

Communication Check-up on Universal Children’s Day

“In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by the public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.” - United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 3.1

Ottawa, ON – The Canadian Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (CASLPA) believes every child deserves the right to communication. In recognition of Universal Children’s Day November 20, CASLPA highlights the vital role of speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel to maximize the communication and hearing potential of children.

Does your six-month-old make sounds back when you talk? Does your one-year-old look at your face when talking to you? Does your two-year-old take turns in a conversation? If you answered no to one of these examples of communication questions, your child may have a communication disorder.

A child’s ability to communicate effectively is vital and central to all social and academic skill development. The first few years of life are particularly critical. Any problems will result in difficulties and delays to master the first building blocks of learning. Early identification and intervention for children with speech, language and/or hearing disorders will ensure they have the best possible help during critical years of their intellectual, social and communication development.

“Parents should act early with their questions and concerns about their child's ability to communicate,” said CASLPA member speech-language pathologist Robin Gaines. “The sooner parents learn how to help their child develop speech and language skills though every day experiences the better the child's outcome will be.”

Universal newborn hearing screening (UNHS) is the first step in the process to improve developmental (social, educational, cognitive, etc.) outcomes in children with hearing loss. UNHS leads to early identification, which then leads to improved hearing and facilitates communication development.

“Hearing and communication are essential to a child’s development ,” said CASLPA member and audiologist Andrée Durieux-Smith. “Extended periods of auditory deprivation have a significant impact on a child’s overall brain development and sensory integration.”

UNHS is increasingly becoming the standard of care in many developed countries, including the United States, where 95 per cent of newborns are screened with UNHS programs. Not all newborns in Canada are screened and that’s why CASLPA has launched a UNHS campaign. For more information, visit the [UNHS page](#) on CASLPA’s website and join the [UNHS Facebook group](#).

If you or someone you know has a suspected communication disorder, CASLPA recommends contacting a speech-language pathologist or audiologist. CASLPA represents the professional needs of more than 5,500 speech-language pathologists, audiologists and supportive personnel. For more information about the role these professionals play in the management of communication disorders or to find one in your area, visit CASLPA’s website at www.speechandhearing.ca.

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