

“My daughter was born with a syndrome that made it difficult for her to speak clearly. The muscles in her tongue, lips, and cheeks needed to be strengthened. She also had to learn proper placement of her tongue and lips to make words. Speech therapy unlocked the world for her. She went from being frustrated at not being understood to being able to communicate. Because of speech therapy she does well in school and is an active child with a future.”

Bonnie B.

“My daughter had chronic ear infections as an infant which affected her speech. Her biggest difficulty was with the letters “L” and “S.” Therapy has dramatically improved her use of these letters and has given her more confidence in her communication skills. This has taken her from an extremely shy and quiet child to one interested in expressing herself. We are thrilled with the quality of the speech therapy and recommend it to anyone who has a child facing difficulties. It is imperative that children receive this assistance as soon as diagnosed to ensure that they have the tools to help them grow into productive and successful students and adults. Improved coverage would provide families with the means to continue long-term therapy. We have limited coverage of \$1000 per year and prepay visits to cover the rest. It is important that she get this therapy and insurance should cover it more thoroughly.”

Nicole W.

“My daughter could hardly speak at all. It was not only hurting us to see her struggle, but was hurting her socially, emotionally and otherwise. She became very insecure and shy. With help from speech therapy, she opened up and became self sufficient and confident. My husband and I could not believe the difference it made in her every day life.”

Yana D.

“Before my twins started speech therapy, life was very hard and frustrating for them and the rest of the family. They were severely speech delayed. Tantrums and lots of screaming and crying were an everyday ritual because they could not get their point across. Now, life is SOOO much better for them and the rest of the family. They are progressing so much and can let go of the frustration as they learn more and more.”

Jessica F.

“By the time our son was 13 years old. He had received minimal speech therapy in the public schools and his special needs team had given up on him ever learning to read. That’s when we took our autistic, retarded son out of school and located our own private speech therapist. We took him to her office as often as we could afford, making personal sacrifices to do so, but it all paid off when we saw him make two years worth of progress in the first few months.”

Becky W.

“My daughter’s speech has improved so much that a deficit is nearly imperceptible. This helps her in her role as president of her eighth grade math club.”

Katherine K.

“My little boy, now eight years old, started speech at two and a half years. He has made wonderful progress: his overall speech score has doubled and his attention span has greatly increased. He is now integrated into the normal class room and is able to communicate much better with others.”

Lorie Z.

“Our son was diagnosed with autism at age four. He could speak words but not converse effectively or answer questions. He has been attending speech/language therapy for about one and a half years. He is now mainstreamed in kindergarten. He is becoming more conversational, can often answer questions, and is learning ‘play skills’ to help himself fit in with his peers. We see new benefits from his therapy on a daily basis.”

Anonymous

“My daughter, who is currently seven years old, was diagnosed with severe hearing loss in her left ear when she was five years old. At the same visit she was also diagnosed with a moderate to severe speech language problem. She was fitted with a hearing aid and was enrolled in speech therapy... The hearing aid has noticeably helped her listening skills. Unfortunately, her hearing aid was not covered under insurance. The entire burden of this cost was our responsibility, even though the hearing aid was necessary to help with her continued success in school and in life. My other daughter, who is currently four years old, has been continuously enrolled in speech therapy from approximately spring 2005 through today...Previously she had a fear of talking or singing to people outside of our family. Today she is more confident that she will be understood and it shows in her interactions with others. I think without the early speech intervention, she would have had lasting communication problems that would carry into her elementary years. I also think the lack of self confidence would limit her interaction with other children her age. The only unfortunate issue with her therapy is that it is not covered by our current healthcare insurance. Our daughter has a severe speech problem, yet insurance does not cover it. We have to pay for her speech therapy out of our own pockets.”

Stormie B.

“My son is five and a half years old and has cerebral palsy. Speech therapy has helped us discover our son and our son discover the world. Using computer aided technology, we have learned about his great sense of humor. He has also become more social, learning to vocalize to get attention when someone enters the room. Speech therapy is one of the biggest keys to his future interaction with the world.”

Kate C.

“My wife and I have put our son, at our own expense, through three years of language and audio therapy. We have seen how important it is to act at an early age for the benefit of the child. We now receive some support but were fortunate enough to be able to afford most early services ourselves. I would hope that as a community we would help those who cannot afford it as much as possible. Early help is essential!”

Scott R.

“My son would not go outside because kids were always teasing him about his speech. Since beginning therapy he has become very outgoing. He has made a few friends. Family members are now able to understand him more clearly instead of guessing what he wants. He has joined sports and other competitive activities. His grades and reading skills are improving.”

Anngel B.

“My child has become more confident. She had joined clubs and many activities. She has made friends. She is able to compete in her activities and has won ribbons. Her grades in school have improved; she has made the honor role. These things would not have been possible without therapy because she used to stay in the house so kids would not tease her about her speech.”

Anngel B.

“Speech language therapy services have greatly benefited both of my children who are apraxic. As I have written in many letters to insurance companies, apraxia is not a developmental delay and will not resolve without speech therapy services. My children are living proof. My four year old son is no longer in need of speech therapy after 20 months of therapy; his speech/language skills are now considered age appropriate. My two year old has been in speech therapy for the past six months and has made great strides in her ability to communicate. I can only contribute their success to speech/language therapy services,”

Melanie S.

“My son has autism. At age three he communicated with cries and physical outburst for most of his wants and needs. He had difficulty due to apraxia and articulation. He needed a lot of processing time to formulate responses. Attention to spoken words was very poor. Our SLP instructed him as well as me and my family in effective ways to encourage my son to communicate verbally, increase attention, decrease processing time, and improve social interactions. These skills ultimately improved his behavior and his ability to learn. Now at age seven, he is included in a typical first grade classroom. He continues to receive therapy to catch up to typical peers’ verbal and literacy skills.”

Rita D.

“My eleven month old has significant problems eating between aspiration of liquids and low oral motor strength secondary to Down’s syndrome. Through feeding therapy, I finally have hope that one day she will be able to eat normally rather than through her feeding tube.”

Mary M.

“Speech therapy has helped increase my son’s speech, listening, learning, and communication skills immensely! If there is anything that has helped him mature and grow in these areas, it is the speech therapy he receives weekly. He needs this service, and we, his parents, need it as well. We learn what we can be working on at home to help expand his skills.”

Elaine W.

“Before our son went to Youngstown Hearing and Speech, he had only a couple of words in his vocabulary. Now he talks in sentences and speaks very clearly. He is more enjoyable because he is not frustrated from being unable to communicate his wants and needs. Thanks to his teacher’s patience and perseverance, he is able to communicate with his family.”

Mark L.

“My son has made tremendous progress in speech therapy both recognizing and correcting his speech. His confidence has improved and he has many friends. I look at speech therapy in the same way as any other preventive intervention. The initial cost is recovered over the lifetime of the individual by preventing other problems, such as behavioral problems brought on by the insensitivity of others, social isolation, withdrawal and lower grades.”

Anonymous

“My daughter has had speech therapy since she was two and one half years old and still continues to receive these services. Without insurance coverage, I would have problems with financially helping her receive the help she needs. Over the past two years, my husband and I have seen our daughter grow from a very frustrated girl who could not communicate her emotions and feelings to a happier child who is beginning to find her personality thanks to the speech and language therapy she receives.”

Amber K.

“Our son had hearing difficulties that were not recognized until kindergarten, resulting in a delay in the normal development of speech, sound awareness, language processing, and maturity. He has been enrolled in speech therapy and as a result has just about caught up with his peers. The speech therapist has always worked with our son, his teachers, and our family as a team which has greatly influenced his progress. He still has issues to conquer, but I have no doubt we will reach our goals and that we are headed in the right path.”

Temizer D.

“Our son has a rare genetic anomaly- he is, to date, the only child who has this diagnosis. We do not have the same resources (e.g. Down’s clinic, autism center) that are available to other parents, so we depend tremendously on our therapists. Without the help of our speech pathologist, we would not be able to communicate with our three year old son who is non-verbal. Through speech, we have learned signs and verbal cues which have helped to slowly turn his speech on. We desperately depend on his weekly speech visit; I don’t know what we’ll do when we run out of benefits. We are incredibly thankful for the expertise and care of the professionals at CCHMC.”

Allison W.

“My son was diagnosed with an expressive language deficit. At two and one half years old, he had a vocabulary of approximately 15 words. The providers offered by my insurance company had a waiting list of six to nine months. I went out of network and was able to receive services for my son- I had to pay 100% out of pocket. The benefits were exceptional! He is now a four year old, ‘normal’ boy who enjoys playing, talking, telling stories, and reading.”

Mary D.

“This program provided my children with confidence and the self-esteem and the ability to speak for themselves. Speech, language, and hearing is the first stepping stone to function in our daily lives. My children now have the ability to speak and to be understood, to read and write, and to blend in with other peers. We can not begin to express our gratitude.”

Novella B.

“Our son is a bright seven year old boy with severe cerebral palsy. Because of his disability, he has numerous limitations. We are fortunate, however, that he is cognitively fine. His cognition allows him to communicate with an augmentative device and to operate his power wheelchair. Speech and language therapy has been instrumental in helping with some of his daily life skills. We began speech and language therapy early to hopefully help him suck from a bottle and eat...but his greatest accomplishment through therapy has been his ability to communicate... With such a severe physical disability, this seemed like an impossible task, but above everything else, communication was and is our foremost goal for our son. When we met with his therapists, we were impressed by how quickly they recognized his level of thinking and learning, and it was apparent that they had treated many children like him before... None of his accomplishments could have been possible without help from our insurance companies. Everything we have described takes a tremendous amount of time and therapy. But through this therapy, he has found a way to communicate effectively, something we consider not only necessary educationally and socially, but definitely medically as well... By continuing speech therapy, our son will learn what he needs to help him go to college, get a job, and be a functioning asset to our society.”

Dave and Kathy S.

“My son has autism and has been receiving both private and group speech therapy for almost 3 years. As a result, he has learned how to verbalize his own thoughts, feeling, wants, and needs. His speech has become functional which has helped him to develop meaningful, happy, and positive relationships with his family, friends, and peers. In addition, his speech test scores, which previously were severely deficient, are now in the average range. His tantrums and negative behaviors have also decreased due to his ability to verbally express himself as well.”

Melissa J.

“My son was not speaking at all at two and a half years old. Through evaluations it was determined that he has SI disorder. The SLPs we have seen are very knowledgeable of his condition and very talented in their treatments. Now at four and one half years old, he is able to communicate at a near age appropriate level because his hard work and the hard work of his therapists.”

Marianne F.

“My daughter’s encephalitis at age three and a half left her unable to coordinate her muscles to chew, swallow, and speak. Through her speech therapy, she is able to eat and drink normally and pronounce almost all of her sounds. She’s making progress every day. Her friends and teachers are better able to understand her, and this has really boosted her self confidence. She still has much work to do, but I know she will achieve her goals.”

Maria S.

“My five year old daughter was adopted at age four from China. Because of early medical issues (VSD heart defect not repaired for two years) and living in four different placements before she was adopted, her speech is quite delayed. It was delayed in China, and then she had to start all over again in English. When we started speech therapy a year ago, she only had a small vocabulary, and she pointed and grunted a lot. Now she is up to four word sentences, and her vocabulary is exploding with more and more words every day. By watching how the speech therapist works and interacts with her, I have learned how to help her more at home. This has been greatly beneficial, as I had no idea where to begin. Regular speech therapy is essential for my daughter’s continued growth and development.”

Heidi J.

“My daughter started speech at two years old. When she started, very few people could understand her, and she had very little tongue function... She still has a lot of work to do, but she has come a long way. More people understand her and she uses her tongue more. Insurance has covered little to nothing. They did not cover the initial evaluation. My husband’s company switched insurers last year. They paid for 20 visits (we came every week) after the \$30 co-pay.; they only paid \$15. After 20 visits, we were responsible for the whole thing...It is important for my daughter to continue in speech so that she can communicate well with others and make her thoughts and words understood. However, it is awful that more of this is not covered by the insurance industry.”

Cary S.

“My son was born with CHARGE Assoc. As a result, he is legally deaf-blind and is unable to swallow. He has some other issues as well... He has been receiving speech therapy for primarily oral motor skills to learn how to swallow... He [also] receives audiology therapy... We drive 45 minutes one way to get these services... Our insurer does not seem to mind spending hundreds of dollars every month for his tube feeding supplies and feeding pump rental, but they balk at paying for therapy. Without the speech therapy, he may never learn to swallow or communicate orally. In conjunction with the audiology therapy, he is learning to respond and interact with his outside environment... [T]he insurance companies can't see the big picture. For my son to ever have a chance of functioning at any level above a baby, he needs these services. They only see the short term bottom line, not the long term benefits and decrease in costs over his life span....”

Jane V.

“I cannot begin to express the enormous and immeasurable benefits my autistic son has gained thanks to the above-and-beyond speech and language therapy services he has received! It is imperative that those in need of speech and language therapy receive it. For the children that need it, it makes total sense to spend the money when they are young and it is easier to teach them so that when they get older they can be as independently functional in society as possible. In the long run, that saves money.”

Karrie F.

“My son is autistic. Speech and OT are essential for him. I have seen him make so much progress with his therapy. He can say and understand so much more than what I was teaching, and the therapists give me ideas to use at home. I think it's a crime that insurance doesn't pay for more than 20 visits per year. My son would benefit from having speech every day.”

Carol D.

“Speech therapy gave my daughter's vibrant personality a voice at home and at school. Her relationship with her therapist is wonderful and has had a lasting and positive impact. All of our family is out of town and, prior to speech, her grandparents could not interact with her in weekly phone calls. After a short time in speech therapy, she could have real conversations, and she and her grandparents are delighted to have the connection.”

Kelley S.

“Speech therapy has helped my son to become aware of the areas that he needs to improve and has given him the tools to correct himself when needed. Even if his speech and language problems are with him all his life, he will have the confidence to know how to compensate for these areas... It would be a shame to waste his intelligence and creativity just because of problems with his speech... Now that Ohio's governor has declared more stringent criteria that schools and students must meet academically, it is very important that health insurers become more lenient with their services. Many insurance companies do not cover speech/language services unless it is caused from a severe disability caused by birth or a devastating accident. These services may be

covered for low income and not be unreachable for high incomes, but those in the middle must rely on health insurance. If our students of today are going to become more productive participants in the government's vision for academic achievement, then we need to be sure that all students receive the additional assistance they need to be the very best they can be in school and in life. Parents and therapists should be able to spend time to help the student rather than trying to convince insurance companies to cover these expenses."

Andrea C.

"I sought speech services to improve my communication skills at work for business meetings, presentations, and conference calls. Before speech therapy, my voice was thin and shallow. I am working on developing a fuller, more resonant, confident voice to improve how my work is presented in the business setting."

Anonymous

"In the short time my daughter has attended speech therapy, I have seen big changes. She is learning techniques to correct her tongue thrust habits. She is excited about practicing and going to her sessions. I have even noticed a boost in her confidence and self-esteem."

Anonymous

"Speech therapy has benefited our child more than we ever imagined. He has come a long way in his short time of therapy. He has gone from grunts to well-pronounced words and even a few three word sentences. We now know what he wants and needs, and we know how smart he is."

Patricia D.

"Speech-language therapy has been invaluable to our child and family. I feel certain that my son would never have achieved the level of communication that he has now at the age he is now (four years) without professional intervention. The SLPs have also been able to guide us, his parents, so that we are able to continue working toward his goals at home. In that way, the treatment of speech therapy can reach far beyond the time the child spends with the therapist, maximizing the overall intervention the child receives."

Jennifer C.

"My daughter, who is now six years old, suffered a stroke when she was only 11 weeks old. The part of her brain that controls her communication was severely affected. Her mouth was also affected by the stroke, which made it difficult for her to eat solid food and drink from a cup or straw. The first year of speech therapy enabled her to be able to swallow liquids as well as solid foods. Without our therapists' help, she might still be eating pureed foods and have great difficulty drinking from a cup. At two years of age, she only had a few basic words in her vocabulary. Now, after a few years with an incredible speech therapist, she has built a good vocabulary. She recently started to put two and three word combinations together, trying to form sentences. My daughter has

overcome enormous hurdles in her life, due to her amazing therapists. There's no telling where she would be developmentally without them..."

Maggie H.

"At three years old, my son could maybe say five words. After one year of therapy, he is using five word sentences. I am a teacher, and my husband is a youth pastor. Together we tried to educate ourselves to help our son. We needed the professional intervention. Self education only frustrated us. We did not know how to break it down for the step by step learning our son needed. The pathologist was fabulous. I don't know where we'd be now without speech therapy!"

Sara M.

"My child has received many benefits while a client at the OSU speech and hearing clinic. She is a complex child with multiple issues to be addressed. The staff and resources available to them have opened up to my child a world that she is beginning to feel she is a part of instead of feeling that she is only watching the world go by... [T]hese programs need funding and resources to help children with exceptional needs keep up."

Carol O.

"My son has been helped tremendously. He used to stutter almost every other word, but since he has received speech therapy, he only stutters every once in a while and is still making improvement. He also has more confidence in himself. He has learned many skills to avoid stuttering."

Anthony J.

"My son has struggled with speech articulation for 15 years. Without speech therapy, many people were unable to understand what he was trying to say. This led to low self esteem and high frustration levels. Speech therapy has been very beneficial for him to gain confidence in his speaking abilities and to be accepted as "normal" by other kids and not be teased."

Sue P.

"Initially my son couldn't speak with a clear understanding of his wants, needs, feelings, or general conversation. His level of speaking and understanding was seriously below average. Since he has attended therapy, he has changed remarkably. We can communicate easily, he understands more concepts of language, and he now has more confidence in himself and his abilities. This has helped him to become more productive in many aspects of his life. Thanks to the help of our therapist, I learned how to communicate and help my son succeed to be able to perform to his maximum potential. Without this small part I would not have been able to figure out how to help him function at a normal level."

Alicia B.

"The Cleveland Hearing and Speech Center has greatly impacted the life of my son and our entire family. Before attending therapy, it was very hard to understand him. He could hardly pronounce his own name or express his feelings without difficulty. Today,

he uses full sentences and clearly states his name and expresses his feelings. He has improved tremendously both in school and socially. My son seems more happy and confident in life. He tells us his likes and dislikes (sometimes too often 😊). The program has been a true blessing and has provided my son with the needed skills to achieve well. He carries/demonstrates all of the skills he learns in speech therapy on a daily and does very well with class work and homework. He is a true testament to the great works of the program..."

Jacques S.

"My daughter entered first step preschool program at age two and a half. She experienced frustration at not being understood and was evaluated and found to have a severe articulation deficit. She has been in speech therapy now for 16 months and the benefits are enormous. She has continued with her class in preschool and is still sometimes frustrated at not being understood, but is likely to be ready for kindergarten with the rest of her class in the fall of 2007. But for this early intervention, she would likely be placed in a special education class or with autistic children where her spirit would have likely been broken. She is an unusually bright little girl and has awareness of the problem and comprehends at a higher than age level... I also had an articulation deficit that was identified when I entered kindergarten in 1969. My comprehension and language was normal or above normal... I recall wondering why I was in with the special ed kids or those with severe speech impediments. I hated school. And until my intelligence was tested in the first grade, the teachers put me in front of the class and repeatedly called on me in an effort to force me to talk more. After the intelligence test, I was allowed to sit in the back and they understood that I was getting everything. I had difficulty making friends until after I was no longer segregated from the rest of the class for speech therapy in the third grade... [L]ooking back on it, I think my daughter's future will be much brighter than mine was because she was identified and helped at a much earlier age... Overall, the awareness of the benefits of speech and language therapy needs to improve and companies need to include this therapy in insurance plans for greater access. It can make a huge difference in a child's life."

Christina S.

"My three year old son was diagnosed with a developmental speech delay when he was 18 months old. We started speech therapy shortly thereafter. As a result of his delay, he was easily frustrated by his inability to communicate with us. The frustration often ended in temper tantrums. With speech therapy, we have seen his communication skills increase dramatically. This has greatly reduced the number and intensity of the temper tantrums. Working with a speech therapist has helped my husband and me know how to help our son communicate. The activities that she suggests we do at home have produced results. We would not know what to do without her. Raising a child with a developmental delay is difficult and can seem somewhat overwhelming at times. Our speech therapist understands this and provides caring moral support for my husband and me."

Sherry S.

“My three year old daughter has regained her confidence in speaking and no longer withdraws from social situations (as she was doing before we started). My husband and I have also learned so much by attending our daughter’s appointments. We have learned how to help our daughter at home and have seen very real and practical applications of the methods they are teaching her. I can’t say enough good things about the benefits of speech therapy in our family.”

Shanda B.

“I am a 39 year old Brazilian woman living in the U.S. for two years now. My lack of awareness of my pronunciation mistakes in the spoken English language led me to be laughed at in my work environment, miss great job opportunities, and even be placed on probation at work. It was embarrassing and affected my confidence and self-esteem. The speech therapy restored my ability to think before I speak. It helped my confidence and people can understand me better now. I hope I can find a better job if I can express myself properly.”

Iris P.

“My son lost his ability to talk, swallow, and eat due to encephalitis. If it was not for the weekly therapy he receives, my son would NOT have the ability to talk, swallow, and be able to eat. How would you feel if you or your child woke up one morning and lost those abilities? Thank God for therapy!”

Melissa I.

“In May of 2000, at the age of two and a half, my daughter was diagnosed with severe Apraxia. She has received private speech therapy every week since that date. Last year, we paid \$10,465 to have insurance coverage for our family. Unfortunately, our private SLP is not in our network and we therefore continue to absorb enormous out of pocket expenses for speech therapy. Imagine your house payment. Now imagine supporting two house payments for over five years. More importantly, imagine having something to say but the inability to express it. How can insurance companies place value or a limit on providing a child whose voice is locked within a little body?”

Beth H.

“The effect of speech therapy on our child is nothing short of extraordinary. Our child, who could not repeat a sound, let alone say a word at age two and a half, can put together up to 10 word sentences and is using tenses, pronouns, and subject/verb agreement increasingly well. He is NOT a late talker; he has severe apraxia and his only hope to communicate by speaking is to receive the professional services of an SLP versed in apraxia treatment. The treatment he receives is customized and is nothing that a parent or other ‘lay person’ could ever hope to construct. Talking is a constant challenge for our child and can be expected to pose problems for him his entire life, but at four and a half even he realizes that he is able to make more and more sounds with rigorous practice of these expert techniques. The increase in his confidence and social skills and the revelation of his imagination and smarts have accompanied his increased ability to make sounds...Tackling apraxia at the earliest opportunity may spare families the heartache of academic failure and social isolation/depression/behavioral issues that

can result when apraxia goes untreated and can spare all of us the social costs of failing to nurture a productive member of society. The purported savings of denying services are actually a deferred cost for all of us.”

Helga D.

“At the rare age of 14, our daughter was diagnosed with a severe progressive hearing loss that probably had been declining for several years. To this day (and after seeing several specialists), we have never found out the cause. One day she was a ‘normal’ child and the next she was ‘hearing impaired’ and in drastic need of hearing aids. Little did we know the journey we were about to take...[T]he only place she had been exposed to hearing aids and a hearing impaired person was the ‘inclusive classroom’ at her middle school. Children with autism, Down’s syndrome, etc. were mainstreamed into music and gym classes but were cloistered for book type instruction in this one space. Our daughter later told us that she was afraid she would be placed in this classroom the rest of her school days. We watched as she bravely tried to come to terms with this new aspect of who she was at a very crucial time in her life. And her classmates and teachers were not always a help. Everyone was in the dark as to how to treat/approach/view her. Childhood friends retreated and she became reclusive. Somewhere in the middle of 7th grade, she fell apart in my arms, crying uncontrollably for hours, flinging the dreaded aids at the fireplace in frustration...[Six months later] at an IEP meeting [we] met a district liaison that to this day I would like to thank. She listened to our story and gave us the name of her friend at the OSU Speech and Hearing Clinic... [After several phone conversations with the audiologist] we finally made an appointment and took one very skeptical teen to see her... Many options were put before us and our daughter was never pressured to try anything. The audiologist gave my daughter the last say in any decision and told her that they worked as hard as possible to help her through the transition of using hearing aids...And only when my daughter was pleased would they be satisfied. Thus began what continues to be a great relationship and is probably the second most important reason that my daughter is now, almost six years later, an honors student at Miami University in Oxford. With our audiologist’s patience and knowledge, she has made being ‘the deaf kid’ a lesson in character strength...”

Joanne P.

“My son could only grunt and say ‘uh-oh’ at the age of two years, four months. He worked very hard in speech therapy until the age of three and now talks in complete sentences and is no longer frustrated with communication. My daughter, who is now two and a half, began speech therapy around the age of two years. She had no words and was very frustrated. She now has a quickly growing vocabulary and can put two to three words together. Speech therapy has enabled both of my children to be able to express their needs. I believe that starting at such a young age may have given them a better chance at a happy, successful life. I feel very strongly that speech therapy is a valuable part of early childhood intervention.”

Renee S.

“I do not know if I have the right words, enough emotion, enough gratitude, or enough praise to appropriately convey our experience with speech and language therapy. We

adopted our son from Russia in 1999 not knowing that he would suffer greatly from the lack of stimulation and nutrition he received while residing at a children's home. Not long after his arrival in the states, it was apparent to me that intervention was necessary. With the guidance of our pediatrician, our son was referred to Children's Hospital in Columbus for a speech evaluation at the age of two. At the age of two years and three months, the day of his evaluation had finally arrived...I was devastated to learn that my son had apraxia, the absence of speech, and would need years of extensive, intense speech therapy if he had a chance to speak at all... That was five and a half years ago. I have since driven the 25 minutes it takes to get to speech twice a week through storms, snow, and sunshine. I took assignments home and worked on them with my son. Together, we have laughed, cried, and high-fived as we walked beside my son on this journey into the world of communication. I can honestly say that our therapist gave us the son we knew was behind those grunts, clinched fists, and daily tantrums...Now at the age of seven and a half, my son has both expressive and receptive language skills at or just below those of his peers. I find this not only amazing, but a true miracle since has only been truly verbal for two years...I am beyond pleased to say that my son can read better than half of his first grade classmates. It is true that we are still working on comprehension. However, five years ago, without speech therapy, my son would have no hope of communicating his basic needs, let alone read me three books each night before he goes to bed. I find it hard to fathom why it is so difficult to obtain speech therapy for our kids. It is my understanding that unless a child is two deviations from the norm, he or she does not qualify for therapy. And then, if they are school-age, it is up to the schools to provide the needed services. To be blunt, I think this is a bunch of crap. Everyone knows that the schools are bombarded with kids that need services and there aren't enough therapists to handle the load. Speech is the foundation to learning. If our kids don't learn all the thought processes that it takes to talk, how can we expect them to learn other things they need to when the need to? There are many aspects to speech therapy. It is not a one-size fits all tool. I can only tell you that because of the resourcefulness- and sometimes unorthodox methods- of our speech therapists, we beat the odds of apraxia and my son having a less than normal life. Families struggle and truly suffer when their children do not develop in a normal way or at a normal rate. These families are asking for help for a situation that may not correct itself in time, or in time enough before other complications arise. Insincerely ask the insurance community to rethink their position on eligible speech services. Give our kids a fighting chance to be all that they can be. I know my child has this chance, not in spite of speech, but because of it."

Carol N.

"When our son started pre-school in September 2004, his teacher told us none of his classmates communicated with him because they did not understand him when he tried to talk to them. He has been going to speech therapy now for just over one year. Relatives and neighbors tell us all the time how much his speech has improved over the last year, and his teacher tells us how much more he is involved in his class everyday now that his classmates understand what he is trying to say."

Tim B.

“Without speech therapy, my daughter would not have progressed as fast as she has. I, too, have hearing loss and I also know my speech would not be where it is today without therapy. It is/has been essential for a successful life with the hearing world. This is something that should be covered by insurance.”

Lisa N.

“Having a child with a speech and language delay, the chance to receive therapy has been very beneficial for my son. His confidence has grown now that he is able to be understood by people outside of his family. Not having insurance coverage would delay the growth that has enabled him to speak with his peers, answer questions in class, and read aloud. Someone who doesn’t have a child with this type of disability cannot truly appreciate what speech and language therapy does.”

Kristie W.

“My daughter has speech apraxia. When she was three years old, she could not verbally communicate with us. Speech therapy at Children’s Hospital has helped her to produce sounds, then words, and now sentences. She still has a long way to go, but the wonderful feeling of having a conversation with my four year old now is hard to put into words. She would not be where she is at in communication without intensive help.”

Lisa S.

“My two sons have verbal apraxia and have been seen by speech pathologists for the past three and a half years. They have progressed from saying ‘ma’- the only word they could say- to saying complete sentences. While they still have much to learn for age-appropriate speech, they have advanced tremendously, which was only accomplished through their speech therapy. If they did not have speech therapy, they would not be able to speak the way they can now. They would also likely have behavioral issues because of the lack of ability to communicate effectively. Their pathologists have taught them to pronounce words correctly by teaching them appropriate tongue and mouth movement, as well as other techniques for correct pronunciation. Parents and teachers can help children to speak correctly from a grammar perspective, but we don’t have the knowledge or skill set to teach our children the correct pronunciation of every word they say. Without the help of the speech pathologists, my sons would probably not be in a ‘typical’ classroom and would definitely not be in the school they’re in (a small parochial school). They would not be able to accurately communicate verbally. And I would imagine my sons would be ridiculed for their poor speech- or lack there of. I am extremely appreciative of the work all our speech pathologists have done for my boys and my family.”

Elizabeth F.