



# Newborn Hearing Screening Program Policy

---

## 1. Purpose

The *Newborn Hearing Screening Program Policy* outlines roles, responsibilities and reporting requirements for Health Service Providers that provide the Newborn Hearing Screening Program.

The Newborn Hearing Screening Program involves screening newborn babies to identify those with moderate to profound (> 40 decibels) congenital permanent bilateral, unilateral sensory or permanent conductive hearing loss including neural hearing loss.

The Newborn Hearing Screening Program is provided by the WA health system as part of standard maternity care.

This Policy is a mandatory requirement under the *Public Health Policy Framework* pursuant to section 26(2)(c) of the *Health Services Act 2016*.

This Policy supersedes OD 0239/09 *Newborn Hearing Screening*.

## 2. Applicability

This Policy is applicable to the Child and Adolescent Health Service and Health Service Providers that provide maternity and neonatal services.

To the extent that requirements contained within this Policy are applicable to the services purchased from contracted health entities, Health Service Providers are responsible for ensuring these requirements are accurately reflected in the relevant contract and managed accordingly.

## 3. Policy requirements

Health Service Providers providing the Newborn Hearing Screening Program must have evidence-based procedures in place that adhere to and align with the requirements of this Policy.

These services must be provided as outlined in the *Newborn Hearing Screening Program Procedure*.

### 3.1 Child and Adolescent Health Service

The Child and Adolescent Health Service must provide the following services for the WA Newborn Hearing Screening Program:

- administrative and management services
- training and education materials for the Newborn Hearing Screening Program
- quality assurance.

Child and Adolescent Health Service must have procedures that document:

- how they provide administrative support to Health Service Providers
- how they manage newborn hearing screening results including:
  - babies with a 'refer' result to be offered a referral to Perth Children's Hospital Audiology
  - babies with a 'pass' result and surveillance indicators to be followed up
  - the recording and reporting of data for compliance monitoring.

### 3.2 Health Service Providers providing newborn hearing screening tests

Health Service Providers that provide newborn hearing screening must:

- nominate at least one contact position at each site that will be the point of contact with the Child and Adolescent Health Service
- ensure timely screening of all eligible babies from six hours post birth
- ensure screening staff are appropriately trained and have access to ongoing education
- provide and maintain screening equipment and consumables.

## 4. Compliance monitoring

Health Service Providers are responsible for ensuring compliance with this Policy.

The System Manager, through the Office of Population Health Genomics, Department of Health may review policies, procedures and reported data to ascertain compliance with this Policy. The Office of Population Health Genomics may provide updates to the Director General regarding the findings.

The Child and Adolescent Health Service must use the [Performance Indicators Form - Newborn Hearing Screening Program](#) to report data annually to the Department of Health via the Office of Population Health Genomics [genomics@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:genomics@health.wa.gov.au).

## 5. Related documents

The following documents are mandatory pursuant to this Policy:

- [Newborn Hearing Screening Program Procedure](#)
- [Equipment Specification Form](#) - Newborn Hearing Screening Program
- [Performance Indicators Form](#) - Newborn Hearing Screening Program

## 6. Supporting information

The following information is not mandatory but informs and/or supports the implementation of this Policy:

- [National Agreement of Council of Australian Governments \(2009\)](#)
- [National Framework for Neonatal Hearing Screening \(2013\)](#)
- [Newborn Hearing Screening Program](#) (Perth Children's Hospital)
- [Newborn Hearing Screening Brochure](#) (Perth Children's Hospital)
- [Why does my baby need further hearing tests?](#) (Perth Children's Hospital)

## 7. Definitions

The following definition(s) are relevant to this Policy.

Term	Definition
Bilateral	In both ears
Congenital	(Of a disease or physical abnormality) present from birth.
Contraindications	Suggest or indicate that a technique, procedure or drug should not be used in the case in question.
Corrected age	Corrected age considers the time between premature birth and the actual due date of a full-term pregnancy.
Newborn Hearing Screening Program	A screening program that detects moderate to profound (> 40 decibels) congenital permanent bilateral, unilateral sensory or permanent conductive hearing loss including neural hearing loss. The testing is not diagnostic but will identify newborns requiring further assessment to confirm the presence of hearing loss.
Pass (negative) result	No hearing loss is detected at the initial newborn hearing screening test. A negative test result.
Permanent childhood hearing impairment	Includes congenital hearing loss i.e. present at birth, as well as conditions that cause permanent hearing impairment in early childhood. Hearing loss can be either conductive, sensorineural, neural or mixed in nature.
Progressive hearing loss	Hearing loss that worsens over time.
Refer (positive) result	A refer occurs when a child has not passed the newborn screen in the same ear/s on two separate occasions and needs to undergo further testing conducted by an audiologist. A positive result.
Rescreen	A second screening for babies who do not pass the initial screen. The rescreen should occur after 24 hours.
Surveillance indicators	An attribute or exposure that is associated with an increased probability of a specified outcome i.e. family history, syndrome, infection.
Screeener	Personnel who have completed an approved education program and achieved competencies in performing universal newborn hearing screening using an approved hearing screen device.
Unilateral	In one ear.

## 8. Policy contact

Enquiries relating to this Policy may be directed to:

Title: Manager, Screening Policy  
Directorate: Office of Population Health Genomics  
Email: [genomics@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:genomics@health.wa.gov.au)

## 9. Document control

Version	Published date	Effective from	Review date	Effective to	Amendment(s)
MP 0167/21	29 July 2021	29 July 2021	July 2023	Current	Original version

## 10. Approval

Approval by	Nicole O'Keefe, Assistant Director General, Strategy and Governance Division
Approval date	28 July 2021

**This document can be made available in alternative formats on request for a person with a disability.**

© Department of Health 2021

Copyright to this material is vested in the State of Western Australia unless otherwise indicated. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the provisions of the *Copyright Act 1968*, no part may be reproduced or re-used for any purposes whatsoever without written permission of the State of Western Australia.