

## What is Speech-Language Therapy?

A Speech-Language Pathologist treats children who have difficulty producing or understanding communication. Many parents wonder whether their child is actually having speech-language difficulties, or if they are just slow to develop. Many factors go into making this determination, but an experienced Speech-Language Pathologist can help answer these questions.

There are a variety of skills necessary for communication. Speech (vocalizations) and gestures are the most common forms of expression. A child who has difficulty saying some sounds or uses minimal vocalizations may be an appropriate candidate for speech-language therapy. Stuttering and voice disorders may also impair a child's ability to communicate. Some children have difficulty understanding language. Common examples include the child who doesn't follow directions well or the child who can't pay attention in a noisy environment. Other children may appear to be listening but can't make sense of what they are hearing.

The Speech-Language Pathologist's job involves all areas of communication and the skills that relate to it. In many instances a child experiencing difficulty swallowing, chewing, or managing secretions will also have difficulty with speech. Feeding difficulties are also in the realm of the Speech-Language Pathologist, or Occupational Therapist, as they relate to the use of oral musculature. The ability to communicate clearly and effectively is an important part of daily life, and the child who cannot do so becomes understandably frustrated.