

Early Help for Speech, Language and Hearing Problems will maximize your child's communication potential!

Speech, language and hearing are fundamental to a child's first years and lay the foundation for future development. Speaking, understanding, hearing, listening, reading and writing are all forms of communication. Difficulties in communicating can dramatically impact a child's learning potential.

By 2 to 3 years of age a child should use 200 or more words and by the age of 4 and a half a child should be using approximately 2000 words. For some children, however, speech and language development happens at a slower pace or in a way that is not normal. There are also approximately 1,000 babies born each year in Canada that have some degree of hearing loss, which can also affect speech and language development. Studies show that the earlier a child's hearing and/or speech-language disorder is identified, the better his or her long-term outcome will be.

If speech, language and hearing problems are not identified early, they can affect a child in many different ways such as: learning, attention, social and emotional development. Appropriate early communication development is the basis for future academic and life skills. The ability to communicate with peers and adults is vital for a student to succeed in school. Speech, language and hearing challenges affect reading, writing and academic performance. A child who has speech-language or hearing difficulties in the pre-school years can have challenges that follow them when they enter school and into adulthood. Without early help or intervention, most children with speech, language, and hearing problems begin to show significant learning difficulties by the third grade. This is due to the increasing complexity of language, social interaction, and verbal communication. Acting early means that children can get the support they need to avoid the difficulties and challenges that their peers do not experience or understand.

It is critical to get help early for children with speech, language and hearing problems. Early help or intervention is the process of anticipating, identifying, and responding to communication concerns in order to minimize any negative effects and maximize healthy development. Research has indicated that only 15% of language delayed children are able to catch up on their own by 3 years of age. In order to maximize communication potential, research has also shown that infants with hearing loss do best when fitted with hearing aids by 6 months of age. Thus, early identification of hearing loss leads to early intervention, which normally means fitting hearing aids during infancy. Early intervention for speech, language and hearing difficulties can reduce the amount of therapy time needed, increase the child's success, and provide an opportunity for them to reach their maximum potential.

For more information, please visit www.nlaslpa.ca

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