



4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on  
Family-Centred Early Intervention for Children  
Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing.  
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*Abstract*

<b>Corresponding author</b> (full name):	Manfred Hintermair
Institution/Organization:	--
E-Mail Address:	Hintermair@ph-heidelberg.de

Title of the Abstract:	Fathers of deaf and hard of hearing toddlers – mostly invisible players in research, but important partners for early intervention practice
Authors (full names):	Manfred Hintermair, Klaus Sarimski

Family-centered intervention has become the standard in supporting deaf and hard of hearing (DHH) toddlers and their families (Moeller et al, 2013). Does this automatically implicate that really all family persons are involved? We hope that this will be the case in practice, but available data from other groups of children with disabilities indicate that this may not be continuously the case. The same situation we do find when we look on research data. Often fathers are left out of picture, and therefore most of the data we have are data from mothers. Not bad, but perhaps not enough!

This fact is surprising insofar as in research on families with children without a disability we have rather much data, beginning from the seventies in the last century by the seminal research of Michael Lamb. The data available reveal the specific role that fathers (can) play for child development: So fathers influence their children in many domains ranging from positive psychological adjustment and lower distress during adolescence, fewer behavioral problems during the preschool, elementary and high school years, improved language and cognitive development during the early childhood years and more positive peer relationships during early childhood (cf. Lamb & Lewis, 2013; McBride et al., 2014).

There is also emerging evidence that fathers' involvement can have similar positive impact on family and child outcomes for children with disabilities. So fathers' positive attitudes to the child's disability are indicative for lower stress maternal levels as well as fathers' support is indicative for lower maternal stress levels. Also higher involvement of fathers is associated with higher mother marital satisfaction. Such increased levels of involvement also can lead to more positive child outcomes when children transition into kindergarten.

If we look on available research regarding the role of fathers in early deaf education we find something like a desert. Just one study by Ingber and Most (2012) focused on this issue in detail presenting data from fathers with DHH preschool-aged children. They highlight the relationship of father involvement with self-efficacy, family cohesion, and adaptability as well as mother-reported paternal involvement.



Our presentation on the one side will offer a concise survey on information available from published research on the role of fathers for child development in general and on the role of fathers with children who have disabilities. On the other hand we present very brand-new data from a study with 92 fathers of DHH toddlers aged from 8 months to 3;11 years old ( $M = 2;2$  years;  $SD = 0;9$ ), using amongst other instruments a rather new scale that focuses on specific challenges of fathers (Fathers of Children with Developmental Challenges; FCDC, Ly & Goldberg, 2014). Further we used information on general self-efficacy and deaf-related self-efficacy as well as information on support received by early intervention providers and on quality of marriage.