



# Ontario Association for Families of Children with Communication Disorders OAFCCD

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## DID YOU KNOW THAT.....

Speech and language disorders constitute the largest disabling condition in society (5-10%).

We can expect language disorders to comprise the largest disabling disorder in schools. Of all children with disabilities receiving services from Junior Kindergarten to Grade 13, we can expect that:

- 4.73% will be labelled Learning Disabled with 40%-100% of these children showing language disorders
- 1.68% will be labelled Developmentally Disabled with 85% of these children showing language disorders
- 1% will be labelled Emotionally Handicapped with 70% of these children showing language disorders

The **most conservative** estimate of the extent of the language problems would be 6% of the total school population in Junior Kindergarten to Grade 13.

Language is not just another subject in school. It is the means by which all other subjects are pursued.

Speech and language disorders are strongly related to failure in reading and writing.

Children with behavioural disorders are 10 times more likely than other children to have unsuspected language disorders.

Drop out rate in children with speech and language disorders is 43% compared to 23% in non-impaired children.

Speech and language services administered by Speech-Language Pathologists provide crucial services which advance the mission of education, to prepare children for life.

For school children with weak language skills, language services which are integrated into the education setting by school Speech-Language Pathologists has resulted in important educational outcomes.

## DID YOU KNOW THAT.....

- Significant gains in reading skills for elementary school children
- Meaningful improvements in adaptive behaviour in the classroom and at home
- Substantial reductions in the drop-out rate for students in secondary school
- For children **at risk** for poor life outcomes, lasting benefits representing a significant savings to the social support system and society

Speech and language skills are the most critical human functions allowing for full participation in society because:

- Language provides the main method of establishing and maintaining social relationships.
- Language constitutes a principal means of organizing behaviour and is central to the normal acquisition of many cognitive and academic skills, particularly literacy.

It is clear that language acquisition is an integral component in the development of an individual and failure of the language system will have life-long negative impact on social, academic and vocational success.

The child with an unresolved language problem as she/he enters school typically has problems in learning to read and write, may be isolated due to difficulties in socializing, and eventually may have great difficulty in getting and holding a job.

Communicative competency is strongly linked to social acceptability and popularity in preschool and school-age children.

Studies have found that the most conversationally skilled children are "liked" and children who are the least conversationally skilled may be "disliked".

Others have conscious or unconscious biases against children with communication impairments including:

- children with communication impairments are likely to be ignored by other children.
- adults consistently and incorrectly rate children with communication disorders as less intelligent than other children.
- individuals with communication disorders are considered to be intellectually slow and handicapped by most members of society.

## **DID YOU KNOW THAT.....**

Children with communication disorders are at risk for poor development and maintenance of friendships and equitable educational treatment.

Friendship is one of the most basic human needs and the one thing that all parents want for their children. If all of our children, including those with communication disorders, are to have the opportunity to 'belong', their communication needs must be met.

As the language-delayed child ages, the gap between himself/herself and his/her peers widens. Thus, the longer the child's problems remain unmanaged, the more pronounced the delay becomes and the more pervasive the impact.

Why does school present a particular challenge to children with communication disorders?

1. The language used in the classroom is complex.
2. Most instruction are delivered through the language code in spoken or written form so you must be able to listen or read to understand.
3. The child lets the teacher know what they have learned by speaking or writing.
4. Children are expected to learn through listening at least 60% of the time during the elementary school years and 90% of the time during the secondary school years.
5. Learning to read requires good language skills, since reading is simply another code which depends upon oral language knowledge.
6. Learning to write involves high level language skills.

Why do social relationships at home and with other children suffer when a child has a communication disorder?

- Dealing with behaviour is a problem because the child does not understand or can not express what they want. Problems are apparent in ability to understand causal events and consequences in everyday routines.
- Friendship, which is based on ability to share, is hindered by weak language skills.
- Children with communication disorders can become so frustrated by their lack of understanding or ability to express themselves that they misbehave.
- The child often fails to realize that the message has been misunderstood or may be so lost that asking for assistance is impossible.

Language disorders, psychiatric problems, learning disabilities and attention deficit hyperactivity/disorders are so often found together that researchers have concluded that language disorders are a common background feature of the utmost importance for proper management of behavioural disorders.

There is clear evidence that language intervention is effective and that the earlier treatment is begun, the better the outcome.

Better outcomes in education for children mean that these children become contributing and independent members of society thus saving our limited resources.

The Speech-Language Pathologist not only intervenes to improve the communication skills but also facilitate access to others in the child's world, sometimes enhancing access to training and education and sometimes providing the social link so necessary to the psychological well-being of humans. One could argue that what the SLP provides is access to the quality of life we all enjoy

Speech-Language Pathologists serve the sometimes invisible and voiceless minority who can not always understand or speak for themselves yet they deserve to be treated as equitably as those with more obvious disabilities.

Individuals with communication disorders should not be denied sheltered passage into the world the rest of us control.

The profession of Speech-Language Pathology is regulated by the government in most of Canada and the Western world, indicating that there is risk of sufficient harm to the communicatively handicapped individual when managed by untrained personnel.

Agencies providing speech and language services through unsupervised, unlicensed personnel are open to legal action and fines under the Ontario Regulated Health Professions Act.



When considering services for communication disorders in Ontario, it can be said without doubt that "too many, wait too long, for too little."