



# Central Texas Speech Pathology Services, Inc.

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## **Parents Know Their Children Best**

Referrals for speech and language services can come from a myriad of sources – physicians, ENTs, pediatricians, and teachers. The earliest and most reliable sources for identifying problems, however, are parents. Parents have the most direct observation time with their children and can typically best answer the relevant questions regarding their child’s difficulties. Does the problem occur when the child is frustrated? Is the child social? Do other family members understand the child during casual speech? Does the speech have to be in the context of a conversation for the child to be understood? Is the child developing at about the same pace as older siblings? When the child is in a group of peers, are there obvious differences in speech and language function?

An ongoing Australian study called *Growing Up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* found that parents were very accurate in identifying disorders in their children. More than 80 percent of parents’ reports about their children’s communication skills corresponded with the diagnosis by a qualified speech-language pathologist. In this study, the parents were even better at accurate identification than classroom teachers. (Sharynne McLeod, Linda Harrison, Lindy McAllister, & Jane McCormack. Charles Sturt University, Australia. The University of Queensland, Australia. [www.csu.edu.au/research/speech-impairment/docs/speech-language-impairment-LSAC.pdf](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/speech-impairment/docs/speech-language-impairment-LSAC.pdf))

Parents should follow their first instincts when it comes to seeking a speech and/or language evaluation for their child and discuss issues or concerns with their physician or qualified speech pathologist. Early intervention is key as many disorders can be treated and resolved before school-age if caught early enough.

McLeod S., Harrison L., McAllister L., & McCormach J. (2009, December) *Correspondence between direct assessment of speech and language impairment in 4- to 5-year-olds and LSAC measures of parent and teacher reported concern*. Poster session presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Growing Up in Australia: Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) Research Conference, Melbourne, Australia.