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Referral Guidelines

At some point in children's development, parents may question whether or not their child is meeting the expected speech and language developmental milestones. The below information should assist parents and professionals in deciding to contact a speech and language pathologist for evaluation and potential therapy.

Common Etiologies:

1. Cerebral Palsy
2. Craniofacial Disorders (e.g. clefts)
3. Articulation or Phonological Disorders

Observed Effects of a Speech Impairment

1. Difficulty expressing needs and wants intelligibly.
2. Difficulty expressing feelings, which may lead to frustration.
3. Difficulty engaging successfully in social and/or classroom situations.

When should I seek the help of a Speech and Language Pathologist?

It is important to request a speech/language evaluation if ...

By age 3 years a child cannot:

- be understood by family and/or caregivers.
- correctly produce vowels and sounds including p, b, m, w.
- repeat when not understood without becoming frustrated.

By age 4 years a child cannot:

- be understood by individuals with whom they do not associate regularly.
- be understood by family and/or caregivers.
- correctly produce t, d, k, g, f.
- be asked to repeat without becoming sensitive.

By age 5 years a child cannot:

- be understood in all situations by most listeners.
- correctly produce most speech sounds.
- be asked to repeat without exhibiting frustration.



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Other reasons that a speech language evaluation may be warranted include the following:

1. Speech is slurred, abnormally loud, nasal sounding or breathy.
2. Speech avoidance or frustration is evident during speaking tasks due to difficulty forming sounds or words, etc.
3. Sound errors are prevalent and sometimes variable in ongoing speech tasks.
4. Deafness or severe hearing loss causes disturbances in intonation, duration, rhythm and/or sound production.
5. Autism, emotional disturbance and/or mental retardation may cause unusual speech language variations.
6. Sudden decline in speech intelligibility or in the ability to be understood by family, friends, caregivers, etc. in the expression of basic needs, preferences and feelings.
7. An individual presents with difficulty in any of the following language areas:

Morphology	The assembly of words, verb tenses and grammatical forms to contribute to the meaning of a text.
Syntax	The structure of sentences and paragraphs within speech and writing.
Semantics	The understanding of vocabulary and concept words.
Discourse	The oral and written formulation of thoughts.
Comprehension	The understanding of text including inference, main idea, figurative language, etc.
Pragmatics	Social interaction with peers and adults in a variety of settings.