SPEECH AND LANGUAGE RESOURCE GUIDE

For Adolescents with Down Syndrome

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Why can’t my adolescent communicate?

The most common communication problems for adolescents with Down syndrome are in the areas of:

- speech intelligibility, i.e. that their speech may be difficult to understand
- conversational skills, i.e. they have difficulty with long conversations
- narrative discourse, i.e. difficulty telling about what happened to them or retelling a story
- academic language, i.e. abstract language for subject learning in middle school and high school
- asking for specific clarifications when they don’t understand something.

What type of speech and language evaluation and treatment are needed?

What can I do to improve my child’s ability to communicate?

In middle school and high school, communication skills need to support where the child is now (subject learning, following school rules and routines, and social language skills) and also support planning for the future (language for transition planning, job skills and community living). Classroom language skills become more difficult because your child has multiple teachers who have a variety of teaching and language styles. In middle and high school, academic subjects involve more abstract and advanced language and there are fewer contextual cues and visual models to help learning. During adolescence, if some communication skills cannot be mastered, alternate communication solutions may need to be considered. For example, if the adolescent cannot give his vital information so that it can be understood (name, address, telephone number, date of birth), business cards or an electronic communication device can be used to ensure that he is able to give that information when needed. All of the following areas should be assessed, and treated as needed:

Receptive Language Skills
- Advanced Comprehension
- Vocabulary and concept development/School, transition to workplace
- Auditory memory
- Auditory processing
- WH questions
- Following complex directions (written and verbal)
- Literacy (reading skills)

Expressive Language Skills
- Vocabulary
- Morphology
- Syntax
- Answering questions
- Giving vital information
- Encoding/sentence formulation
- Presentation skills
Where can I go for help?

Books, conferences and presentations will help you learn more about how to help your adolescent with speech and language. Speech and language services may be available through your local school system through the IEP process and transition planning, medical centers, community clinics, university clinics, and private practitioners. Your local parent support group is an excellent source of information to help in locating professionals in your area.


For more information:
www.ndscenter.org
www.ndss.org
www.ds-health.com
www.downsed.org
www.nads.org

This work made possible by a grant from The Thomas W. Bradley Foundation.