

“She failed the newborn screening test. Don’t worry, we will come back tomorrow,” said the technician. As new parents, we had no idea what the newborn hearing test was, let alone, what it meant to fail. But after failing the test the following day, and two weeks after discharge, we knew that our daughter Hadley had a problem. After countless tests including EKG’s, MRI’s, genetic blood tests and more hearing tests, we finally had our answer. Our daughter had profound sensorineural hearing loss due to a deficiency in her Connexin 26 gene. In plain English, she was deaf. My husband and I were in uncharted waters. We read, researched, and networked, trying to understand what this would mean for our daughter and her future. Living in Boston, we were seen at Children’s Hospital and evaluated by the Cochlear Implantation Program. Hadley was deemed to be a candidate for implants, and she was scheduled to be implanted at 10 months old.

This process was only the first step in our journey. We knew that early implantation was not enough. Hadley had lost exposure to sound during her nine months in utero and the first ten months of her life. She needed to be inundated with language and speech as soon as possible. We researched how to best accomplish this goal and learned about Auditory Oral Education.

That Thanksgiving, we traveled to Phoenix to see family and were fortunate enough to visit Desert Voices. My husband and I observed a class in session and watched two 4-year-old girls talking about the turkey and stuffing that they were going to eat in a few days. These girls had hearing loss, like our daughter, but they were playing and talking like any other 4-year-olds. My husband and I had tears in our eyes. We had never even imagined that this normalcy would be possible for our daughter. The team at Desert Voices was so welcoming, accommodating, and reassuring. Seeing the children and the clear success stories was beyond overwhelming. We knew what we had to do. One cross-country move later, Hadley started early intervention at Desert Voices. It was a few months after her first birthday. She progressed through the toddler program and the preschool. She is now five years old and graduated from Desert Voices in May. Hadley mainstreamed this fall, and is doing great. Her teachers are extremely impressed by her vocabulary and grammar, and she’s starting to learn to read!

Enrolling Hadley at Desert Voices is the best decision we have ever made. We could never thank everyone at Desert Voices enough for all they have done for Hadley and our family.

Dr. Adam Harris and Colby Kant