WHAT IS A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM?

Speech and Language Programs provide a high level of specialised support for children with severe specific speech and/or language impairments. Their primary area of need is communication, while learning and development in other areas is similar to that of other children their age.

The program aims to strengthen children’s communication by supporting their talking and listening skills, ability to learn and interact with others.

There are 8 Speech and Language Programs in preschools across the Adelaide metropolitan area.

IS MY CHILD ELIGIBLE TO ATTEND A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM?

Children can be referred to a Speech and Language Program if they have a severe specific language and/or speech impairment diagnosed by a speech pathologist, and:
- are making slow progress with regular speech pathology support
- will be within their eligible preschool year when they begin the program unless they are Aboriginal or under the Guardianship of the Minister and they then can be considered individually for earlier intake to the program
- have non-verbal intelligence within the average range or above
- have hearing within normal limits (as shown by a hearing test, carried out within the last 12 months).

Speech and Language Programs may not meet the needs of children who have:
- learning needs that relate to general delayed development
- a significant syndrome or disability, such as Autism Spectrum Disorder or Down Syndrome
- additional needs that may be best met by other support programs, such as the Preschool Support Program.

These children may be referred to other preschool support programs and Support Services in collaboration with your Preschool Director and/or Special Educator.

HOW DOES A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM OPERATE?

Speech and Language Programs provide specialised teaching and therapy that supports children’s participation and learning at preschool. Your child’s program will include:
- individual and small group activities to support talking and listening skills
- direct teaching through play
- support for their use of new skills across all areas of learning.
HOW CAN MY CHILD BE REFERRED TO A SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM?

A speech pathologist, including a private provider, can refer your child to a Speech and Language Program if appropriate, and they will gather relevant information about your child.

The following information is required in addition to referral forms for the program:
- a speech pathology report - describing your child’s talking and listening skills
- a psychological report - describing your child’s intellectual ability
- an audiogram or audiology report – describing your child’s hearing ability
- any available relevant professional reports (e.g. paediatric, medical, occupational therapy etc)
- other information may be sought as required.

1. If your child is not attending a DECD preschool, the Team Leader Support Services of your first preference program will contact you and facilitate the completion of additional paperwork required as part of the referral process.
2. If you are unable to arrange an intellectual assessment by a psychologist through a community health centre, public hospital, Child Development Unit, or private psychologist, DECD Support Services will assist you in this process.
3. An Intake Panel will discuss your child’s needs and if your child meets the criteria and provided there is a vacancy in a program, you will be offered a placement.

**Please note - There are 8 Speech and Language Programs across the metropolitan area with 7 places in each program. There are generally a high number of applicants with children prioritised according to level of need. If you would like more information:
- speak with your DECD, community or private speech pathologist
- contact the DECD Team Leader Support Services.

WHAT SERVICES ARE AVAILABLE IF MY CHILD IS NOT OFFERED A PLACE IN THE SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PROGRAM?

Speech and Language Programs are designed to meet the needs of children with specific language and/or speech impairment. There are other options available that may better suit the needs of your child. These may include:

- the Preschool Support Program – additional staff are provided at your local preschool to support the teaching and learning of children with additional needs.
- the Special Educator – will provide support and advice to both families and preschool staff in order to best meet your child’s individual needs.
- DECD speech pathology and/or psychology services – assessment and intervention is available to children attending preschool.
- other service providers outside of DECD – speech pathology, psychology, occupational therapy etc.
FAMILIES ARE AN IMPORTANT PART OF CHILDREN’S LEARNING

The majority of children’s talking and listening occurs at home with family and friends. Everyday activities help children improve their talking and listening skills. Children learn best when families and preschool staff work together to achieve the same goals.

Family’s support their child’s learning by:
- regular preschool attendance
- sharing information about their child with preschool staff
- talking about their child’s learning needs with relevant personnel
- being involved in preschool activities
- working on learning goals at home
- attending meetings about their child’s learning.

Preschool staff will plan with you to keep you informed about your child’s progress and talk about how you can continue your child’s program at home. Parents are welcome to bring a family member or friend to support them in talking about these issues.

Speech and Language Programs are located at the following preschools. Additional information about programs can be obtained from the Team Leader Support Services located in the offices as listed below.

Para Hills Office: Ph: 8314 4000
- Lake Windermere Children’s Centre (Salisbury North)
- Valley View Kindergarten (Valley View)
- John Hartley Children's Centre (Smithfield Plains)

Felixstow Office: Ph: 8366 8800
- Bertram Hawker Kindergarten (Myrtle Bank)
- Glandore Kindergarten (Glandore)
- West Lakes Kindergarten (West Lakes)

Noarlunga Office: Ph: 8207 3700
- Brentwood Drive Kindergarten (Huntfield Heights)
- Flagstaff Oval Kindergarten (Flagstaff Hill)