

If You Have Concerns, See an SLP

You may want to discuss your concerns with your child's doctor, however a physician's referral is not needed to see an SLP. Note that you may need to go through the healthcare system unless you are paying with private funds.

WHERE TO SEEK HELP:

To find a speech-language pathologist in your area, contact your local school district or health authority. You can also use the searchable database on the website for the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA)

www.caslpa.ca

Go to the Consumers tab and click on Find a Professional.

Be Prepared to "Inform" Professionals

Research in this area is limited, so many SLPs have not received formal training in the assessment and treatment of the internationally-adopted population. You may find that you have more information about speech and language development in this population.

Learn About Communication Before Adoption

The child's communication abilities in their birth language is an important piece of information. It may be critical in determining your child's

prognosis and whether or not they are eligible for SLP services.

Don't Assume Problems are Adoption-Related

Somewhere between 2 and 8% of all children have developmental speech and language disorders regardless of whether or not they were adopted. Although time spent in an orphanage may increase his/her risk for delays, it is a mistake to assume that all difficulties with English are due to adoption.

Advocate for Needed Services

Internationally-adopted children are often not eligible for speech and language services. School systems may consider them to be learners of English as a second language or preschool children may be too old for early intervention services. Be prepared to advocate for services.

Take Time to Enjoy Your Child's Development

Try not to get caught up in the day-to-day concerns about your child's progress. Be sure to sit back and enjoy watching them learn the magic of communication.

For more information:

The reference materials used in the production of this pamphlet include:

Glennen, S. (2006). Language Development in Internationally-Adopted Children. <http://pages.towson.edu/sglennen/index.htm>.

Pollock, K. (2006). Top Ten Tips for Speech and Language in Internationally-Adopted Children. In C. Kitze, J. MacLeod, & S. Macrae (Eds.), *Adoption Parenting: Creating a Toolbox, Building Connections*. Warren, NJ: EMK Press.

BEFORE AND AFTER: WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- What to Ask the Orphanage or Foster Family
- How to Seek Speech and Language Services
- Tips to Ensure that Your Child's Speech and Language Needs are Met

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Before the Adoption

Before you bring your child home, it is important to gather as much information as possible from the orphanage or foster family regarding speech and language development. This information will provide you with a better understanding of your child's current communicative abilities, thereby improving your ability to interact with them. This information will also be invaluable to a speech-language pathologist who may work with your child should concerns arise.

Dr. Sharon Glennen, an international adoption researcher at Towson University in Maryland, has compiled three lists of pre-adoption questions for parents. These cover areas such as eye gaze and facial expression, reaching and gestures, play with objects, language comprehension and production and feeding abilities. For older ages, topics also include articulation, social interaction, literacy and academic skills. Each list is designed for a different age group as follows: Under 12 months, 12-30 months, and older children. Examples of questions for each age group are shown below.

Under 12 Months

- Does the infant make frequent eye contact with adults during interactions?
- By 12 months of age, does the child anticipate being picked up (hold up their arms)?
- If under 8 months, does the infant bang, mouth or throw objects?
- By 12 months, does the child respond to his/her name being called?
- When an adult talks, does the child vocalize?
- Does the child eat from a spoon?

12-30 Months

- When an adult points to an object, does the child look to where the adult is pointing?
- Does the child push away unwanted items?
- Does the child attempt simple pretend play actions?
- Can the child follow simple commands such as "sit down"?
- Is the child attempting to say any words?
- Does the child feed himself/herself?

Older Children

- What types of questions does the child understand?
- How many words are in the child's longest sentences
- What consonant and vowel sounds does the child have difficulty with?
- During play activities, does the child interact well with other children?
- Are the child's reading abilities at, above, or below grade level?
- What school subjects are most difficult for the child?

WANT MORE INFORMATION?

For a comprehensive list of questions, see Sharon Glennen's website at:

<http://pages.towson.edu/sglennen/index.htm>

After the Adoption

After you bring your child home, you may develop concerns about their speech and language acquisition. At this time, you may feel it is necessary to seek the advice of a speech-language pathologist. Before doing so, you may want to consider the following tips proposed by Dr. Karen Pollock, an international adoption researcher at the University of Alberta in Edmonton. These tips will help to ensure that your child's speech and language needs are met.

Don't Panic

Although there is a high degree of variability, research has shown that the majority of children adopted as infants or toddlers become competent English speakers within a few years.

Be Proactive

Do your best to make your home a language-rich environment. Talk to your child about what is happening around them, elaborate on what your child says, and read to your child.

Get a Hearing Test

Good hearing is essential for speech and language development so ensure that your child has his/her hearing tested as soon as possible after returning home. A speech-language pathologist can screen for normal hearing and will refer to an audiologist for further evaluation if necessary.

Trust Your Instincts

Parents are reliable reporters of their children's speech-language difficulties. If you have concerns, they are likely warranted and you should act on them.