

## DCDD Hot Topics

The DCDD Board members prepare briefs about topics of interest for our members. As a DCDD member, you are receiving this brief on the topic of early awareness and intervention for communication disorders. We appreciate your continued membership with DCDD! Please feel free to share this article on DCDD [Linkedin](#) or [Twitter](#).

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May is Better Hearing and Speech Month! This is an ideal time to bring awareness to speech, language, and hearing disorders. The ability to communicate effectively is the essence of what makes us human. It's also a human right! Therefore, any communication disorder is a major concern.

It's important to alert families to the early warning signs of a communication disorder and encourage them to pay attention to developmental milestones from birth. The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) recently surveyed more than 1,100 of its members about parental awareness of warning signs and knowledge of benefits of early treatment.

- One of the more staggering results is that almost 70% of the speech-language pathologists and audiologists polled say that parents of young children are **not aware** of the early warning signs of communication disorders.
- Another key finding is that upon noticing the warning signs of a speech or language disorder, more than a third (36%) of these professionals say that parents, on average, are waiting **one year or longer** before taking action.
- With respect to hearing, nearly one third of the respondents say that, on average, the symptoms of hearing loss are going undetected in children for **a year or longer**.

How can we help parents of young children fully appreciate the importance of early communication interactions? How can we encourage parents to seek treatment early?

- Understand why parents wait. Many think children will outgrow a communication problem. Parents often hear messages that foster a wait-and-see approach, like “boys talk later than girls,” “she’ll talk when she’s ready,” or “Einstein was a late talker.”
- Alert parents to early warning signs of communication disorders. These are listed on [IdentifytheSigns.org](http://IdentifytheSigns.org). ASHA has a new [PSA](#) showing that the warning signs are not always obvious. Remind parents to trust their instincts. They know their child best.
- Remind parents to seek an assessment at the first sign of a speech, language, or hearing problem. They can go to Child Find or use ASHA ProFind to locate [ASHA-certified audiologists and speech-language pathologists](#).
- Talk about the benefits of early intervention. Early treatment is generally less expensive, takes less time, and is more effective. And if it turns out there isn't a problem, then an evaluation can serve to put a parent's mind at ease.
- Warn parents about the consequences of waiting too long for communication intervention: problems with social interaction, learning, reading and writing, behavior, and even later employment and career success.
- Provide practical communication tips for parents:

- Talk, sing, read, and play with your child!
- Listen and respond. Pay attention to what children say and not how they say it.
- Talk to your child in the language you are most comfortable using.
- Use many different words.
- Limit technological distractions.

Happy Better Hearing and Speech month! Please take this time to educate the public about communication disorders and the value of early intervention.