

At times, we work with children in the child care setting who may not be communicating as much as their friends are. We may give them time to become comfortable and acknowledge that it might take someone time to warm up to preschool and want to open up. There are other times, however, when you have a sense that someone may be having difficulty in his/her development of speech and language. You know this because of your experience of working with many other children of the same age. Still, you may be hesitant to share your concerns with parents, because you feel you may be wrong.

A handout called Red Flags for Speech, Language and Communication was developed as a guideline to parents and teachers about what might be a valid concern that may require an assessment by a speech-language pathologist. Do not ignore that concern that you might have. Act on it. Talk to parents about what they might be seeing and hearing at home and together decide if there is a concern that needs to be addressed.

Speech-Language Pathologists, KidsAbility

## Red Flags for Speech, Language & Communication

### Language Comprehension:

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- Unable to follow directions outside of normal routine
- Better able to follow instructions with visuals (e.g., following peers' lead, with gestures, objects, pictures, etc.)
- Unable to follow directions in busier/noisier environments
- Appears to not be listening

### Expressive Language:

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- Reduced vocabulary
- Difficulties with storytelling and/or expressing thoughts/ideas (e.g., does not talk about past events without a lot of prompting/help, can not explain sequences, etc.)
- Poor grammar
- Short sentences for age

### Pragmatics - Social Use of Language:

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- Difficulties taking turns or sharing in play and/or conversation
- Child is passive and does not initiate play and/or conversation
- Shifting topic of conversation abruptly and inappropriately
- Does not look at objects jointly with others (e.g., books during circle, etc.)
- Does not initiate play in socially appropriate ways (e.g. hitting, screaming, biting, kicking)
- Difficulties transitioning between activities
- Reduced and/or no eye contact during interactions
- Play skills are below expectations (e.g. does not engage in functional and/or pretend play, engages in repetitive forms of play such as lining items up, etc.)

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### **Articulation - Speech Production/Oral Motor:**

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- Difficulty pronouncing sounds and/or limited sound repertoire
- Inappropriate drooling for age
- Poor speech clarity when talking in sentences

### **Voice:**

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- Weak/breathy voice
- Chronic laryngitis
- Deep/hoarse/husky voice
- Strained voice

### **Dysfluency:**

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- stuttering

### **Resonance:**

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- Not enough nasal airflow (i.e., how you sound when you have a cold)
- Too much nasal airflow (i.e., like you are talking out of your nose)

### **Phonological Awareness/Literacy Skills:**

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- No interest in books
  - Does not know how to hold a book upright and/or turn pages
  - Difficulties with rhyming
  - Poor alphabet/number knowledge (e.g., cannot recognize his/her name in print, etc.)
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If Early Childhood Educators have concerns about a child's communication development, they can make a referral to the SPOT Team for a speech and language assessment by calling SNAP (519-741-0076), once parental consent is provided. Remember that it is best not to wait when considering a referral as research shows that the earlier intervention can begin, the better overall outcome.