

TRIPOD'S BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

A hearing loss is a barrier to communication and an obstacle to learning. If this loss occurs at birth or shortly after, the child's ability to acquire language by the usual means - through hearing - is lost or greatly reduced.

Although deaf children have the normal range of intelligence and can experience success in many areas of life, the vast majority of them never learn to read or write adequately.

Over 90% of deaf children are born to hearing parents who often feel powerless in the face of the profound communication barrier which must be overcome. Most hearing parents have no concept of what deafness means, so they often feel cut off from normal parenting instincts.

The quality of any child's interaction and communication with his family during the formative years has a great impact on his ultimate success as an adult. This is especially true with deaf children, but when the parents are hearing, it is also much more difficult. These families need to develop new ways of communicating, which usually involves learning a new language. They need to feel relaxed and confident in their role as parents, but there is no "Dr. Spock for the Deaf Child" to guide them.

TRIPOD was founded in 1982 by parents and professionals who were concerned that:

- * there was no family-oriented pre-school program in the Los Angeles area using a Total Communication philosophy,
- * there was no place where parents, professionals and deaf adults could meet and openly discuss the many controversial issues surrounding deaf education,
- * there were no sign language classes which offered vocabulary relevant to families with young deaf children, and
- * there was no central clearinghouse for objective information about raising and educating a deaf child.

TRIPOD's purpose is to provide families of deaf children with information, support, and a place where they and their children can communicate and learn together in a positive, natural and informed way.

TRIPOD was specifically designed to avoid duplication of existing services and to work closely with other programs serving the hearing-impaired community.