

**SUBJECT:** Sharing information following a newborn and infant hearing screening

**COMMITTEE:** Public Health — committee substitute recommended

**VOTE:** 7 ayes — S. Thompson, Coleman, Frank, Lucio, Price, Sheffield, Zedler

0 nays

4 absent — Wray, Allison, Guerra, Ortega

**WITNESSES:** For — Michael Swoboda and Aulby Larry Gillett, Texas Association of the Deaf; Fiorela Agusti; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Marisa Finley, Baylor Scott and White Health; Steven Aleman, Disability Rights Texas; Troy Alexander, Texas Medical Association; Andrew Cates, Texas Nurses Association; Clayton Travis, Texas Pediatric Society)

Against — None

On — Bobbie Scoggins, Texas School for the Deaf; (*Registered, but did not testify*: Manda Hall, Department of State Health Services; Lindsay Rovers, Health and Human Services Commission)

**BACKGROUND:** Health and Safety Code ch. 47 requires a birthing facility to perform, either directly or through a referral, a hearing screening for the identification of hearing loss on each newborn or infant born at the facility before the newborn or infant is discharged from the facility, with certain exceptions. If the child does not pass the initial screening, the facility is required to offer a follow-up screening or refer the parents to another program for a follow-up screening. If the child does not pass the follow-up screening, the program that performed it is required to:

- provide the newborn or infant's parents with the screening results;
- assist the parents in scheduling a diagnostic audiological evaluation; and
- refer the newborn or infant to early childhood intervention services.

**DIGEST:** CSHB 2255 would revise procedures regarding information on hearing screenings provided to parents of newborns or infants and the responsibilities of programs conducting the screenings.

The bill would require a birthing facility that operated a certified newborn hearing, screening, tracking and intervention program to simultaneously distribute to the parents of each newborn or infant the results of the child's hearing screening and informational materials on the following public resources:

- early childhood intervention services;
- the primary statewide resource center at the Texas School for the Deaf (TSD); and
- contact information for Texas Early Hearing Detection and Intervention.

CSHB 2255 would require the Department of State Health Services to share the educational and informational materials with the public upon request.

The birthing facility also would be required to report the newborn or infant's test results to TSD.

The bill would require a program that performed a follow-up hearing screening that a newborn or infant did not pass to provide the results to the TSD, with the prior written consent of the newborn's or infant's parents, in addition to providing the results to the parents themselves. The program that conducted the follow-up screening also would be required to refer the newborn or infant to TSD.

CSHB 2255 would require the Health and Human Services executive commissioner to develop guidelines to protect the confidentiality of patients and require the written consent of a parent or guardian before any identifying information was provided to TSD. The bill would require TSD to allow a parent to at any time withdraw the information provided to TSD.

The bill would take effect September 1, 2019.

**SUPPORTERS  
SAY:**

CSHB 2255 would better inform the parents of hard-of-hearing children about the public resources available to them and their children, would increase the utilization of early intervention services, and would help better identify deaf and hard-of-hearing children across the state.

The bill would help close the gap on follow-up screenings in the state by distributing educational and informational resources to parents along with their infant's screening results. The majority of infants in Texas receive hearing screenings. However, not passing the initial screening does not always mean that a child is deaf or hard of hearing. In order to confirm the potential hearing disability, infants would need to receive a follow-up screening, but many do not. By informing parents of the public resources available, parents will be better equipped to seek follow-up care to support their child's language, cognitive, and emotional success.

CSHB 2255 would help deaf or hard-of-hearing children across the state access existing early childhood services. The bill would maximize the utilization of these resources by allowing whoever administered the hearing screening to provide screening results to the Department of State Health Services as well as the primary statewide resource center at the Texas School for the Deaf.

Deaf or hard-of-hearing children who do not receive intervention can suffer from deprivation of language, which may lead to developmental speech and language delays that could later affect their academic performance.

**OPPONENTS  
SAY:**

No concerns identified.