

Working together as a team

For the best results, you will need to commit time every day to follow through with the plan that you and your speech language pathologist have put into place. If time is a problem, talk to your speech language pathologist about how to provide the best support possible for your child.

When you and your family become actively involved, you can help your child develop the language skills needed to reach his or her full potential.

For information on local speech and language programs or hearing program please visit ontario.ca/earlychildhood and click on Speech and Language or Hearing.



Helping your child learn language

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Helping your child learn

Ontario's Preschool Speech and Language Program and Infant Hearing Program provide support as you begin to help your child develop his or her language skills.

Your involvement is essential in helping your child learn language. Children learn best through relationships with the important people in their lives. As a parent, you are your child's best teacher because you know your child better than anyone else. You are in the best position to help him or her learn how to communicate.

What is language development?

Language development is a continuous process. A baby begins to use language with babbles and coos, then starts imitating words and understanding what they mean. Gradually, a child starts to string words together and moves from simple to more complex conversations.

A child has a language delay or disorder if he or she has difficulty understanding words or putting them together to communicate his or her needs and ideas.

Professional help

If you suspect your child's language is delayed, it is important to seek professional help immediately.

Although you are the most important person in your child's language development, you will not be alone. You will be part of a team with a speech language pathologist.

These professionals help to identify, assess and treat language disorders and to support language development. You may also work closely with other professionals, including communications assistants, American Sign Language consultants, auditory verbal therapists and early childhood educators, to support you and your child.

These professionals will show you how to communicate and play with your child at home to encourage and support your child's language development.

Your family's role

The Preschool Speech and Language and Infant Hearing programs rely on the involvement of a child's family as the key to improving his or her language skills.

A family's lifestyle, customs and environment all come into play as children learn about their world, the people in their lives and how to communicate. So, as a parent, it is your job to provide the professionals with valuable information about your child's strengths and needs. That way, you can help to develop goals to support your child's language development that will work for your family.

Finding the right approach for your family

There are various approaches to helping children learn. For example, a speech language pathologist may work with you to develop a program to follow at home or arrange for you to join regular get-togethers with other parents and children.

The speech language pathologist's first step is to assess your child's speech and language abilities. With your help, he or she will set goals and discuss how you can best work together. The speech language pathologist will then schedule time to work with your child and give you support through at least one of these:

- parent education workshops
- small group sessions
- consultation
- a home program.

Sessions with professionals will involve you, other family members and child care providers, so everyone can learn ways to help support your child's development during daily activities. You will receive helpful strategies and materials including, for example, suggestions for books to read and games to play at home. You may also be asked to videotape your child's progress, keep a journal or fill out questionnaires about your child's development.