

Speech and Language Therapy

What Is Speech-Language Pathology?

A speech-language pathologist offers support and care to children who have trouble communicating or difficulty eating, drinking and swallowing. An SLP is a medical professional who evaluates and treats communication and swallowing disorders. They are sometimes called "speech therapists." SLPs work with infants, children, adolescents, and adults.

Conditions Speech-Language Pathologists Treat

Speech-language pathologists treat individuals of all ages who have a wide variety of disabilities, complex conditions and serious injuries that cause problems with communication and swallowing, especially in the following areas:

- **Speech Production:** Problems in this area affect how a person says sounds and how well they can be understood by others when talking. These are sometimes called articulation disorders, phonological disorders, apraxia of speech or motor speech disorders like dysarthria.
- **Language:** Problems in this area affect how well a person understands what they hear or read (ie, receptive language) and how well a person uses words to tell others what they are thinking or feeling (ie, expressive language).
- **Social Communication/Pragmatics:** Problems in this area affect how well a person follows unspoken social rules of communication like turn-taking, eye contact, personal space when talking with others, etc.
- **Voice and Resonance:** Problems in this area affect how a person's voice sounds. Sometimes individuals can have problems with their voice that make them sound too loud or too soft, breathy, hoarse, or harsh. Sometimes people have problems with too much or too little air getting into their nose during speech. This can make them sound nasal.
- **Fluency:** Problems in this area are commonly called stuttering. Fluency refers to how smooth speech is or how well it flows. People that have fluency disorders may repeat one part of a word (e.g., t-t-t-able), the whole word (e.g., today, today, today I want candy) or they might use a lot of pauses like "um" or "uh", and their face or body might get tense when they get stuck on a word. Many young children go through a normal period of stuttering that they typically outgrow within 1 to 2 years after it appears for the first time. This usually happens around the time children are in preschool or kindergarten.
- **Cognitive-Communication:** Problems in this area affect how well a person's mind works. This can mean issues with short and long-term memory, attention, solving problems, organizing thoughts and other thinking skills.
- **Feeding and Swallowing:** Problems in this area affect how well a person's mouth and throat work when chewing and swallowing different foods and liquids. Babies may have problems with drinking from a bottle or an open cup. Sometimes people have trouble moving their tongue or lips or may cough or choke when they eat or drink certain

foods and liquids.

Whether your child has no known medical diagnosis, a lifelong condition such as [cerebral palsy](#) or needs care following a serious injury that is affecting their ability to communicate, a speech-language pathologist can address speech problems and other complications to help them feel more comfortable communicating and navigating their world.

Speech and Language Pathology Tests and Treatments

Supported by the latest equipment and techniques, your child has many options for outpatient therapy and inpatient care at Gillette Children's. We have a diverse team of specialists that work closely together to help children achieve their best. In addition to facilitating speech therapy activities, we help you coordinate care with other specialists to provide:

- [Augmentative and alternative communication \(AAC\)](#) assessments.
- Cognitive therapy for concussions and [traumatic brain injury](#).
- [Nutrition and feeding](#) services.
- Specialty care for [cleft lip and palate](#), [velopharyngeal dysfunction](#), and other craniofacial conditions.
- [Swallowing](#) studies ([videofluoroscopy](#) and fiberoptic endoscopic evaluation of swallowing) for feeding disorders (dysphagia).
- VitalStim or [neuromuscular electrical stimulation \(NMES\) therapy](#) for the treatment of swallowing disorders.

Integrated Care

At Gillette Children's, we recognize that every child's communication and feeding needs are unique. Our speech-language pathologists use a highly collaborative approach with other specialists at Gillette, including occupational therapy (OT), physical therapy (PT), audiology, orthotics prosthetics and seating (OPS) and more. This collaboration ensures that your child will get the best possible care.

Find out how speech and language therapies at Gillette can help your child to succeed.

Your child will work with a team of specialists who understand the challenges of children who have conditions such as [cerebral palsy](#), or who experience speech delay. Gillette offers the Twin Cities' only pediatric comprehensive [inpatient rehabilitation program](#) certified by the Commission on the Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). Gillette is one of eight U.S. pediatric inpatient rehabilitation facilities to have CARF accreditation for both its pediatric specialty and pediatric brain injury programs.

As part of their treatment at Gillette, your child might receive care from providers across our many specialties, including:

- [Child life](#).
- [Craniofacial and plastic surgery](#).

- [Music therapy.](#)
- [Neurology.](#)
- [Neuropsychology.](#)
- [Nutrition and feeding.](#)
- [Orthopedics.](#)
- [Orthotics, prosthetics and seating.](#)
- [Psychology.](#)
- [Radiology and imaging.](#)
- [Rehabilitation medicine.](#)
- [Social work.](#)
- [Therapeutic recreation.](#)

Locations



[St. Paul Campus](#)



[Burnsville Clinic](#)



[Maple Grove Clinic](#)

[Appointment: 651-290-8707](#) [Refer a Patient: 651-325-2200](#) [Pediatric Expert Consult](#) [More Ways to Contact Us](#)

This information is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice of your health care providers. If you have any questions, talk with your doctor or others on your health care team.

If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](#).