

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force: Evidence lacking for screening for speech delays in young children

July 25 2023, by Elana Gotkine



The evidence is insufficient for assessing the balance and harms of screening for speech and language delay and disorders in young children. These findings form the basis of a draft recommendation statement published online July 25 by the U.S. Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF).

Cynthia Feltner, M.D., M.P.H., from RTI International-University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Evidence-based Practice Center in Research Triangle Park, and colleagues conducted a systematic review of the evidence on screening for [speech](#) and language delay or disorders in children aged 5 years or younger. A total of 38 studies were reported in 41 articles, including 9,006 participants. The researchers found that none of the studies evaluated the direct benefits of screening versus no screening.

In 21 studies, the accuracy of 23 instruments for detecting speech and language disorders was assessed. Across included studies, the sensitivity and specificity varied widely. None of the studies reported on the benefits and harms of screening versus no screening or on potential harms of interventions. The enrolled populations were heterogeneous, as were the specific type of speech and language [disorders](#) targeted.

Based on these findings, the USPSTF concludes that the current evidence is insufficient to assess the balance of benefits and harms of speech and [language delay](#) and disorder screening in children (I statement). The statement applies to asymptomatic children aged 5 years or younger whose parents or clinicians do not have specific concerns relating to speech or language.

The draft recommendation statement and evidence review is posted for public comment. Comments can be submitted from July 25 through Aug. 21, 2023.

More information: [Draft Evidence Review](#)
[Draft Recommendation Statement](#)
[Comment on Recommendation Statement](#)

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