

**MEDIA RELEASE**

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## **Early Diagnosis is Key: CASLPA Helps Spread Autism Awareness**

Reported cases of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have increased by 600 per cent in the past 20 years, according to the Center for Disease Control in the United States. Evidence suggests at least one in every 110 Canadian children struggles with a form of autism. While there have been important advancements in the way we care for and educate individuals with ASD, more research needs to be done to develop better treatments and interventions.

Speech-language pathologists (S-LPs) represented by the Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA), play a pivotal role in the diagnosis and treatment of individuals with ASD. The expertise of these professionals will be increasingly important as the number of Canadians with ASD grows.

“You aren’t able to ‘prevent’ ASD, but early and intensive intervention, combined with early identification of the speech, language, and communication characteristics, may yield excellent progress in skill acquisition with a much improved outcome for these children,” says Tracie Lindblad, director and speech-language pathologist at the Child Development Centre of Oakville.

Autism is the most common developmental disability, occurring significantly higher in males. ASD can affect a child’s social interaction, communication, attention, and behavior patterns. While there is no cure for autism, with appropriate treatment and education, many children learn to adapt and function within their homes, school, and community settings.

“Speech-language pathologists are trained to assess and treat the core deficit areas of ASD - speech, language skills, communication/conversation skills, and social skills,” adds Lindblad. “Through the careful assessment of the form of language (e.g., grammar, speech, augmentative communication system), the content (e.g., the meaning of words and sentences) and the function (e.g., for requesting, labeling, protesting, greetings, etc.) within social settings, the S-LP can develop a treatment plan to address the deficit areas.”

CASLPA represents the professional needs of more than 5,500 speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel. If someone you know or care for struggles with autism, CASLPA suggests consulting a S-LP to learn how to address communication problems.

For more information about the role speech-language pathologists, audiologists, and supportive personnel play in the assessment and treatment of communication disorders or to find an S-LP or audiologist in your area, visit CASLPA’s website at [www.speechandhearing.ca](http://www.speechandhearing.ca).

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