



SECTION 2

DEAFNESS AND CULTURE

Professionals helping support your child will want to be considerate of any special cultural needs your family has. Let them know if there is something you want them to be aware of.

For example:

- If someone is visiting your home you may want them to take their shoes off at the door, or not put their equipment on food preparation surfaces such as the kitchen table.
- If English is not your first language you can ask for an interpreter when you go to an appointment, such as when you visit an audiologist, or on a pre-school or school visit. Ask your Advisor on Deaf Children (AODC) about how to request a translator.
- A culture, family, or community can have special beliefs about hearing loss. For example, some cultures warmly embrace deafness while others may view it less positively. Sometimes talking about your beliefs with others will help them gain a better understanding if any issues arise that need to be resolved in a culturally-sensitive way.

"I don't care that I'm deaf. I can still be involved in sport. I play rugby. I can't hear the whistle so when I explain I am deaf they use a flag. I go to the gym with my mum. I belong to Poly [dance] club."

Tagi, student

"Most deaf children cope well and have lots of friends... When my parents realised I was deaf they learnt how to sign."

Amber, student

"I've got loads of friends who are really supportive. Some friends really understand how it works. The other night I was at a party and my girlfriend brought some batteries to me because the batteries [on hearing aid] had run low. Other friends have done that as well."

Josh, age 21

"Jamie has a cochlear implant. He has topped his class for the past three years and also has won the school's Piano Cup for the past two years. In the International Competitions and Assessments for Schools (ICAS) of science, English, and maths he was placed in the top 2% of the country for English, the top 3% for maths and the top 9% for science."



If you are Māori

There are special issues you may need to consider and talk through with your whānau when deciding how you want your tamariki to learn to communicate:

- Māori culture has a strong oral tradition that talks of 'listening with our ears not our eyes'. Making direct eye contact is seen by some people as a sign of disrespect. If this is the case in your whānau, lip reading is less likely to be one of your tamariki's hearing strategies.
- The wearing of hearing aids – especially cochlear implants which require surgery – may bring particular issues because of the involvement of the head.

Kaitakawaenga

These are Ministry of Education Māori liaison advisors who can work with you, your whānau, and your tamariki in your home, on marae, kura, wharekura or Kohanga reo. Your Kaitakawaenga will help support culturally appropriate relationships between your whānau and the professionals who work with your child.

Ruamoko Marae – the world's only Deaf Marae

Ruamoko Marae is in the grounds of Kelston Deaf Education Centre in Auckland.

Māori and Deaf staff and whānau provide support to students and their families in educational planning meetings, hui, a Māori Studies programme, carving, Te Reo classes, trips, and advocacy.

Contact:

Ruamoko Marae
c/- KDEC, Private Bag 93008, New Lynn
Waea/fax 09 827 9812
Phone 09 827 4859
TTY 09 827 9806
Website www.kdec.school.nz

"Tua Wera" – a Southern whare, for deaf students

Van Asch Deaf Education Centre (VADEC) in Christchurch has a dedicated whare wanaka named "Tua Wera", which is used for school and regional support meetings and activities. VADEC also offers Māori books, posters, and DVDs through its Media Centre. You'll find a free resource catalogue on the van Asch website. (A wanaka is a place of learning. The term "wananga" is used in the North Island.)

Contact:

Van Asch Deaf Education Centre, Truro Street,
Sumner, Christchurch
Phone and TTY 03 326 6009
Fax 03 326 5346.
Email info@vanasch.school.nz
Website www.vanasch.school.nz

Sign language in Māori

While there's no separate Māori sign language, there are Māori signs for Māori concepts. Both Māori and Pākehā Deaf use NZSL as a common community language. Māori Deaf people have developed and continue to develop signs relating to Māori culture.

A quarter of all 24,000+ people who communicate using NZ Sign Language also speak Māori.