

Frequently Asked Questions

Reference: Communication Skill Builders *Parent Articles*

What is a speech-language disorder?

Speech and language impairments are defined as disorders of language, articulation, fluency or voice which interfere with communication, preacademic, or academic learning, vocational training, or social adjustment. *Source: Florida State Board of Education Rules*

What is an articulation disorder?

Sometimes a child has difficulty making speech sounds correctly. They may distort, substitute with another sound, or omit the sound completely. If the child is young, he may not be expected to have developed these sounds yet. These are called developmental articulation errors. If the sounds are no longer considered developmental, then therapy may be warranted when the following factors are considered: intelligibility (how easily the speech is understood), interference with reading, spelling, acquisition of phonetic skills, physical problems that may be interfering (cleft palate, cerebral palsy), reluctance to communicate within the school setting due to embarrassment or frustration.

What is a language disorder?

A child with a language disorder may have difficulty with language *form*, *content* and *use*. Disorders of language *form* can affect the child's ability to use word endings to form plurals, past tense verbs or other grammatical forms they should be using at their age. A child who has difficulty understanding and choosing words to express ideas has difficulty with language *content*. A child with disordered language *use* does not know how to use language appropriately in different situations.

What is a voice disorder?

The most common voice disorder among children is vocal nodules, a hard callous that forms on the vocal folds. These occur when a child abuses their voice by screaming, frequent throat clearing and coughing or talking at the wrong pitch. A child with vocal nodules sounds hoarse and breathy. Treatment includes education about and a reduction in the abusive behaviors. Often a child will be seen by an ear, nose and throat (ENT) doctor to determine the origin of the voice disorder.

What is a fluency disorder?

Children who have difficulty saying sounds, words, and phrases in a smooth flow may have a fluency disorder. Many times young children have disfluent speech when they are first beginning to express themselves verbally. It is important that a speech-language pathologist be consulted to determine if a child is experiencing normal disfluencies or developing stuttering behaviors.

I think my child has a speech-language disorder. What do I do?

Talk to your child's classroom teacher and the SLP (Speech-Language Pathologist) who serves your child's school. If the problem is also being seen in the classroom you will be invited to an *Intervention Assistance Team* meeting with the teacher, SLP and others who may work with your child. At that meeting you will have the opportunity to discuss your concerns and the classroom teacher will discuss educational implications of the communication problem. You and the classroom teacher will be given some intervention strategies to try for a period of time. If those interventions are unsuccessful, you will sign a **Permission to Evaluate** form. Your child might also be tested for other learning problems at this time.

Once testing is completed you will be invited to an eligibility meeting to discuss the results of the evaluation and any proposed services that may be offered.

My child attends a private school. Is he/she eligible for speech-language services?

There is a process in place for any private school child to be tested by the school system for eligibility in any ESE program. A public school SLP will test your child at the private school if the Intervention Assistance Team at the school determines the need, and if found eligible, a Service Plan will be written. Therapy will be provided by a private agency that provides speech-language services.

What will a speech-language evaluation include?

Depending on the reason for referral, your child will be given standardized tests in the suspected deficit area of articulation, language, voice or fluency. A case history may be taken, as well as classroom observations, to determine the extent of the communication disorder and its impact on the educational process.

What does it mean when my child "does not qualify" for speech and language services?

The state of Florida sets guidelines for eligibility for Exceptional Student Education. These are found in the *Florida State Board Rules*. If your child does not meet these guidelines then we are unable to write an Individual Education Plan for ESE services. However, as the communication specialist in the school, the SLP can continue to work with the classroom teacher and school staff to help implement strategies in the general education setting that will help your child.

Who determines the type and frequency of service my child receives?

The IEP team (staffing committee) will review all records, observations, and evaluation information to determine your child's present level of performance and their needs. Consideration will be given to the amount of time the child can benefit from the general education instruction in the classroom, the child's ability to generalize skills, and all other pertinent information. Our goal is for your child to remain the general education setting as much as possible.

My child has been receiving private speech-language therapy. Will he qualify for speech-language therapy in the schools?

The first step is to determine if your child's communication disorder is interfering with the educational process. The state of Florida requires that the school staff document interference with communication, preacademic or academic learning, vocational training, or social adjustment. If this is the case, then the referral process will be followed. You may be asked to sign a Release of Information form so that the private agency can release records. The school SLP will then review your child's current assessments and therapy progress notes to determine if further assessment is needed. Your child will still need to meet district criteria for speech-language services before an IEP is written.

How do PreK children qualify for services?

If parents have concerns regarding the speech-language development of their three to five year old children, they should contact Child Find at 647-4262. Their child will be scheduled for a screening, which covers vision, hearing, speech, language and early development skills. If concerns are noted during screening, additional evaluations will be scheduled addressing the areas of concern. If the child has already been evaluated by another agency, that information is reviewed and utilized when possible.

Children exhibiting significant delays only in the area of speech (articulation) generally receive services through the SLP at their home school on a part-time basis. Children exhibiting more significant delays involving language or other developmental skills may be eligible for services in a preschool program.