



Let's Talk

Autism and Communication Problems

“ I just want Ryan to say, “Mama.” He’s 3 and should be talking by now. But he doesn’t say any words. He doesn’t answer when I call his name. He likes to play with the same toy over and over. He stiffens up when I try to hug him. I think Ryan may have autism. ”

—Emily

Children With Autism

Children with autism, also called autism spectrum disorder, usually have problems with:

- Talking and understanding
- Playing with toys
- Playing with other people
- Reacting to noises, tastes, smells, touch, and actions appropriately
- Accepting changes in their routine

These problems may be mild or very severe. More boys than girls have autism. Each child with autism has different needs.

How Can an SLP Help?

Speech-language pathologists, or SLPs, work with children who have autism. Your SLP can help your child at home, in school, and in the community. The earlier your child gets help, the better.

Your SLP may be the first to notice signs of autism. The SLP can help figure out if your child has autism or some other problem. SLPs and other professionals will work with you on a team to watch and test your child—this is called an assessment. From this, they can diagnose autism and decide what will help your child.

What Will the SLP Do?

The SLP will work with your child to help him with listening, talking, reading, and writing. The types of services will depend on what your child needs and what he does well. It is important to get your child help as early as possible.

Fast facts

- Children with autism have problems communicating.
- They may have trouble making friends or talking to other people.
- Speech-language pathologists, or SLPs, can help.



Autism and Communication Problems

The SLP can help your child:

- Learn to play with objects
- Learn to interact with others
- Understand, talk, read, and write
- Get along better with kids in school

Your SLP can also help you and your child's teachers:

- Work on your child's speech and language at home and at school
- Understand your child's speech and language needs better
- Understand all the different ways that your child might communicate, like flapping hands or making sounds

Some children with autism are not able to speak. The SLP can help find other ways for your child to

communicate. This may include using hand gestures or sign language, pointing to pictures, or using electronic devices. This is called augmentative and alternative communication, or AAC.

Your SLP can also help you and others find ways to communicate with your child. This may include talking in shorter sentences or using pictures or gestures when you talk.

Will Insurance Pay for Speech and Language Services for My Child?

Many states are now passing laws that require insurance companies to pay for autism services. Talk with your insurance company to see what your health insurance might pay for. Your child may be able to get services through your state health department or public school.

“The team said that Ryan has autism. Ryan's been working with his teachers and an SLP. He lets us know what he wants for lunch by showing us a picture and using gestures. He says a few words to tell us what he wants to play with. The other day, he said, “train” for his “Thomas the Tank Engine” book. His eyes lit up when I knew which book to grab from his shelf.”

—Emily

Autism can change a child's life. SLPs can help.

To learn more about speech and language disorders and autism or to find an SLP near you who has been certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), visit www.asha.org or call 800-638-8255 or (TTY) 301-296-5650.

My SLP's name is

Appointment

Compliments of
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)
and