

# ABOUT COMMUNICATION DISORDERS

Speech and language disorders refer to problems in communication and related areas such as oral motor function. These delays and disorders range from simple sound substitutions to the inability to understand or use language or use the oral-motor mechanism for functional speech and eating. Some causes of speech and language disorders include hearing loss, neurological disorders, brain injury, intellectual disabilities, drug abuse, physical impairments such as cleft lip or palate and vocal abuse or misuse.<sup>6</sup> Since causes of communication disorders vary greatly and there are few published data, it is difficult to determine how many Americans cope with a communication disorder. Approximately 1% of the U.S. population stutters and about 1% of the U.S. population have aphasia (partial or complete impairment of language and expression, often due to a stroke).<sup>7</sup>

## *Caring for people with communication disorders*

When interacting with people with communication disorders, it is important to:

- Speak as you would to anyone else, using normal tone of voice.
- Give the person your undivided attention.
- Keep your manner encouraging rather than correcting.
- Tell the person if you do not understand and ask them to clarify any information they have given you.
- Ask short questions that require brief answers or head nods.
- Make pen and paper available, if useful.
- Become familiar with and be patient with any communication devices patients may be using.

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<sup>6</sup>Kennedy Krieger Institute. Communication/Speech/Language Disorder. Retrieved from [http://www.kennedykrieger.org/kki\\_diag.jsp?pid=1079](http://www.kennedykrieger.org/kki_diag.jsp?pid=1079)

<sup>7</sup>American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Retrieved from [http://www.asha.org/research/reports/speech\\_voice\\_language.htm](http://www.asha.org/research/reports/speech_voice_language.htm)



## Resources

Delaware Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
 P.O. Box 7383  
 Newark, DE 19711  
 For information, email [dsha@dsha.org](mailto:dsha@dsha.org).

Delaware Assistive Technology Initiative  
 Locations in New Castle, Kent and Sussex Counties  
 800-870-3284 Toll Free (Delaware only)  
 302-651-6790 Phone  
 302-651-6794 TDD  
 302-651-6793 Fax  
<http://www.dati.org>

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association  
 2200 Research Boulevard  
 Rockville, MD 20850  
 301-296-5700 Phone  
 301-296-5650 TTY  
 301-296-8580 Fax  
<http://www.asha.org>

National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders  
 National Institutes of Health  
 31 Center Drive, MSC 2320  
 Bethesda, MD 20892  
 800-241-1044 Toll Free  
 800-241 1055 Toll Free TTY  
<http://www.nidcd.nih.gov/>

United States Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication  
 100 E. Pennsylvania Avenue, Courtyard  
 Towson, MD 21286  
<http://www.ussaac.org>  
[info@ussaac.org](mailto:info@ussaac.org)