



Speech or Language Impairment

What is a Speech or Language Impairment?

"Speech or language impairment" means a communication disorder, including stuttering, impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment, that adversely affects a child's educational performance (K.A.R. 91-40-1(000)).

Prevalence

More than 1 million students who received special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Improvement Act (IDEA, 2004) in public schools are served under the category of speech or language impairments. (Center for Parent Information and Resources, n.d.)

Five Categories of Speech and Language Impairments

- **Articulation:** difficulties in producing sounds (e.g., distortion, substitution, and omission).
- **Fluency:** difficulties in the flow of speech that is disrupted by sounds, syllables, and words that are repeated, prolonged, or phonation patterns (e.g., stuttering).
- **Voice:** difficulties in the voice quality of speech in relation to pitch, resonance, or loudness.
- **Language:** difficulties in expressive and receptive language that primarily include words or phrases in sentences (syntax), and word meanings (semantics).
- **Pragmatics:** persistent difficulties in the social use of verbal and nonverbal communication.

Causes of Speech or Language Impairments

- hearing loss;
- neurological disorders;
- muscular disorders;
- developmental delays;
- brain injury;
- intellectual disability;
- autism;
- cerebral palsy;
- physical impairments (e.g., cleft lip, cleft palate, or paralysis of vocal folds);
- nodules on the vocal cords); or
- other unknown causes.

Characteristics of Speech or Language Impairments

- speech and/or language skills that are noticeably behind developmentally, as compared to age
- partial or total loss of voice;
- interruptions in the flow or rhythm of speech, such as stuttering;
- difficulties with producing speech
- difficulties with pitch, volume, or quality of voice;
- difficulties with the use of words and their meanings;
- inability to express ideas;
- difficulties with grammatical patterns;
- reduced vocabulary;
- difficulties with social skills;
- difficulties in language processing;
- difficulties with vocabulary, sight words, decoding, and comprehension; and
- difficulties with abnormal rates of speaking, speech interruptions, and repetition of sounds, words, phrases, or sentences, which interferes with effective communication.



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Resources

KSDE Process Handbook <http://www.ksde.org/Default.aspx?tabid=598>

Kansas State Department of Education: Eligibility Indicators
<https://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/SES/misc/iep/EligibilityIndicators.pdf>

Kansas Speech-Language-Hearing Association (KSHA) www.ksha.org

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) <https://www.asha.org/>

Council for Exceptional Children www.cec.org

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities (NICHCY)
<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/speechlanguage/>

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