COVID-19
Provincial Guidance on Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) Services

Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (UNHS) is offered to all families of babies born in Manitoba. Initial hearing screening is completed in hospital or on an outpatient basis if baby is discharged from hospital prior to 15 hours of age or is born in another location. If babies “do not pass” inpatient hearing screening they are seen for an outpatient re-screen at designated sites. Babies who “do not pass” on second stage screening are referred to a Pediatric Audiologist for diagnostic Auditory Brainstem Response (ABR) assessment at designated sites.

Background
As this is a Provincial program, with regions relying on each other for outpatient follow-up screening, re-screening, and diagnostic ABR services, a consistent service delivery model for the province is recommended.
To best protect families of newborns, health care professionals, and the general public and to reduce risk of spreading COVID-19 the following work has been completed:

• Review of current regional screening practice
• Review of Canadian Infant Hearing Task Force data
• Provincial Stakeholder Consultation with:

  Andrea Meakin   Interim Regional Director Audiology -WRHA
  Diana Dinon     Manager UNHS – WRHA
  Shannon Webber  Regional Director & Manager UNHS- PMH
  Jackie Derksen  Regional Director & Manager UNHS- SH-SS
  Leana Smith     Regional Director & Manager UNHS- IERHA
  Cam Ritzer      Regional Director & Manager UNHS- NRHA

Based on the above review, the following service delivery recommendations have been made:

• Beginning March 27, 2020 only inpatient hearing screening will be conducted, all outpatient screening or re-screening will be rescheduled at this time.
• Appointments will be postponed, and parents will be contacted to re-schedule.

Overall Strategy
Consistent with other Canadian jurisdictions the following guideline is recommended within Manitoba:
NEWBORN SCREENING

- Continue screening inpatients on mother-infant/child units and in Neonatal Intensive Care (NICU) units as per current protocol
- For infants who do not pass the screening- all outpatient screening is postponed until further notice. Families to be informed they will be contacted for their outpatient screening or re-screening when services resume

AUDIOLOGY (DIAGNOSTIC Auditory Brainstem Response) SERVICES

- Services will be offered only to infants considered to be urgent (meningitis, known Cytomegalovirus (CMV))
- Prior to an outpatient Diagnostic ABR (Auditory Brainstem Response) assessment families will be contacted by phone to screen for COVID-19. Any infant or family identified with any of the following will be deferred until cleared:
  - Has recently returned from travel, including travel within Canada, even if asymptomatic
  - Has been in direct contact with a positive COVID-19 patient, or anyone undergoing testing within 14 days, even if asymptomatic
  - Has influenza-like illness at the time they show up for the assessment
  - Has an unexplained new cough, even if they do not have a fever

Communication Strategy for Inpatient Sites

To reduce parental anxiety as they wait for outpatient hearing screening or re-screening we suggest the following be put into place:

- UNHS Hearing Screeners will continue to distribute the UNHS program brochure, highlighting the phone number for parents to call if they have concerns. The UNHS program will ensure an audiologist is available to return any parental calls. Hearing Screeners will indicate to parents that outpatient services are currently not available and they will be contacted for an outpatient appointment when service resumes (For consistency a script will be developed for Hearing Screeners to use)
- Should it be necessary for modifications to be in place for several months an Audiologist will contact families in 2-3 months to further triage future outpatient appointments based on family concerns and to answer any questions families might have
- Once services resume, infants should be seen by order of priority (i.e. any infants with risk factors, any infants whose parents have concerns about hearing, any no risk infants who did not pass bilaterally, any no risk infants who did not pass unilaterally).
- Outpatient clinic time will need to be increased to meet demand.
Documentation
The Provincial Universal Newborn Hearing Screening (PUNHS) serves as the provincial registry for newborn hearing screening and outcomes

- The UNHS program staff will document in the PUNHS database that the outpatient hearing screening/re-screening or Diagnostic ABR will be postponed as per the COVID-19 Provincial UNHS Guidance document, for all affected infants.

- Follow up services and outcomes will be documented per the UNHS Protocol data management section, requiring capture of service dates, screening status, screening outcomes for all infants and Diagnostic ABR assessment outcomes where clinically required.

- It is recognized that during the time in which the COVID-19 Provincial UNHS Guidance is in place, some infants will exceed the program target of 6 months. Documentation will be entered into the PUNHS database for all children affected by the postponement of screening or diagnostic service regardless of age.