

Title: Deaf Childhoods in the Caribbean

This presentation discusses policy issues related to inclusive early childhood care and education for deaf children in the Caribbean, where little research has focused on deaf children. This gap can partly be attributed to the region's legacy of colonial governance that influenced educational approaches to young children and contributed to the historical marginalization of disabled children. Despite anti-discrimination policy documents, lack of resources, in addition to government priorities and structural ableism, has curtailed the development of a regional and national strategy for the provision of early intervention and education for deaf children, as well as children's ability to access education. Without a fully accessible language, children are less favourably positioned to express themselves and make their own choices, which are cornerstones of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as the Government of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago's National Child Policy. This also shapes ideologies and practices surrounding deaf childhoods in the Caribbean. This presentation will advance the rationale for and outline first steps toward exploring barriers to and opportunities for implementing culturally congruent and accessible education in sign language for deaf young children, in addition to parental education and programming.

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