

When Should You Have Your Child's Speech and Language Evaluated?

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Parents of young children are faced with countless questions about their development. Some of the most common concerns are about their speech and language skills. *Are they delayed? Are their errors age appropriate? When should they be evaluated?*

A quality speech and language evaluation should be a thorough observation and assessment of your child's communicative functioning. Deciding to initiate an evaluation for a very young child can be difficult, but it's often the best decision. In some cases, it may reveal that the child is demonstrating age-appropriate skills. If a delay or disorder is discovered, early intervention is paramount.

If your child is age 2 and not talking, you should schedule an evaluation. This is also recommended if your child:

- Has difficulty following spoken directions
- Repeats back words and phrases without comprehension
- Frequently uses memorized phrases or sentences
- Demonstrates unintelligible speech
- Has trouble using appropriate grammar



- Seems reluctant to engage in conversation
- Does not make eye contact and/or does not answer to his or her name
- Misinterprets social cues

If your child attends preschool, ask the teachers if he/she is a successful communicator. Do they ask and answer questions? Do they engage with peers? Is their speech understood or are they frequently asked to repeat themselves?

Keep in mind that a child may seem to understand spoken language at home because it is routine, predictable and repetitious. Try giving your child directions they haven't heard before, without pointing or using any visual support, to discern if they are truly comprehending language.

Parents often think that their child must be school age to receive services through their local school district. Each county in the state of Michigan has an Early On program that services all children under the age of 5. Part of their role is to conduct evaluations and determine whether a child is eligible for speech and language services.

You can also seek answers or an evaluation from a private practice like the Kaufman Children's Center. As speech-language pathologists who work with young children, research informs so many of our decisions. We know by intervening early, with quality therapy, we can help every child reach their greatest potential.



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