



### Speech/Language Services in Monroe Township

Speech and Language services refer to a very specific set of delays and I have taken the liberty of copying from the ASHA (American Speech-Language Hearing Association) the most commonly used terms and their meanings for clarification.

“A communication disorder is an impairment in the ability to receive, send, process, and comprehend concepts or verbal, nonverbal and graphic symbol systems. A communication disorder may be evident in the processes of hearing, language, and/or speech. A communication disorder may range in severity from mild to profound. It may be developmental or acquired. Individuals may demonstrate one or any combination of communication disorders. A communication disorder may result in a primary disability or it may be secondary to other disabilities.

- A. A speech disorder is an impairment of the articulation of speech sounds, fluency and/or voice.
  - 1. An articulation disorder is the atypical production of speech sounds characterized by substitutions, omissions, additions or distortions that may interfere with intelligibility.
  - 2. A fluency disorder is an interruption in the flow of speaking characterized by atypical rate, rhythm, and repetitions in sounds, syllables, words, and phrases. This may be accompanied by excessive tension, struggle behavior, and secondary mannerisms.
  - 3. A voice disorder is characterized by the abnormal production and/or absences of vocal quality, pitch, loudness, resonance, and/or duration, which is inappropriate for an individual's age and/or gender.
- B. A language disorder is impaired comprehension and/or use of spoken, written and/or other symbol systems. The disorder may involve (1) the form of language (phonology, morphology, and syntax), (2) the content of language (semantics), and/or (3) the function of language in communication (pragmatics) in any combination.

## 1. Form of Language

- a. Phonology is the sound system of a language and the rules that govern the sound combinations.
- b. Morphology is the system that governs the structure of words and the construction of word forms.
- c. Syntax is the system governing the order and combination of words to form sentences, and the relationships among the elements within a sentence.

## 2. Content of Language

- a. Semantics is the system that governs the meanings of words and sentences.

## 3. Function of Language

- a. Pragmatics is the system that combines the above language components in functional and socially appropriate communication.”

To be eligible for speech and/or language services in Monroe, first and foremost, there must be an evaluation by a New Jersey Department of Education certified Speech therapist and/or a Licensed Speech Pathologist. All services are evaluation driven! In New Jersey, the specific criteria for receiving speech services are driven by the New Jersey Administrative Code.

### Preschool (6A:14 3.3 (3))

“When a preschool age child is referred for an initial evaluation, a speech-language specialist shall participate as an additional member of the child study team in the meeting to determine whether to evaluate and the nature and scope of the evaluation”.

“If it is determined that a speech-language assessment will be conducted, it may be utilized as one of the two required assessments in N.J.A.C. 6A:14-3.4(i).

New Jersey administrative Code 3.5:10 continues to define eligibility for preschool services by stating to be eligible for preschool service a child must be between the ages of three and five and demonstrate a developmental delay, as measured by appropriate diagnostic instruments, and requires special educational and related services”. “A developmental delay shall mean a 33 percent delay in one developmental area, or a 25 percent delay in two or more developmental areas (communication being one of the possible developmental areas). Monroe Township uses the Battelle as one of the diagnostic tools for determining preschool eligibility”.

### School Age Student: Communication Impaired

A student shall be determined eligible for special education and related services when the “disability adversely affects the student’s performance and the student is in need of special education and related services” (3.5 c). To continue, the same section of the administrative code 6A:14 3.5(4) defines Communication Impaired as follows: “means a language disorder in the area of morphology, syntax, semantics, and/or pragmatics/discourse which adversely affects a student’s educational performance and is not due to an auditory impairment. The problem shall be demonstrated through functional assessment of a language in other than a testing situation and performance below 1.5 standard deviation, or the 10<sup>th</sup> percentile on at least two standardized language tests, where such tests are appropriate one of which shall be a comprehensive test of both receptive and expressive language. When the area of suspected disability is language, assessment by a certified speech-language specialist and assessment to establish educational impact are required”.

### Eligible for Speech Only Services 6A:14 – 3.6

Speech only services is an area in which there is a “a speech disorder in articulation, phonology, fluency, voice, or any combination, unrelated to dialect, cultural differences or the influence of a foreign language, which adversely affects the students’ performance; and/or a language disorder that meets the definition of Communication Impaired above and requires speech-language services only”.

1. **Articulation/phonology:** On a standardized articulation or phonology assessment, the student exhibits one or more sound production error patterns beyond the age at which 90 percent of the population has achieved mastery according to current developmental norms and misarticulates sounds consistently in a speech sample.
2. **Fluency:** The student demonstrates at least a mild rating, or its equivalent, on a formal fluency rating scale and in a speech sample, the student exhibits disfluency in five percent or more of the words spoken.
3. **Voice:** On a formal rating scale, the student performs below the normed level for voice quality, pitch, resonance, loudness or duration and the condition is evident on two separate occasions, three to four weeks apart, at different times.

### Service Delivery

Speech services, provided by a certified speech therapist are conducted either on an individual or small group basis. Services are designed to address student need as well as to reduce educational impact. The reader is now aware that eligibility

for speech services is dependent upon not only student's skills but the overall impact that disability may have on educational performance.

In an individualized educational plan (IEP), and depending on the level of severity, a parent/guardian will see that their child will be receiving services for a specified period of time on a yearly basis. The school year service delivery model enables the student to receive their dedicated services and still permits the therapist to work through the school calendar which often sees breaks in school for holidays, assemblies, inclement weather, etc.

Monroe Township uses both the push-in and pull-out models of providing services. Pull-out is the more traditional model of removing students from their classes and providing services either individually or in a small group in a separate setting (usually the therapy room). This model is more typical at the elementary level. Monroe does use both push-in and pull out models. Push-in is when the therapist goes directly to the class and integrates/infuses their services in the class so all students benefit and teacher can reinforce that session in their other lessons. This has proven a viable model at the secondary level and most especially within our secondary self-contained classes. Given the ages of the students and the departmentalized model of instruction, it becomes increasingly more difficult for students to be removed from the primary subjects for related services.

As previously noted, Monroe Township uses a yearly model to note its service model. This is done to ensure students receive their services throughout the school year and are not adversely impacted by the school calendar that often sees periods of absences for school holidays, inclement weather, class trips, assembly programs, standardized testing, etc. If a staff person is absent the service is made up; however, if the student is absent that service is not replaced.

Given the nature of the student's disability the frequency of service varies. For example, a student within our preschool autism program might receive maximum services while a student with a mild articulation deficit may receive much less. Consequently, services are developed depending on severity of need.

### Discontinuation of Services

Services for students cease under fairly natural consequences. When a student meets their goals and have achieved at a level developmentally appropriate, a student is re-evaluated and assessment findings, along with therapy growth would lead to discontinuing services.

It is also possible that a parent would request discontinuance of services. In this situation, the district would receive a letter with an original signature. The district would provide the parent written confirmation that parents have requested a change in their child's services and provide them with 15 days to consider their decision. After 15 days, with no change in decision, services would come to an end and the student's IEP/file would be closed.

**It is also possible that student's level of progress "plateaus". This a situation in which a student has been receiving services for a period of time and despite implementing different therapeutic strategies, the student has achieved their maximum growth for their developmental period. This is more frequently reported on medical side of service delivery mode, but also does occur in the school system as well, and break or hiatus, from services would be discussed.**

**It is important to note, that as would be the case for starting services, no services are discontinued without some contact and input from parents/guardians.**

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