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Sent: Thursday, July 18, 2013 3:59 PM
To: scott@afamilyforeverchild.org
Subject: Speech Delays in Adopted Children



Dear ,

Children in foster care may be diagnosed with speech or language delays. This can be due to a number of reasons, including abuse, neglect, not attending school regularly, or developmental delays. Nurture also plays a huge role in speech and language development. If your child has a speech or language delay or if you suspect that they do, you may consider seeking out the help of a speech-language pathologist. Your child's doctor or therapist may refer you to a speech-language pathologist in your area.

Working with a Speech-Language Pathologist

A speech-language pathologist will look at a child's speech and language skills, and how it relates to their overall development. He/she will also conduct standardized tests and look for developmental milestones in your child's speech and language development. In addition, the speech-language pathologist will also assess the following:

- What your child is able to understand, also called "receptive language"
- What your child can say, also called "expressive language"
- What other methods of communication your child may be using, such as head shaking or nodding, pointing, gesturing, etc.
- Your child's sound development and how clear their speech is
- How your child's mouth, tongue, palate etc. work together for speech, eating and swallowing, also known as your child's "oral-motor status"

If your child needs speech therapy, it is very important that you remain involved throughout the entire process. Ask about how you can participate in the therapy sessions, and if you can observe them. You will to work with your child at home to improve his/her language and speech skills. Finally, having a realistic expectation of where your child is at developmentally will help you in understanding what will be involved in helping your child learn how to speak and use language, and will help you celebrate each development that comes as a result.

What you can do as the child's parent

Speech development is a mixture of nature and nurture, so your role as the child's parent will be critical in the child's development and use of language. While a child's genetic will play a big part in determining their intelligence and speech and language development, so will their environment. Examples of how a child's environment plays a role include the type and frequency of stimulation he/she receives at home or at daycare; the number of opportunities he/she has for communication exchange and participation; and what kind of feedback he/she receives. The following are some strategies you can use at home to help develop your child's speech and language:

Spend a lot of time communicating with your child- This is also important during infancy. Talking, singing, and encouraging your child to imitate sound and gestures will help them in their development.

Read to your child- Look for age-appropriate books and picture books that your child can look at while you read to them. It's ok if you don't finish the entire book! Books with textures that kids can touch are also great learning tools. Nursery rhymes are also a great teaching tool for their rhythmic appeal. As your child begins to make progress in their speech and language development, have them point to pictures in the book and name them.

Reinforce your child's speech and language through everyday situations- Examples include pointing to and naming foods at the grocery store, explain what you are doing as you cook or clean a room, point and name different objects around the house, or name the different sounds you

hear as you drive the car or walk down the street. Ask your child questions, and always acknowledge their responses, even if you can't understand them. Keep what you say simple, but avoid using "baby talk".

Recognizing and treating speech and language problems right away is the best approach to helping your child learn and develop language, whatever their age. Overtime and with proper therapy and learning tools, your child will be able to better communicate with you, his/her peers, and everyone else he/she come into contact with.

Additional Information

For more information on speech delays, visit the following sites:

Kids Health: [Delayed Speech or Language Development](#).

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA): [Late Blooming or Language Problem?](#)

[Find](#) a speech-language pathologist near you

Adoptive Families: [Your Child's Speech and Language Development](#)

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