

CHOOSING A SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST



Choosing a speech-language pathologist can be a very difficult task. There are many options available and you want to ensure an excellent fit so that your maximum potential can be achieved. Below are some questions to ask of possible speech-language pathologists to help you make this decision. These questions will assist you in ensuring that you have chosen someone who is not only highly skilled, but who is a nice match for your particular needs and style.

Questions to ask **BEFORE** you start therapy:

- Is the therapist a registered speech-language pathologist, accountable to the College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists of Ontario?
- Is the therapist a member of the Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (OSLA)? OSLA members tend to be the most informed professionals in the province and have the biggest network of contacts.
- Does the therapist appear friendly and knowledgeable?
- Does the therapist work with other speech-language clinicians in their clinic/office with knowledge and experience in your particular area of difficulty, so s/he can collaborate?
- Does the therapist seem to understand your specific issues?
- Do you get a feeling of confidence in the therapist? Did the therapist seem to reduce your stress and worry somewhat?
- Does the therapist encourage family involvement in sessions?
- Is the therapist flexible with appointments and able to see you for an appropriate amount of time?
- Is the therapist available for questions via phone or email outside of your therapy sessions?
- What percentage of the therapist's practice is in the area you're experiencing difficulty with (e.g., stroke, brain injury, learning disabilities, voice, etc.)?
- What conferences has the therapist attended in the past two years about your particular area of difficulty?
- Has the therapist ever presented or written articles about your area of difficulty?

Questions to ask once therapy has begun:

- Do you get along with the therapist? Can s/he take cues from you and interact appropriately?
- Has the therapist discussed goals with you? Are these goals appropriate, achievable and what you want to work on?
- Does the therapist create materials that are meaningful and beneficial for you or does s/he grab standard workbook activities that you do not enjoy?
- Does the therapist provide rationale and explain why you are completing activities and how this will help to achieve your goals?
- Does the therapist provide an adequate amount of homework between sessions? Does s/he explain how to complete the homework and why you are completing it?
- Does the therapist provide adequate training and education for family members?
- Does the therapist track your progress to determine if the approach is working? Does s/he discuss your progress with you or your family members? Are you meeting the goals that were set out at the beginning of therapy?

If you had positive answers to most of these questions, you have found an excellent fit! If you have concerns with some of the answers, you are encouraged to discuss these with the therapist to see if things can be improved. If you are still not convinced that you have found the best fit for you, see if there is another therapist in the clinic you can work with. If there is no one else available in the clinic, ask your speech-language pathologist to recommend therapists at other clinics. Your speech-language pathologist should be willing to help you find another therapist because, even if things didn't work out with them, they will still want to ensure you are well looked after.