



Northwest Medical Center

A Tradition of Community Healthcare

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For Immediate Release:

Identify the Signs of Communication Disorders During Better Hearing and Speech Month

8%–9% of Children Suffer From Speech Disorders,

Many Parents Wait Too Long to Seek Treatment

(Albany, MO) May 6, 2014—With 8%–9% of young children suffering from speech disorders, May's Better Hearing and Speech Month is the perfect time for parents to learn how to recognize the early signs of these disorders. Northwest Medical Center's speech-language pathologist Valerie Gray, M.S. CCC-SLP is encouraging parents to educate themselves through the [Identify the Signs](#) campaign, a national effort of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA). The campaign is designed to combat an overall lack of awareness about communication disorders—a major barrier to treatment for the more than 40 million total Americans who suffer.

Speech, language, and hearing disorders are among the most common disabilities in the United States. However, unlike many other disabilities, these disorders often are reversible and even preventable with early intervention. Unfortunately, many parents do not recognize the first signs of these disorders. In young children, early treatment can help prevent them from falling behind academically, socially, and in other key areas at a critical time in their development.

"As a certified speech-language pathologist, I see the benefits of early intervention every day. Unfortunately, I also see the consequences of parents' and others' waiting too long to seek treatment—which is why the Identify the Signs campaign is so important," said Gray.

"While it is certainly never too late to seek help, treatment is most successful, less expensive, and takes the shortest amount of time when a parent or loved one is able to pick up on the earliest signs of these disorders. As May is Better Hearing and Speech Month, I suggest all parents familiarize themselves with these signs at IdentifytheSigns.org and seek an assessment from a certified speech-language pathologist if they have any questions. One should not assume a child will 'outgrow' speech or language difficulties. There is never harm in seeking an assessment, whether it results in putting a parent's mind at ease or identifying a potential issue in a child that can be treated."

In children, parents should watch for the following [signs](#) of speech and language disorders:



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- Does not interact socially (infancy and older)
- Does not follow or understand what you say (starting at 1 year)
- Says only a few sounds or words or makes only a few gestures (18 months to 2 years)
- Says words that are not easily understood (18 months to 2 years)
- Does not combine words (starting at 2 years)
- Struggles to say sounds or words (3 to 4 years)

In adults, signs of speech and language disorders include:

- Struggles to say sounds or words (stuttering)
- Repeats words or parts of words (stuttering)
- Says words in the wrong order (expressive aphasia)
- Struggles with using words and understanding others (global aphasia)
- Has difficulty imitating speech sounds (apraxia)
- Speaks at a slow rate (apraxia)
- Produces slurred speech (dysarthria)

For more signs, treatment information, and other resources, visit <http://identifythesigns.org>. To schedule an assessment with Northwest Medical Center's Speech Therapist, Valerie Gray, contact NMC's Outpatient Department at (660) 726-1210.

About- Northwest Medical Center has provided high-quality health services to residents in Northwest Missouri since 1957. Along with five satellite clinics and a full-service home-health agency, Northwest Medical Center continues its tradition of community healthcare utilizing leading-edge diagnostic equipment and boasting one of the top emergency room facilities in the region.

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