Early intervention in young children with hearing impairments

St. Petersburg Early Intervention Institute (EII), Russia. [www.eii.ru](http://www.eii.ru)

**Who we are:**

The EII is non-government institution. The main goal of the EII is to change for the better the life of children with disabilities and their families, to prevent institutionalization of children and to facilitate inclusion of children with disabilities into open society. For this purpose the EII develops multidisciplinary early intervention programs to support families with young children with disabilities. Among other activities, the EII has been actively helping to the families of children with hearing impairments. The work with hearing impaired children leads in several directions. For the purpose of early identification of hearing loss EII audiologists conduct newborn hearing screening at the Children's Hospital #17, St. Petersburg. At the EII audiologists carry out assessment of young children hearing and, in case of need, hearing aids fitting. Speech therapist closely works with audiologists. She conducts individual and group sessions for the families with hearing impaired children. There is set of equipment at the EII for performing audiological assessment, which includes: impedance audiometry, registration of otoacoustic emission and auditory brainstem response (ABR), visual reinforced audiometry and play audiometry. Part of the equipment was granted by The St. Gregory Foundation (England).

**Actuality of the project:**

Poverty is one of the main problems for children with disabilities and their families. Main part of such families could not pay for necessary medical service in St. Petersburg and throughout Russia. It is necessary to perform regular (several times per a year) hearing assessment and evaluation of quality of hearing aids fitting. The EII is the only organization to provide the hearing assessment in St. Petersburg free of charge.

**Project plan:**

Program planning is based on multidisciplinary point of view. The program is conducted by speech therapist and audiologists but may also require consultations of pediatrician, physical therapist, physiologist of vision, neurologist and psychologist. The program is performed with obligatory participation of parents. It includes individual and group sessions; regular hearing assessment and hearing aids fitting; consultations and psychological support for parents. Speech therapist (specialist on early communication) realizes her support in a form of home visits for children younger than 8 months age or in a form of individual sessions at the EII for older children. After 1 year of age children can be included in the integrative group providing them possibility to communicate with normal hearing children. During execution of the program, necessary documentation (forms, questionnaires, etc.) will be developed and collected.

The early intervention program is expected to be accompanied and supported by the EII parents/children club activity. The club is supported by St. Gregory Foundation. Within the frame of the club activity, weekly musical group sessions are held, they can include lectures for parents, drawing lessons and special computer games for children, tea-drinking for parents and children.

**Short-term project:**

To collect experience in development of programs of help to the kids with hearing impairments.

**Long-term project:**

The dissemination of our experience to other organizations helping children with hearing impairments.