



ASHA-CERTIFIED SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGISTS AND AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

Speech-Language Pathologists Can Help With Autism Spectrum Disorder

Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are well-versed in preventing, assessing, diagnosing, and treating speech, language, social communication, cognitive-communication, and swallowing disorders in both children and adults.

SLPs are experts in social communication, which is one of the defining criterion for autism. While the average age of diagnosis for autism is age 4 or older, a reliable diagnosis at a younger age is possible.

What Are Signs of Autism?

Every child with autism is different. All will have challenges with communication and social skills, but not in the same way. Autism is a spectrum disorder because it can cause mild problems, severe problems, or something in between. People with autism may focus on one topic or have some behaviors that they do over and over. Some may talk well but not be able to make friends, while others may not talk at all. An SLP can help navigate these differences.

For more information on the signs of autism and how an SLP can help, please visit [asha.org/public/speech/disorders/autism/](https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/autism/).

How Can I Have My Child Assessed by an SLP?

An SLP is instrumental in finding out if your child has autism or a social (pragmatic) communication disorder. SLPs are often available in school systems for support.

To find ASHA-certified SLPs in your area, consult the directory on www.asha.org/profind.

All children with autism have social communication problems. But, not all children with these problems have autism. Knowing which one your child has will help the SLP find the best treatment. While being non-verbal is not considered a defining trait of autism, speech and language delay is often one of the first signs – and SLPs are best equipped to give an in-depth look at your child’s abilities. Given this expertise, an SLP may be the first person to tell you that your child has autism.

You Can Help Inform The Assessment

Some of the most important information about your child will come from you. You can tell the SLP about what your child does well and where he or she has problems. The SLP will use different tests and watch how your child plays. The SLP may also want to talk to your child’s teacher or others who know about him or her.

BENEFITS OF SLP TREATMENT

With treatment, an SLP has the ability to help your child:



- Make sounds and speak words
- Improve articulation and intelligibility
- Have conversations
- Ask and answer questions
- Ask for help
- Take turns in a conversation
- Start or stop a conversation



- Pay attention to what others do
- Play and get along with others
- Understand and use gestures, like pointing
- Follow directions



- Look at books and tell stories
- Write letters, words, and sentences

These developments can help your child to:



- Make and keep friends
- Play with others and share toys
- Understand how others feel
- Focus with someone on the same object or event, called joint attention



- Accept new foods - children with autism may not like the way foods look, taste, or smell, but effective communication can reduce outside frustrations.



SLPs Can Help In Another Important Way

Children who don't talk may need other means to communicate. SLPs are well trained in augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC, which help children who cannot talk or are very hard to understand. It can be used in a variety of settings: school, home, and other places. AAC can even help a child learn to talk.

Children with autism can learn better social and communication skills. SLPs can help.

For Resources, Visit:

asha.org/public/speech/

asha.org/public/speech/disorders/Autism/

identifythesigns.org

asha.org/profind



ashacertified.org