

COMMUNICATION AND SPEECH THERAPY

Handout for parents

Who is a Speech therapist?

Speech therapists or Speech and Language Pathologists (SLPs) assess and provide therapy for people who have:

- difficulty saying speech sounds correctly (e.g. saying 'lun' instead of 'run') or speaking fluently (e.g., stuttering) or having voice problems (e.g. having a very strained rough voice)
- trouble understanding others (receptive language), or sharing thoughts, ideas, and feelings (expressive language).
- difficulty communicating for social purposes (e.g., greeting, commenting, asking questions), talking in different ways to suit the listener and setting, and following rules for conversation and story-telling.
- problems organizing thoughts, paying attention, remembering, planning, and/or problem-solving.
- Problems eating, drinking or swallowing (e.g. coughing and choking while eating food)
- Provide therapy for individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Provide Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) systems for individuals with severe and complex communication difficulties (e.g. like those difficulties seen in Autism and Cerebral Palsy)

At Avaz, the Speech Therapists focus on communication and language development using Avaz (a tool for Augmentative and Alternative Communication(AAC)).

How will speech therapy help my child?

Speech therapy will involve the SLP working with the child or adult to build their communication to a level that is appropriate for their age and development. The goal is to have communication that is independent and effective. Speech therapy can be

- One on one or in small groups
- Supported by a family member as home practice needs to be carried out
- Depending on the person's needs the goals can be different. Some goals can be: expressing feelings, sharing stories, naming things around them.

Language intervention activities

The SLP will interact with a child by playing and talking, using pictures, books, objects, or ongoing events to stimulate language development.

What is AAC ?

AAC stands for Augmentative and Alternative Communication *Augmentative* means to add to someone's speech. *Alternative* means to be used instead of speech. Some people use AAC throughout their life. Others may use AAC only for a short time, like when they have surgery and can't talk.

- It refers to all other means of communication other than verbal speech such as
 - Signs or sign language
 - Pictures or symbols
 - Communication boards
 - Speech generating devices. Speech therapists recommend various AAC tools for developing language and communication. **Avaz is an AAC app using iPad or Android tabs.**

Who can use AAC?

People of all ages can use AAC if they have trouble with speech or language skills. It is especially beneficial for non-verbal or minimally verbal individuals - E.g. Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Down's Syndrome, Intellectual challenges, delayed development etc.

If you have apprehensions about getting started with AAC..

For those parents who are concerned about taking the leap of faith to adopt AAC for their child who is minimally verbal, wondering if it will impede their speech, here is a very motivating parent account...

[The Leap: AAC by 18 months: 3 years later](#) - by Dana Neider, parent

When can I start therapy?

Therapy should begin *as soon as possible*.

Children who start therapy early (before they're 5 years old) tend to have better results than those who begin later.

This doesn't mean that older kids won't do well in therapy. Their progress might be slower, because they have learned patterns that need to be changed.

Courtesy:

Some FAQs are sourced from [Kids Health](#) and [ASHA](#)

[Model Bill of Rights \(asha.org\)](#)

[We have human rights](#) (A Human rights handbook for people with development disabilities - Harvard)