

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

Position statement

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

About this Document

This position statement is an official statement of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). It was developed by ASHA's Ad Hoc Committee on the Role of the Speech-Language Pathologist in Early Intervention. Members of the Committee were M. Jeanne Wilcox (chair), Melissa A. Cheslock, Elizabeth R. Crais, Trudi Norman-Murch, Rhea Paul, Froma P. Roth, Juliann J. Woods, and Diane R. Paul (ex officio). ASHA Vice Presidents for Professional Practices in Speech-Language Pathology Celia Hooper (2003–2005) and Brian B. Shulman (2006–2008) served as the monitoring officers. The ASHA *Scope of Practice in Speech-Language Pathology* (ASHA, 2007) states that the practice of speech-language pathology includes providing services for infants and toddlers with communication needs. The ASHA Preferred Practice Patterns for the Profession of Speech-Language Pathology (ASHA, 2004) are statements that define universally applicable characteristics of practice. It is required that individuals who practice independently in this area hold the Certificate of Clinical Competence in Speech-Language Pathology and abide by the ASHA Code of Ethics (ASHA, 2003), including Principle of Ethics II, Rule B, which states that “individuals shall engage in only those aspects of the profession that are within their competence, considering their level of education, training, and experience.” This document was approved by the ASHA Board of Directors (BOD 4-2008) in February 2008. This position statement replaces the 1990 ASHA document *The Roles of Speech-Language Pathologists in Service Delivery to Infants, Toddlers, and Their Families*.

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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](#)).

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Index terms: early intervention, newborns, infants and toddlers, developmental disorders

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