Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists in Early Intervention: Position Statement

Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist in Early Intervention


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Position Statement

It is the position of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) that speech-language pathologists have a central role in providing services and supports for families and their infants or toddlers with disabilities as members of the early intervention team. Furthermore, the appropriately certified and licensed (as applicable) speech-language pathologist is qualified to address delays and disabilities in communication, language, speech, emergent literacy, and feeding/swallowing. Effective communication is fundamental to all aspects of human functioning, particularly learning and social interaction. The development of communication skills begins at birth. Families with infants and toddlers (birth–36 months) who are at risk for or have disabilities should receive developmentally supportive care that addresses a broad spectrum of priorities and concerns (Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 2004; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2005; National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2000; Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005).

Speech-language pathologists, as autonomous professionals, assume various roles in addressing the concerns and priorities of families and their infants or toddlers, and should be included on any early intervention team for children who are at risk for or have communication, language, speech, emergent literacy, or feeding/swallowing impairments. These roles are implemented in collaboration with families, caregivers, and other professionals, and include but are not limited to (a) prevention; (b) screening, evaluation, and assessment; (c) planning, implementing, and monitoring intervention; (d) consultation with and education for team members, including families and other professionals; (e) service coordination; (f)
transition planning; (g) advocacy; and (h) awareness and advancement of the knowledge base in early intervention. These roles should be implemented in accord with the following guiding principles:

1. Services are family centered and culturally and linguistically responsive.
2. Services are developmentally supportive and promote children's participation in their natural environments.
3. Services are comprehensive, coordinated, and team based.
4. Services are based on the highest quality evidence that is available.

Extensive information and references about these guiding principles and roles and responsibilities of speech-language pathologists in early intervention can be found in the companion ASHA technical report, guidelines, and knowledge and skills documents (ASHA, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c).

References


