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THINK BIG 2017

DVR INTERACTIVE STATIONS

Disability Overview

Communication Disorders

Communication disorders include problems related to speech, language, and communication:

Speech refers to the production of sounds that allow individuals to express themselves, and includes articulation, fluency, voice, and resonance quality.

Language refers to the use of a system of symbols, such as spoken words, sign language, written words, or pictures, that allow people to communicate in a rule-governed manner.

Communication refers to any verbal or nonverbal be-

havior that influences the behavior, ideas, or attitudes of another person.

Communication disorders may range from simple sound repetitions such as stuttering to occasional misarticulation of words to complete inability to use speech and language for communication. The communication disorders that have been outlined in the most recent version of the *DSM* include the following: language disorder, speech sound disorder, childhood-onset fluency disorder (stuttering), social (pragmatic) communication disorder, and other specified and unspecified communication disorders.

Some causes of communication disorders include hearing loss, neurological disorders, brain injury, mental retardation, drug abuse, physical impairments such as cleft lip or palate, emotional or psychiatric disorders, and developmental disorders. Frequently, however, the cause is unknown. It is estimated that one in every 10 Americans, across all ages, races, and genders, has experienced or lives with some type of communication disorder (including speech, language, and communication disorders). Nearly six million children under the age of 18 have a speech or language disorder.

Vocational Challenges

1. Spoken language expression problems
2. Spoken language comprehension problems
4. Trouble processing information
5. Memory problems
6. Problems with school and work
7. Social problems with peers and supervisors
8. Can have other challenges if secondary disabilities exist—i.e. head injury, hearing loss, etc.
9. Trouble grasping higher level information
10. Problems reading basic information

Considerations for Successfully Working Together

- Learn from the family, caregiver, or individual about the nature of the person's communication disorder, whether it is a speech or language disorder or both.
- Treat the person with respect. Do not be afraid to ask him or her to repeat a word or sentence. Be patient; do not supply words or finish thoughts for him or her.
- Address the person with the communication disorder directly. Do not assume someone with a speech disorder lacks the capacity to understand.
- Look for facial, hand, or other responses. Speech is not the only form of communication.
- Do not urge a person who stutters to slow down or start over. This tends to make the stuttering worse.
- Speak clearly and distinctly but naturally. Be aware that people might feel like you are "talking d own" to them if you speak too slowly.
- Be willing to work at communicating. In some cases, this may mean learning basic sign language or being aware of special communication devices for individuals who are nonverbal. If appropriate, become familiar with devices, systems, and programs which have been developed to assist.
- Strive to understand what the individual is saying by focusing on *what* he or she says rather than *how* he or she is saying it.

Resources

American Speech, Language and Hearing Association

<http://www.asha.org/public/>

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association is committed to ensuring that all people with speech, language, and hearing disorders receive services to help them communicate effectively.

Center for Hearing, Speech and Language

Denver: 303-322-1871

Colorado Springs: 719-597-3390

The Center for Hearing, Speech and Language is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization that offers health care services of the highest quality to the people who live in the Metropolitan Denver and Colorado Springs areas.