



confident communicators

BURLINGTON SPEECH & LANGUAGE CLINIC

WHEN MIGHT A CHILD BENEFIT FROM SPEECH & LANGUAGE SUPPORT?



Communication challenges are not always related to **speech sounds**. Children may also need support with **understanding language, conversation skills, social communication, and play skills**.



The goal is **not to diagnose or label children** but to know when it may be helpful to start a conversation with families around communication development and support.



Children develop communication skills at different rates. If questions arise, a **Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)** can help determine whether additional support may be beneficial.

EDUCATORS MAY CONSIDER SUGGESTING SPEECH-LANGUAGE SUPPORT IF A CHILD:

1 LIMITED VOCABULARY

The child uses few words compared to other children their age and relies mostly on pulling an adult, showing objects, pointing or gestures instead of spoken words.

2 IS NOT COMBINING WORDS OR EXPRESSING IDEAS IN SHORT PHRASES

By around age two, most children begin putting two words together (for example, "more juice"). As children grow, they begin using longer sentences to share ideas and tell simple stories. If a child continues to use mostly single words, non-specific words such as "this" or "that" or has difficulty explaining events or experiences, additional support may be helpful.

3 HAS DIFFICULTY UNDERSTANDING INSTRUCTIONS OR ANSWERING SIMPLE QUESTIONS

The child may struggle to follow familiar directions or answer basic questions such as *who, what, or where*, which can affect participation in daily classroom routines.

4 HAS SPEECH THAT IS DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND

You may have trouble understanding what the child is saying compared with peers. Educators and other children often ask the child to **repeat themselves** or cannot understand what they are trying to say.

5 USES LIMITED GESTURES OR EYE CONTACT

The child may rarely point, wave, show objects, or use eye contact to communicate.

6 BECOMES FRUSTRATED WHEN COMMUNICATING

The child may frequently become upset when trying to express needs, ideas, or feelings because others do not understand what they want.

7 DOES NOT CONSISTENTLY RESPOND TO THEIR NAME OR FAMILIAR SOUNDS

The child may not respond when their name is called or when hearing familiar voices or environmental sounds.

8 LOSES PREVIOUSLY USED COMMUNICATION SKILLS

The child stops using words, gestures, or social communication skills they previously demonstrated.

9 SHOWS LIMITED INTERACTION OR PLAY WITH OTHER CHILDREN

The child may rarely engage with peers, have difficulty with pretend play, or struggle with starting play, taking turns and joining conversations with other children.

10 SHOWS SIGNS OF STUTTERING OR REPETITIVE SPEECH

Frequent sound repetitions, long pauses, or tension while speaking may indicate early fluency challenges.

11 LANGUAGE SKILLS SEEM BEHIND PEERS

- talks less than other children
- struggles to participate in conversations
- has difficulty telling stories or explaining ideas



Early identification helps children access support that can strengthen communication, social skills, and readiness for school. Daycare observations are especially valuable because they reflect how a child communicates in natural, everyday settings.

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