



Cued Speech and Literacy

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

Literacy is the ability to read and write proficiently, which allows one to understand and communicate ideas so as to participate in a literate society.

The primary purpose in developing Cued Speech was to create a visual system that would enable a person who is deaf or hard of hearing to become literate. We acknowledge that the ability to comprehend language is critical to an individual's quality of life and self-esteem. English language literacy provides access to educational options and career choices, as well as better employability, economic and social freedom.

Language and literacy go hand in hand. Ideally, the child's first language should be the parents' primary language(s). This allows for the natural acquisition of language and literacy skills.

The Cued Speech system enables people who are deaf or hard of hearing to visually absorb English, including its vocabulary, syntax, and phonemic structure. Consistent cueing in English increases communication, vocabulary, and language interaction between people who are hearing, deaf or hard of hearing. Thus, cueing provides visual access to the foundation necessary for proficiency in reading and writing.

Maximum attainment of language literacy depends on accurate and consistent cueing by family members and professionals. Cueing is most effective beginning at early identification of hearing loss and when the following occur:

- The family provides the individual who is deaf or hard of hearing with visual access to the language(s) and environmental sounds that others hear.
- A child's educational program is accessed through Cued Speech by teachers and service providers who are cueing all the time. If they do not cue, then a qualified cued language transliterator should be present. Transl iterators facilitate communication and learning, as well as provide access to auditory environmental information.

Cued Speech can be used in conjunction with aural/oral, auditory/verbal, and/or signing approaches. It can be used to develop literacy skills in children with a variety of learning needs.

*—Original Statement adopted 7-22-1990
—Revised Statement adopted 4-14-2007*



Early Intervention and Cued Speech

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

Early access to communication and language is vital for developing emergent literacy skills. The National Cued Speech Association supports universal newborn hearing screening programs, as it is necessary for parents of children who are deaf or hard of hearing to learn how best to communicate with their child. The earlier appropriate visual communication is established, the sooner the language development process can begin.

Children diagnosed with hearing loss should receive services as requested from early interventionists, including audiologists, speech-language pathologists, developmental therapists, and/or teachers of the deaf trained in working with children who are deaf or hard of hearing.

Presenting unbiased information about Cued Speech as a visual communication option at the time the child's hearing loss is identified allows families the opportunity to learn how to cue and provide immediate and early visual access to English to their newborn child.

Parents/guardians and early intervention specialists should receive formal training and direct support in learning Cued Speech so that they can provide accurate and consistent cued language stimulation at all times, during both structured and unstructured learning opportunities.

A cued language environment from birth allows children identified as deaf or hard of hearing to more rapidly develop receptive and expressive language skills and establish a mental model of the spoken language used in the home, thus facilitating reading and writing skills development. Early use of Cued Speech also provides the multi-sensory information that children with identified auditory- or language-related disorders (e.g., auditory neuropathy, autism, Down syndrome, etc.) need in order to attain their maximum potential in language, speech and literacy.

Family Cued Speech camps (learning vacations) play a critical role in providing support to parents and professionals, as well as deaf and hard-of-hearing children. For families and professionals new to deafness and cueing, these camps act as a safe space and provide positive reinforcement. These camps also create environments in which cueing is the norm, allowing new cueers to communicate with others who cue.

—Original Statement adopted 3-24-2006

—Revised Statement adopted 4-13-2007



Cued Speech and the Deaf Child in the Hearing Family

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

The National Cued Speech Association (NCSA) believes parents are the best language models for children. Approximately 90 percent of children who are deaf or hard of hearing are born to hearing parents. In order for the child who is deaf or hard of hearing to be fully included in the family, s/he must have full access to the parents' primary language(s).

The NCSA believes that parents who consistently use a cued language provide the child who is deaf or hard of hearing with full access to communication and language(s) in the home, and therefore, full inclusion in family activities.

Cueing enables hearing parents to quickly learn to express their native language visually and then build upon their child's language base at home. As with all children, those who are deaf or hard of hearing want and need to be full participants in their family's language(s) and culture(s). Cued Speech was developed for use by all parents, hearing and deaf, of children who are deaf and hard of hearing to expedite the development of English language skills. These skills are needed to establish a strong foundation for academic literacy.

Children of hearing parents should also be provided with opportunities for interacting with deaf role models who use varied modes of communication. The exposure of role models who are deaf and hard of hearing is crucial to not only a child's potential success, but also his/her well-being and self-esteem.

The NCSA asserts that parents have the right to decide the mode of communication used to convey their own language(s) and culture(s) to their children. Parents also have the right to use Cued Speech, singly or in combination with other modes of communication. As parents are the most important factor in a child's nurturing as well as in their language development, the parents' choices need to be respected. The freedom to make informed choices is essential, and educational professionals, other parents, and deaf and hard of hearing people need to recognize and respect those choices.

The NCSA also asserts that parents have the responsibility of following through on their commitment to Cued Speech by cueing accurately and consistently as a family in all interactions with their child. Parents also have a responsibility to ensure that family members who are deaf or hard of hearing have access to communication during any activity or gathering.

—Original Statement adopted 11-4-1990

—Revised Statement adopted 4-14 -2007



Cued Language Transliterators and Direct Instruction at Schools and Other Educational Institutions

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

The National Cued Speech Association believes that we must respect people who are deaf and hard of hearing and their chosen mode of communication. No one mode is preferred by all people, therefore no one mode is a substitute for another. We assert that those who prefer and request Cued Speech for language access be provided appropriate accommodations to maintain language continuity.

Teachers of the deaf, speech-language pathologists, language facilitators, and others assigned to the student who is deaf or hard of hearing should communicate by cueing accurately and consistently in order to provide direct linguistic access to instruction and thus bolster the foundation for academic literacy.

Cued language transliterators provide clients who are deaf or hard of hearing with access to the same auditory information that is available to hearing people. This concept of equal access to language information supports cultural and functional integration into society. It is also essential to maintaining the success achieved by students who are deaf or hard of hearing and who use Cued Speech for access to the language(s) in the classroom. Direct instruction in cued language and/or the use of a qualified cued language transliterator ensures equal access to all information, including environmental sounds.

Therefore, in an effort to provide equal access to all those who are deaf or hard of hearing, the National Cued Speech Association asserts that schools and educational institutions provide students who prefer Cued Speech with qualified cued language transliterating services upon request. This position is supported by federal and state laws that guarantee equal access to persons who are deaf and hard of hearing in a variety of settings, including the classroom.

*—Original Statement adopted 8-5-1991
—Revised Statement adopted 4-14-2007*



Cued Speech and Cochlear Implants

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

For many persons who are deaf, the rapidly advancing technology of cochlear implants significantly increases access to the auditory information necessary to process speech and language. The decision to implant a child or undergo implantation is complex. It requires an understanding of the potential risks and benefits involved. The parents and/or implant candidate also need reliable information about evaluations and recommendations from experienced medical and educational professionals, as well as feedback from other parents and cochlear implant recipients.

The National Cued Speech Association (NCSA) supports literacy and language development through the use of Cued Speech. The NCSA asserts that the continued use of cueing after implantation facilitates the process of learning speech and language through auditory channels by providing visual clarification and confirmation of what the person hears through the implant.

Cued Speech allows the implant recipient to match the cues to new auditory information and assimilate it into his/her internal phoneme map. Cueing also provides an unambiguous message when competing or background noise is present, when the implant is not in use or when the implant recipient is at a distance from the speaker. Additionally, cueing facilitates and accelerates new language development, including vocabulary, grammatical structures, and idiomatic expressions, as well as provides continuity among speech-language professionals when teaching articulation skills.

The NCSA believes that for the implant recipient to obtain maximum long-term educational and linguistic benefits, accurate and fluent cueing should be used in conjunction with the cochlear implant.

—Original Statement adopted 7-31-2003

—Revised Statement adopted 4-14-2007



Bilingualism – American Sign Language and cued English

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

The National Cued Speech Association (NCSA) recognizes advantages of bilingualism in English and American Sign Language (ASL) for most people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

The NCSA promotes the use of Cued Speech for the development of English language literacy for children who are deaf and hard of hearing. A visual understanding of the phonemic structure of English, as well as its vocabulary and syntax, is critically needed as the foundation for reading and writing before the child begins elementary school. The emphasis in preschool should therefore be on the acquisition of receptive and expressive English through Cued Speech, hereafter referred to as cued English. Cueing consistently and accurately allows these children to acquire English naturally on a daily basis.

Cued English and ASL are not mutually exclusive. They can be used at school, at home, at work, and in various social settings, depending on the user's preference. The use of Cued Speech provides direct, visual, and complete access to English, therefore protecting the sanctity of the English language. It also protects American Sign Language because ASL is a language that is distinct from English. By using cues for English and signs for ASL, the distinction between the two is made completely clear.

The NCSA invites and encourages a continuing dialogue on bilingualism with and among the various organizations advocating for people who are deaf and hard of hearing.

—Original Statement adopted 7-22-1990
—Revised Statement adopted 4-14-2007



The Inclusion of Cued Speech in an Auditory-Verbal Environment

A Position Statement of the National Cued Speech Association

Cued Speech provides complete visual access to phonemic information. Auditory-Verbal therapy supports the development of auditory skills. Therefore, Cued Speech should be considered a part of an auditory-verbal approach. Cued information supports the development of auditory perception, discrimination, and comprehension, and it clarifies potentially ambiguous information.

With consistent and appropriate use of hearing aids, cochlear implants¹, and/or other technologies, many individuals have more access to auditory information than before. However, the degree to which an individual who is deaf or hard of hearing can comprehend auditory information is unpredictable and inconsistent.

Early, accurate, and consistent cueing with individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing enables them to develop language, which is processed in the auditory cortex of the brain. Recent functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) research has proven that deaf users process cued language in the auditory cortex. This is also consistent with research showing that the visual and auditory cortexes are interconnected in individuals with normal hearing.

Clear and accurate cues provide complete visual access to phonemic and environmental information. Thus cueing reinforces the auditory input the child receives. Such reinforcement supports the continuing development of auditory perception, discrimination, and comprehension.

Cued Speech:

- should be used as soon as possible after diagnosis to begin the process of establishing phonemic awareness and discrimination of language, regardless of the use of assistive listening technologies.
- clarifies visually the information the child accesses through audition.
- is especially necessary when hearing aids or implants are removed or compromised (e.g., bedtime, bath time, in the pool, in noisy environments, etc.).
- assures full communication when technology is not sufficient to provide access to every sound or phoneme (e.g., during classroom discussion when speakers overlap).

When information is missing or unclear, that impacts the language learning process, both receptively and expressively. In order to maximize language development and emergent literacy skills, individuals must have 100 percent access to the language all around them.

—Adopted 4-15-2007

¹ See position statement on cochlear implants