if they have additional disabilities. What does matter is that each infant or toddler and their families find the support that will make a difference.

[Insert your state deaf-blind project’s contact information here.]

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