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4 factors for finding the right SLP

A Quick Guide for Parents

If you're looking for speech-language therapy options for your son or daughter, it's often difficult to understand exactly what to look for. That's why we created this **quick guide** to help you evaluate private speech therapy options. Here are **our recommendations**; we hope they help *you find the best speech-language pathologist for your needs.*

- 1. Therapy approach**
- 2. Experienced in specialty**
- 3. Proximity, travel & availability**
- 4. Cost of therapy**

14% of parents surveyed by the National Stuttering Association report having their child denied speech therapy services in school.

*Survey by National Stuttering Association – May 2009

50+ the average caseload for a school-based SLP. For caseloads greater than sixty, 35% of students make no therapy progress.

*ASHA School Survey Report

For example, in stuttering treatment alone, there are numerous therapy methodologies. From stuttering modification to fluency shaping, every approach is unique. That's why **it is key to find an approach that matches your personal goals and perspective.**

2. Experienced in specialty

Similar to therapy approaches, it's important to find a speech-language pathologist with meaningful **clinical or field experience**. More importantly, working with an SLP that holds experience within a specialty is another key factor in the success of therapy outcomes.

Try searching on Google for “speech therapy” and you will find dozens of varied results: speech disorders, language impairments and expressive disorders, swallowing and more.

1. Therapy approach

One of the most important factors in successful treatment is being “on the same page” as your speech-language pathologist (SLP). That’s why understanding a SLP’s therapy approach is so important. A few key questions may include:

- Does your SLP conduct therapy as a goal-orientated process?*
- What is the structure of therapy, more drill-based or play-based?*
- Does your SLP offer ongoing support outside of therapy sessions?*
- How compatible are you/your child with this therapist personally?*

But, chances are you don’t need all of those therapies. So how can you find an SLP for your specific therapy need?

-Look for board-certified specialists: many speech-language pathologists choose to specialize in a specific disorder or field of therapy. The American Speech & Hearing Association (ASHA) is the organization behind certifications, which typically read “board-certified” or “board-recognized” specialist.

-Look for memberships: many speech-language pathologists choose to contribute time and skills to non-profit groups, as well. For instance, an SLP could attend the National Aphasia Association’s member conference or submit a research publication to a quarterly journal. These efforts highlight a specialized and engaged focus within a particular speech-language field.

3. Proximity, travel & availability

You can't be everywhere at once. As a busy parent, it's important to consider the time constraints around travel and availability for therapy services. Often times, you may be located remotely from your speech-language pathologist. So here are a few options to think about:

-Traveling to an SLP's **office or clinic** is the most common form of accessing private therapy. Many clinicians will have an office with all the necessary tools, games and resources for a productive therapy session.

In-home therapy is also an option. Many local, private-practice SLPs will travel directly to your home to conduct therapy sessions. This can be a convenient option and offers the comfort of practicing therapy within a "real world" setting. But travel may also increase the costs associated with therapy for an SLP.

-A growing number of SLPs are treating clients via "**teletherapy**" programs such as Skype or Cisco's WebEx. Clients can connect with their SLPs from their home through videoconferencing technology, which requires a webcam and broadband Internet access. Several studies have confirmed the efficacy of teletherapy outcomes, as well.

4. Cost of therapy

It's important to consider the financial costs associated with speech therapy services. While school districts are mandated to fund special education programs, private therapy is paid either out of pocket or through a third-party payer, such as insurance providers or government programs.

In terms of insurance, coverage will vary by therapy type as well as by insurance provider. The good news is most private speech-language pathologists offer preliminary phone or in-person **consultations at no cost** to determine an adequate therapy recommendation.

Guide provided by



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