

What is Speech-Language Therapy?

Speech-language therapy provides treatment, support and care for children and adults who have speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication and swallowing disorders. These include difficulty with things such as producing speech sounds correctly, understanding others, sharing thoughts/ideas/feelings, social use of verbal and nonverbal communication, organizing thoughts, paying attention, remembering, planning, problem-solving, or feeding and swallowing.

How Does Speech-Language Therapy Help Someone with Autism?

Individuals with autism can benefit from speech-language therapy since communication deficits are a primary criterion for diagnosis. Challenges with communication range from complete lack of spoken language to difficulty with social skills and nonverbal cues.

Speech-language therapy begins with an evaluation by a speech-language pathologist (SLP) to assess the individual's strengths and weaknesses. The SLP develops individualized goals to help the individual communicate in more useful and functional ways.

Speech-language therapy may involve the use of augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) systems, which can include sign language, gestures, pictures, videos, written words, or electronic devices. These are sometimes used when individuals have no spoken language or have trouble producing speech sounds correctly.

Goals of speech-language therapy may include:

- Asking for help.
- Understanding and using gestures to communicate.
- Developing joint attention.
- Following directions.
- Asking and answering questions.
- Playing and getting along with others.
- Taking turns in a conversation.
- Starting or stopping a conversation.

How Do I Find a Speech-Language Therapist?

After I receive a prescription from my provider for Speech-Language Therapy, I can:

- Consult my child's case manager or supports coordinator.
- Call a Special Needs Unit.
- Seek a referral from your child's doctor or teacher.
- Connect with other parents through a local support group.
- Use the resource on Finding and Choosing a therapist for more ideas.

REFERENCES

Speech-Language Pathologists: American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

What Treatments are Available for Speech, Language and Motor Issues: Autism Speaks

Autism (Autism Spectrum Disorder): American Speech-Language-Hearing Association