

Delays & Disorders Explained – Articulation/ Speech Sound Clarity –

A GUIDE FOR CAREGIVERS



WHAT IS ARTICULATION/SPEECH SOUND CLARITY?

Articulation/speech sound clarity refers to how clearly a person pronounces speech sounds in words.

- It is the ability to move lips, tongue, jaw and mouth in the precise patterns needed to elicit specific sounds.

WHAT ARE THE COMMON SIGNS?

Parents may notice that their child's speech is less clear than that of their peers, or they might have trouble understanding what their child is saying. It's important to recognize that speech sound clarity can vary widely among children as they develop their language skills. There is a hierarchy in the development of speech where some sounds are expected earlier than others, according to age.

Common signs of speech sound clarity issues in children include:

- Difficulty pronouncing specific sounds.
- Substituting one sound for another.
- Omitting sounds from words.
- Other people struggling to understand the child's speech.

WHAT DOES THERAPY FOR ARTICULATION/SPEECH SOUND CLARITY INVOLVE?

Speech therapy is a valuable solution for addressing articulation issues. In therapy sessions, the clinician will work with the child so they improve their speech sound productions.

This often involves:

- Practicing the correct placement and movement of the articulators (tongue, lips, and jaw) to produce sounds accurately.
- Drill and practice of the correct movements at the individual sound level; then moving to sound and vowel into single words, gradually increasing to phrases and sentences.

Therapists use engaging activities and exercises tailored to the child's age and interests, making learning fun and motivating.

- Therapy is structured in blocks of 10 sessions to ensure consistency to address all goals; then determine whether a subsequent block of therapy is needed.

WHAT CAN BE PRACTICED AT HOME?

Parents play a vital role by practicing speech exercises at home. This reinforces what the child learns in therapy, which will in turn allows for faster progress and the overall results you are seeking, so the child reaches their goals efficiently.

It's essential for parents to be **patient** and **supportive**, as progress in speech sound clarity can take time. **Celebrating small improvements** and maintaining **consistent** practice will encourage your child to reach their speech goal in a timely way.

Remember that every child is unique, and the specific sounds they struggle with may vary. Speech therapy is highly individualized, focusing on the sounds that are challenging. With dedication and professional guidance, most children can make significant improvements in their speech sound clarity, enhancing their ability to communicate effectively. Early intervention is often key to success, so if parents have concerns about their child's speech, it's a good idea to seek evaluation and therapy sooner rather than later.