



HIGH FIVE SPEECH THERAPY

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RED FLAGS FOR SPEECH/LANGUAGE DELAYS

Every child develops differently and at different rates – and that uniqueness is wonderful! However, there are some very important skills that need to develop in order for a kiddo to grow and thrive as s/he continues to develop. These foundational skills are crucial for long-term speech & language development and if not observed by certain ages, **it is as a red flag that indicates your child should be screened or evaluated by a speech-language pathologist.**

Here are some **RED FLAGS** that may indicate your child should be assessed by a speech-language pathologist (a.k.a. speech therapist).

If your child is demonstrating any 1 of the Red Flags listed for their age, please see the resources at the end of this document, or contact Emily.

6
MONTHS

- No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions
- Does not yet laugh or squeal
- Does not yet look toward new sounds
- Does not yet have interest in games like “peek-a-boo”
- Does not yet make cooing noises (vowel sounds like “aaaaah”)

9
MONTHS

- Is still making only vowel sounds, with no speech-like consonants (e.g. “aaa” instead of an occasional “mmm” or “bah” or “duh”)
- No back-and-forth sharing of sounds, smiles, or other facial expressions

12
MONTHS

- Not yet babbling with changes in tone (e.g. “dadada,” “bababa” or “deedee”)
- Not yet consistently respond to her/his name
- Not yet pointing, sharing, reaching, waving “bye bye” or shaking head for “no”
- Not yet communicating interests/needs through eye gaze or gestures like pointing or reaching
- Not yet babbling or cooing during play (note: babbling is vocalizations with consonants + vowels like “mamamama” and cooing is only vowel sounds like “aaaahhhh”)
- Not yet imitating gestures or actions
- Not yet understanding common words such as “bye”, “no”, “give me,” etc.
- Has infrequent eye contact or little interest in interaction with familiar caregivers

15
MONTHS

- Not yet using 3-5 signs and/or verbal words (note: pronunciation does not have to be perfect)
- Not yet making any animal noises
- Not yet pointing to things of interest as if to say “Look at that!” and then looking right at you (e.g. pointing at a car driving by, pointing at a dog outside the window, etc.)
- Not yet understanding and responding to words like “no” and “up”
- Not yet pointing to objects or pictures when asked “Where’s the...?”
- Not yet imitating gross motor movements like clapping or stomping feet

18
MONTHS

- Not yet using 15-20 signs and/or verbal words like “mama,” “more,” or “up” (note: pronunciation does not have to be perfect)
- Not yet imitating words consistently
- Not yet using at least 3-4 consonants (for example: p, b, d, t, m, n)
- Not yet pointing to 2-3 major body parts such as head, nose, eyes, feet, mouth, ears, tummy
- Not yet understanding simple commands like “come here”, “stop”, “don’t”, “give me the _____” or “touch your nose”
- Doesn’t respond with a word or gesture to a question such as “what’s that? Or “where’s your shoe?”
- Not yet understanding names of common objects
- Not yet playing “pretend” with items (e.g. talking on toy phone, feeding a doll)
- Not yet in playing near other children when they are close



- Not yet using 50-100 signs and/or verbal words (note: pronunciation does not have to be perfect)
- Not yet consistently combining 2 verbal words and/or signs together like "Daddy go," "more milk" or "shoe on" (note: rote 2-word phrases like "thank you" and "Mickey Mouse" count as 1 word)
- Not yet using at least 1-3 new words a week
- Not yet imitating verbal words consistently and frequently
- Not yet asking short questions such as "what's that?"
- Speech is not at least 50% understandable to caregivers (doesn't mean speech has to be perfect – just has to be understood by familiar listeners)
- Not yet playing pretend with toys, such as feeding dolls or making a toy person drive a toy car
- Not yet following simple 2-step commands such as "Get the ball and put it on the table"
- Not yet responding to simple questions ("Where's the ball?")
- Not yet pointing to objects or pictures of items in books consistently when asked
- Not yet understanding the function of common objects such as a cup, fork, brush, etc.



- Not yet using 300 verbal words
- Not yet using action words like "run", "eat", "fall"
- Not yet using some adult grammar, such as "two babies" and "doggie sleeping"
- Says only 1-2 words at a time (e.g., "kick ball" instead of "I kick ball to daddy") and is not combining words into at least 3-4 word sentences (e.g., "I want big apple" or "my truck is broken")
- Not yet asking questions
- Not yet accurately and consistently answering yes/no questions
- Not yet able to correctly say these sounds: "p", "b", "m", "n", "t", "d", "h", "w"
- Speech is not **at least** 75% or more understandable (doesn't mean speech has to be perfect – just has to be understood)
- Strangers understand less than half of what child says
- Child is leaving the beginning sounds or ending sounds off of most words
- Child is not yet able to correctly produce all vowels in their native language
- Not yet answering simple who, what and where questions like "who is that" or "where is the truck" or "what is she doing?"
- Experiencing stuttering behavior for more than 6 months
- Not yet playing with other children
- Not yet initiating conversations, speaks only when spoken to, or only repeats what others say



- Not yet consistently using complex sentences with 4+ words
- Having difficulty with grammar or pronoun use. Examples: puts words in the wrong order in sentences, uses pronouns incorrectly (I, you, me, your, my, etc.) and/or leaves out little words (in, the, of) and word endings (-ing, -ed, -s)
- Talks only about the "here and now" rather than events in the past and future, objects/people that are not present, etc.
- Not yet able to listen to 2-3 lines of a story and answer simple questions about it
- Not yet able to tell a story with a beginning, middle and end
- Not yet able to correctly say these sounds: "f", "k", hard "g", "p", "b", "m", "n", "t", "d", "h", "w"
- Speech is not 90-100% understandable to strangers despite age-appropriate articulation errors (may not yet be able to say "r", "l", "ch", "th" or "sh" yet)
- Not yet asking a variety of questions to gain information (who, what, where, why, when, how)
- Not yet able to tell a simple story on topic
- Not yet following simple 3-step directions
- Has difficulty answering simple who, what, where and why questions
- Not yet able to name a few letters, numbers, and rhyming words
- Experiencing stuttering behavior for more than 6 months



- Uses only 3-4-word sentences to talk about "here and now"
- Not yet using complete sentences that are grammatically correct and that give lots of detail
- Not yet answering how and why questions or questions about past or future events
- Not yet able to correctly say these sounds: "l", "s-" clusters (st-, sm-, sk-, sp-, etc.), "f", "v", "k", hard "g", "p", "b", "m", "n", "t", "d", "h", "w"
- Speech is not 95-100% understood by most listeners despite age-appropriate articulation errors (may not be able to say "r", "ch", "th", "j" or "sh" yet)
- Talks a lot, but does not engage in reciprocal conversation and/or make comments relevant to the situation
- Cannot answer "how" and "why" questions, or questions about past or future events
- Experiencing stuttering behavior for more than 6 months

OVERALL WARNING SIGNS

- ANY loss of speech or babbling or social skills at ANY age •
 - ANY child that appears unable to hear •
 - ANY swallowing difficulties •
- Toddler or preschooler that never/rarely gestures or imitates •
- Toddler or preschooler that appears to not understand speech •
- Difficulty developing words beyond repeating others over and over •
- For 2 years and older: Leaves off first sounds of words (“og” for dog), substitutes lots of “k” or “g” sounds (“gog” for dog, “kak” for cat), uses few consonant sounds with mostly vowels •
- NOTE: Chronic ear infections put a child at high risk for speech/language delays •

UH-OH...MY CHILD HAS SOME OF THESE RED FLAGS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

If your child is demonstrating 1 or more of the red flags for their age OR for the ages younger than their age, **please don't wait to seek help!**

DID YOU KNOW?

- Many communication delays and disorders can be reversed, or even prevented, when therapy starts early!
- If your child needs therapy, beginning therapy earlier means less time in therapy overall.

Studies show that early treatment takes less time and money:
every \$1 spent in early years saves \$7 in treatment and services at older ages.
It also promotes improved confidence, improved work in school
and better social skills!

A note on the “wait and see” approach: It is a **MYTH** that you should just “wait and see” if your child is a “late talker.”

The “wait and see” approach can be appropriate in some circumstances, and a speech-language pathologist (SLP) may even recommend this upon screening your child – however, I **STRONGLY** encourage you to have your child screened or evaluated by a speech pathologist if you have ANY concerns with his/her development at ANY AGE. The SLP can determine if the “wait and see” approach is appropriate for your child or not.

DO NOT WAIT UNTIL AGE 2 if you have concerns at 16 or 18 or 21 months!

A note regarding pediatricians: Pediatricians are wonderful medical professionals. I highly value them and frequently refer out for their medical advice.

Please keep in mind that most pediatricians have **MINIMAL** training in speech & language development. The typical pediatrician is trained to diagnose and treat *medical issues*, not speech & language issues.

If your gut tells you something is going on with your child's speech and/or language development, I generally advise caregivers to **follow their gut** and get your child evaluated or screened by a speech-language pathologist sooner rather than later – it can't hurt!!

Who Should I Contact For Help?

You have several options, and some families even utilize multiple options. Don't be afraid to "shop around" for the best fit.

1. YOUR LOCAL SPEECH THERAPIST

• FOR CHILDREN OF ALL AGES •

You may contact local speech-language pathologist, Emily Goudreault, to schedule an in-person screening, virtual screening, 2nd opinion or formal evaluation if you have any concerns:
emily@high5cr.com • call or text 970.988.6718

In Michigan: Emily has offices in Holland and Grand Rapids, and also offers in-home therapy (schedule permitting).

Other local therapy options include private therapy clinics and hospital outpatient clinics. These are especially good options if your insurance plan allows for pediatric speech therapy (the large majority of insurance plans do NOT unless your child has a relevant medical diagnosis such as autism, cerebral palsy, hearing loss, etc.).

Please ask lots of questions about the therapist's background and experience with children that are your child's specific age and with your child's specific challenges to ensure they are the best fit for your child.

2. YOUR HOME SCHOOL DISTRICT:

Regardless of where your child attends school, your home school district is legally obligated to provide free screenings/evaluations and educational services to children who "qualify" (i.e. demonstrate a significant delay affecting learning).

Each individual school district's special education team is responsible for determining how, when and where those services are provided, although parents can and should participate in those decision-making conversations.

• IF YOUR CHILD IS UNDER 3 YEARS OF AGE •

Early Intervention: Every state has a federally-funded Early Intervention program for children ages birth-3 years that is typically operated by the state's public school system.

Children demonstrating a significant enough delay in any developmental domain (e.g. language, gross motor, fine motor, social/emotional, cognitive) or those with a medical diagnosis related to development (e.g. autism, hearing loss, Down syndrome), may be offered therapy or some kind of support services through Early Intervention at no charge. Screenings/evaluations are also free.

If you are in Michigan, that program is called EarlyOn Michigan. You may self refer (no medical referral necessary) at www.1800EarlyOn.org or call 1-800-Early-On. For information about other states' Early Intervention programs, look online for the [CDC's Guide to Early Intervention Contacts by State](#).

• IF YOUR CHILD IS 3-5 YEARS OF AGE •

Contact your home district's Child Find Coordinator to request a screening/evaluation.

Children demonstrating delays in any developmental domain domain (e.g. language, gross motor, fine motor, social/emotional, cognitive), may be offered therapy or support services through their home district, typically through the district's public preschool program. These services are free of charge if the child qualifies.

If you are in Michigan, you may find your district's contact information at www.BuildUpMI.org or by calling 1-888-320-8384.

• IF YOUR CHILD IS IN KINDERGARTEN OR 6+ YEARS OF AGE •

Contact your home school's special education team or discuss your concerns with your child's teacher. If you submit a written request for an evaluation, your home district has to follow special rules to respond/evaluate. All schools receiving public funding have a duty to identify and evaluate all students in need of special education services.

Children demonstrating delays in any developmental domain domain (e.g. language, gross motor, fine motor, social/emotional, cognitive), may be offered therapy or support services through their home district's special education program. These services are free of charge if the child qualifies.