

Many parents miss speech disorders in young kids

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(HealthDay)—Many parents don't recognize the signs of speech and

language problems in children, or don't know that early treatment is important, a new survey finds.

"Communication disorders are among the most common childhood disabilities—and they are highly treatable in most cases," said Elise Davis-McFarland, president of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

"Yet, even with all of the information available to today's parents, our members report they are still seeing children much later than what is optimal for achieving the best outcome," she said in an association news release.

The poll of more than 1,100 audiologists and speech-language pathologists across the United States found that 69 percent said parents of young children are not aware of the early [warning signs](#) of speech/language disorders. And 32 percent said symptoms of [hearing loss](#) go undetected in children for an average of one year or more.

Forty-six percent of respondents said the main barrier to early identification of communication disorders in children is parents' lack of awareness about the warning signs.

Along with the recently published poll, the group is releasing broadcast public service announcements to encourage parents to seek help if they're concerned about their child's speech/language or hearing abilities.

"We know parents want the best for their children. However, they may hear messages that encourage a 'wait-and-see' approach by suggesting a child may grow out of a communication issue," said Davis-McFarland.

"Unfortunately, this often is not the case. Delaying treatment means [children](#) may miss a critical developmental window where they acquire a

majority of their foundational speech and language skills, which occurs between birth and 3 years of age," she noted.

"Hearing and listening to language is the primary way [young children](#) learn. The skills achieved during this time lay the groundwork for later success with reading and writing, academics, social interactions, and career options and advancement—making early intervention for any [speech](#)/language or hearing problem, preferably well before age 3, so important," she explained.

May is Better Hearing and Speech Month.

More information: The U.S. National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders outlines [speech and language development milestones](#).

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