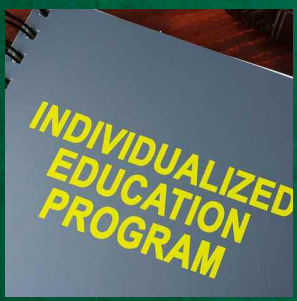






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2017 SPOTLIGHT PARTNERS

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4502 E. 41st St.
Tulsa, OK 74135
918.660.3000
www.ou.edu/tulsa.html

RTY Law
1214 E. 33rd St.
Tulsa, OK 74105
918.200.9094
www.rtylaw.com

Therapy & Beyond
308 Aspen Ave.
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
539.777.0940
www.therapyandbeyond.com

BOOTH PARTNERS

The Bridges Foundation Summer Camp
1813 N. Ash
Jenks, OK
918.299.2656

1345 N. Lewis Ave.
Tulsa, OK
918.592.3333
www.thebridgesfound.org

Building All Children
5550 S. Lewis Ave., Suite 202
Tulsa, OK
918.398.6127
www.buildingallchildren.org

CALM Center
6126 E. 32nd Pl.
Tulsa, OK
918.394.2256

Camp Barnabas
P.O. Box 3200
Springfield, MO
417.476.2565
www.campbarnabas.org

Camp Perfect Wings
Contact: Keith Burkhart, 405.942.3800 x4649
Sarah Pruegert, 405.942.3800 x 4634
Pat Jones, 405.942.3800 x 4648
Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma
3800 N. May Ave.
Oklahoma City, OK 73112
campperfectwings@bgco.org
www.bgco.org/ministries/special-needs

The Children's Hospital at Saint Francis
6161 S. Yale Ave.
Tulsa, OK
918.494.2200
www.saintfrancis.com/childrenshospital

Center for Language and Autism Support Services (CLASS) Tulsa
7170 S. Braden Ave.
Tulsa, OK
918.280.0090
www.classtulsa.com

Citizen CPR
744 W. 9th St.,
c/o OSU Medical Center

Tulsa, OK 74127
918.596.3600
www.tulsacpr.com

Down Syndrome Association of Tulsa
1831 E. 71st St.
Tulsa, OK
918.804.3728
www.dsat.org

Greenhouse Pediatric Therapy
Contact: Kaysie Steele
2257 W. Washington St.
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
918.994.7799
greenhousepediatrictherapy@gmail.com
www.greenhousepeds.com

Hope's Crossing Camp
P.O. Box 4423
Tulsa, OK 74159
918.855.0817
www.hopescrossingcamp.org

Home Therapy Resources
6715 E. 41st St.
Tulsa, OK
918.806.0106
www.hometherapyresources.com

K12 – Powered Schools: Oklahoma Virtual Charter Academy and Insight School of Oklahoma
1160 S. Douglas Blvd.
Midwest City, OK 73130
866.467.0848
aselby@k12.com
www.k12.com/OKevents

Lead Learn Live
P.O. Box 1952
Owasso, OK 74055
918.520.2794
jlackey.leadlearnlive@gmail.com
www.leadlearnlive.or

NewView Oklahoma
Tulsa Low Vision Center
5986 S. Yale Ave.
Tulsa, OK
855.811.9699
www.newviewoklahoma.org

Oklahoma Parents Center
223 N. Broadway
Holdenville, OK 74848
877.553.4332
405.379.2106
www.oklahomaparentscenter.org

Pathways Therapy Center
4157 S. Harvard, Suite 117
Tulsa, OK 74135
918.712.7868
contact@pathwaystherapycenter.com
www.pathwaystherapycenter.com

Sooner SUCCESS
940 N.E. 13th Street, #3890
Oklahoma City, OK 73104
877-441-0434
sooner-success@ouhsc.edu
www.soonersuccess.ouhsc.edu

Sprouts Child Development
5840 S. Memorial, Suite 111
Tulsa, OK 74145
918.699.4250
info@sproutsdevelopment.com
www.sproutsdevelopment.com

TARC
2516 E. 71st St., Suite A
Tulsa, OK 74136
800.688.8272
918.582.8272
tarc@ddadvocacy.net
www.ddadvocacy.net

TherapyWorks
7608 E. 91st St.
Tulsa, OK 74133
918.663.0606
info@therapyworkstulsa.com
www.therapyworkstulsa.com

Special Needs Resource Guide



ACADEMIC ADVANTAGE
Dr. Trissy Pitkin
Owasso, OK 74055
918.231.7669
www.academicadvantage.org

BRAIN BALANCE OF TULSA
Meghan Tappan
6022 S. Yale Ave.
Kingspointe Village
Tulsa, OK 74135
918.488.8991
www.brainbalancecenters.com

Brain Balance of Tulsa offers a comprehensive, drug-free program that helps kids overcome their behavioral and learning difficulties enabling them to reach their social and academic potential. If your child suffers with behavioral issues, ADHD or a learning disability then you've experienced their painful frustration and lack of confidence both academically and socially. At Brain Balance Achievement Centers, we can help your child achieve success behaviorally, socially, and academically. We are specialized achievement centers that utilize a drug-free, whole-child approach to address the underlying issues in many of the behavioral, developmental and learning disorders that plague so many children today. Call us today to schedule your free consultation!

CENTER FOR LANGUAGE AND AUTISM SUPPORT SERVICES (CLASS) TULSA
7170 S. Braden Ave., Suite 195
Tulsa, OK 74136
918.280.0090
www.classtulsa.com

COUNSELING & RECOVERY SERVICES OF OKLAHOMA
7010 S. Yale, #215
Tulsa, OK 74136
918.492.2554
crsok.org

Counseling & Recovery Services of Oklahoma provides mental health, physical health and wellness care coordination and services for children/youth/young adults ages 0-25 and their families. Caring professionals are a phone call away at 918.492.2554 to assess, diagnose, treat and provide support, regardless of a family's ability to pay. Outpatient Services include: individual and family counseling; behavioral rehabilitation; life skills coaching; linkage to community services; psychiatric evaluations; medication oversight by a physician; on-site pharmacy at the Tulsa office. Wraparound Tulsa provides support teams for children and youth experiencing frequent crisis and their families. Teams advocate for the child/youth and coordinate community services. A family support provider is available by phone any time of day or night.
Transition Services helps young people, ages 17-25, with behavioral health issues to set and achieve goals for independent living.
CALM Center provides immediate crisis support and comprehensive treatment during a short stay for youth ages 10-17 at risk of hurting themselves or others. The CALM Center is available any time at 918.394.2256, 6126 E. 32nd Place, Tulsa, OK 74135. Visit crsok.org to learn more.

MILLER SWIM SCHOOL
6415 S. Mingo Rd.
Tulsa, OK
918.254.1988
www.millerswimschool.com

Miller Swim School has been teaching Tulsa and surrounding communities about water safety for over 50 years. We offer private swim lessons with our specialized instructors for students with disabilities or special needs. Individuals with special needs can benefit from swimming to increase confidence and self-respect, as well as improve physical strength and coordination. Swim lessons offer social interaction, joy, friendship and a sense of accomplishment. Larry and Rita Miller established the school in 1960 in order to teach students to respect and enjoy the water, and to be safe, happy, successful swimmers. Our philosophy is that learning to swim well should be a part of every student's education for life. We offer year-round swim lessons for ages 6 months to adult. Miller Swim School is an authorized American Red Cross provider and a member of the United States Swim School Association.

MUSIC THERAPY
PROGRAM & CLINIC
Oral Roberts University
2448 E. 81st St., #124
Tulsa, OK 74137
918.493.8040
www.oru.edu/academics/coacs/music/music-therapy-clinic/

The Music Therapy Clinic at Oral Roberts University advocates that music therapy improves the quality of life for children and adults with disabilities or illnesses, as well as those who are healthy. In particular, the ORU Music Therapy Clinic serves the following clinical populations:

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, Down Syndrome, Cerebral Palsy, ADHD, Intellectual Disabilities, Learning Disabilities, Emotional and Behavioral Disorders, Visual/Hearing Impairment and other Developmental Disorders.

Individuals with Neurologic Disorders including Stroke (CVA), Parkinson's, Alzheimer 's disease (Dementia) and Traumatic Brain Injury.

Individuals with Anxiety Disorders, Depression and Emotional & Behavioral Disorders

In every music therapy treatment, music is used as a tool to reach non-musical goals, whether physical, sensory-motor, cognitive, speech/language, emotional, social or spiritual. The music therapy techniques used during sessions are based on research and extended collegiate studies. Many possible goals addressed by music therapist might include: improving motor coordination, improving steadiness of gait, increasing memory recall, increasing attention to task, improving speech and communication, increasing reality-based thinking, increasing interpersonal skills, decreasing anxiety, decreasing pain, regulating mood, developing bonds among family members, and increasing coping skills.

Contact ORU Music Therapy Clinic at 918.493.8040, via email at musictherapy@oru.edu or visit www.oru.edu/music-therapy-clinic for more information.

NEWVIEW OKLAHOMA
501 S. Yale Ave.
Tulsa, OK 74135
918.779.7772
www.newviewoklahoma.org

NewView Oklahoma is the only private in-state provider of comprehensive services for people with significant vision loss that cannot be corrected with glasses, surgery or medication. NewView is also the largest employer of blind and vision impaired Oklahomans in the state. We help blind and vision impaired Oklahomans of all ages remain independent where they live, learn, work and play. Through assessment, occupational therapy, training in assistive technology, on-the-job training and various programs, we help enhance the lives of those we serve.Our Tulsa and OKC Low Vision clinics offer possibilities and opportunities for people who are blind or vision impaired.

Patients receive a comprehensive vision assessment, followed by a variety of services that will allow them to remain independent.
We never turn anyone away based on ability to pay.

RTY LAW
1214 East 33rd St.
Tulsa, OK 74105
918.200.9094
www.rtylaw.com

Focusing exclusively on estate planning, at RTY Law we think there is nothing more important than family. We believe providing for loved ones is not only a responsibility but a privilege. We would be honored in assisting your family with navigating the challenges of addressing long-term needs.

THERAPY & BEYOND
308 N. Aspen Ave.
Broken Arrow, OK 74012
844.422.2669
www.therapyandbeyond.com

Therapy and Beyond provides intensive, 1:1 ABA and speech therapy for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities both in-home and in-clinic. Our individualized programs encourage family involvement and are designed on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis & Skinner's Analysis of Verbal Behavior (VB) to focus on major areas of development including behavior, language, social, academic and self-help. Give us a call to learn more about ABA as an effective and evidence-based treatment for autism.

THERAPYWORKS
7608 E. 91st St.
Tulsa, OK 74133
918.663.0606
www.therapyworkstulsa.com

Working wonders in children's lives for over 35 years, TherapyWorks offers physical, occupational and speech therapy at its outpatient clinic in Tulsa. TherapyWorks helps children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, ADHD, sensory processing, Down syndrome, balance and coordination, orthotics, sports injuries, cerebral palsy, torticollis, fine motor skills, handwriting, speech, language, oral-motor skills, swallowing, feeding, picky eating, food allergies and intolerances and many more neurological and physical impairments. One-on-one treatment is provided by specialized, experienced pediatric therapists. To learn more about TherapyWorks, call 918.663.0606 or visit www.therapyworkstulsa.com. Tulsa's oldest most respected pediatric clinic. We can work wonders in your child's life. Call us today!

For more resources, go to www.tulsakids.com, and click on "Special Needs" under Directories.

Recreational Activities in Tulsa for Kids with Special Needs



A resource guide for Tulsa families looking for extracurricular activities for children with special needs.

Aim High Academy
Aim High Academy provides opportunities for children with special needs to improve their strength, balance, and coordination. Activities and specific types of movement include the back and forth movement in swinging, the rotational movement as in twisting, and the up and over movement used for rolling. An hour of activities combined with social interactions of friendships developed makes this a very special and fun time for all. Call or visit their website for more information.
Contact information:

7020 E. 38th St.
Tulsa, OK
(918) 664-8683
michelle@tulsagymnastics.com
www.aimhighgym.org

American Therapeutic Riding Center

ATRC provides opportunities for people with varying ability levels and physical disabilities to challenge themselves physically and emotionally by setting goals to improve quality of life through equine facilitated therapy. For more information, watch this video.
Contact Information:
395 N. 177th W. Ave.
Sand Springs, OK
(918) 246-9450
deniseatrc@gmail.com
www.atrcok.org

BA Challenger Sports

BA Challenger Sports has developed sports programs for mentally and physically disabled youth and adults to enjoy the full benefits of participation in athletic environments structured to their abilities. They also have a Special Olympics Team, BA Challenger.
Contact Information:
Molly Faucault
7613 E. Broadway St.
Broken Arrow, OK
(918) 357-5012
ChallengerSports@aol.com
www.bachallengersports.com

Bit By Bit Therapeutic Horseback Riding Center

This program is designed to meet the special needs of individuals that cope with challenges in their daily lives. Special needs or considerations may be in the areas of cognitive, developmental, behavioral, physical or a combination of several disability areas. Bit by Bit provides a safe, regularly scheduled equine experience based on the individual goals of each student.
Contact Information:
14674 S. Hwy 169
Oologah, OK
(918) 371-1750
lbarron@bitbybitok.org
bitbybitok.org

Green Country Shining Stars: Special Athletes Cheerleading Program

This is a competitive cheer squad for special needs students ages 5 and up. For more information contact Michele Adams at (918) 289-1071 or go to www.greencountryshiningstars.com

Kids Connections

Activity group for Kindergarten through 5th grade serving children with Asperger syndrome and high-functioning autism. The group meets the 2nd Thursday of every month from 4:30 – 5:30 p.m.
Contact Information:
TARC Office
6585 S. Yale Ave., Suite 410
Tulsa, OK
Contact: Sherilyn or Jae
(918) 582-8272
www.autismtulsa.org

Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church and Kirk Crossing Special Buds Program

The Kirk in Tulsa offers a unique special needs ministry that allows children and adults with developmental disabilities and their

families to attend church activities at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays.
Contact Information:
Crystal Fulda
(918) 494-7088
Kirk of the Hills Presbyterian Church
4102 E. 61st St.
Tulsa, OK
Kirk Crossing
11420 S. James Ave.
Jenks, OK
www.thekirk.com

The Little Light House Tulsa

Children from birth to the chronological age of six with physical and mental challenges causing a developmental delay in one or more areas of development are eligible for Little Light House services. Conditions which typically create these challenges are
Down Syndrome, Spina Bifida, Cerebral Palsy, Autism and sensory deprivations such as blindness.
5120 E 36th St.
Tulsa, OK
(918) 664-6746
www.littlelighthouse.org

Metro Tulsa Soccer Club: Special Needs League (SNL)

Open to 4 through 19 year-old-youth athletes from any school district with special needs (physical or developmental disabilities). The focus is on player participation, fundamentals of soccer, appreciation for the game, team friendships and fun.
10715 S. Delaware
Tulsa, OK
(918) 298-0190
www.metrotulsasoccer.com

Miller Swim School

Private lessons for children with developmental disabilities are available. Call or visit the website for more information.
Contact Information:
6415 S. Mingo Rd.
Tulsa, OK
(918) 254-1988
sarah@millerswimschool.com
www.millerswimschool.com

Miss Shelly's School of Dance

A class for children with special needs meets on the first and third Saturday of each month for 45 minutes. There is no tuition for this class and enrollment is open all year.
Contact Information:
8032 S. Sheridan Road
Tulsa, OK
(918) 496-9549
www.missshellyschoolofdance.com

Oklahoma Special Olympics

The mission of Special Olympics is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic-type sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, giving them continuing opportunities to develop physical fitness, demonstrate courage, experience joy and participate in a sharing of gifts, skills and friendship with their families, other Special Olympics athletes and the community.
Contact Information:
6835 S. Canton Ave.
Tulsa, OK
(918)481-1234
www.sook.org

The Right Path Riding Academy

This program is designed to help children with special needs achieve their highest potential —

physically, emotionally, and cognitively — through the unique avenue of therapeutic horseback riding, cart driving, and other equine-assisted activities. Therapeutic riding is offered for children 4-18. We also offer a youth enrichment program for at-risk teens and a literacy project for elementary aged children.
Contact Information:
16620 Old Shamrock Highway
Drumright, OK
(918) 352-4110
walkon@rightpathridingacademy.org
www.rightpathridingacademy.org

Teen Connections

Teen Connections is a social skills group for middle and high school students on the autism spectrum. They meet together for fun activities such as board and video games where they can practice social skills. Teen Connections meets the fourth Wednesday of every month from 4:30-6 p.m. at the TARC Office in Tulsa.
Contact Information:
6585 S. Yale Ave.
Tulsa, OK
Contact: Sherilyn or Jae at (918) 582-8272
www.autismtulsa.org

Internet Resources

ADA
www.ada.gov

Advocacy
www.oklahomaparentscenter.org
www.ddadvocacy.net (TARC)
www.kvkasa.org (Kids As Self-Advocates)

Assistive Technology
www.ok.gov/abletech

Autism
www.autismspeaks.org
www.autismoklahoma.org

Hearing Loss
www.tsha.cc (Total Source for Hearing Loss and Access)

Down Syndrome
www.dsat.org (Down Syndrome Association of Tulsa)

Grief
www.thegriefcenter.org (The Tristesse Grief Center)

Mental Health
www.mhaok.org

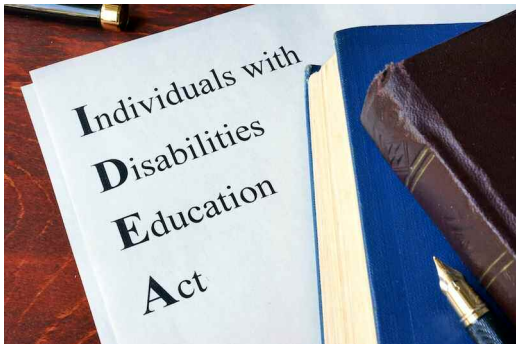
Premature Births
www.marchofdimes.org

Special Education
www.ok.gov/abletech/Special_Education_Resolution_Center/ (Special Education Resolution Center)

Vision
www.newviewoklahoma.org

Oklahoma Parents Center Offers Free Training and Information for Families with Children with Disabilities

by Bria Bolton Moore



Sharon Coppedge Long, the executive director of Oklahoma Parents Center, has stood in the shoes of many of the families she serves. Her son Jordan was about four years old when Long was told he was intellectually disabled and should be institutionalized. Long didn't heed that advice. Today, Jordan is a thriving adult, and Long spends many of her days telling parents what she wishes someone would have told her: "It's going to be okay."

Funded by the US Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs and Oklahoma State Department of Education, the Oklahoma Parents Center exists to "educate and support parents, families and professionals in building partnerships that meet the needs of children and youth with the full range of disabilities ages birth to 26," their website explains. The Oklahoma Parents Center offers a toll-free parent information line, individual assistance with educational issues, and parent education workshops on topics like writing an effective IEP (individualized education plan), basic rights in special education, effective communication skills and transition to adulthood.

When Long's son was still a toddler, she was paying $600 a month and making two out-of-town trips each week for him to get the speech and language help he needed. One day, a representative at the Health Department location where Jordan was receiving services handed Long a card and said, "You need to call these people." The card connected Long to what is now the Oklahoma Parents Center, and she learned her son should have been receiving free support.

"I've been that desperate momma who wants someone to talk to who will help me understand my rights," Long says. "I didn't know anything about special education, and they helped me."

Oklahoma Parents Center does helps families understand their rights by law, including those outlined in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

"Most of the parents we talk to really don't understand the accommodations that public schools are required to provide if there is an IEP," says Amy Synar, Tulsa County representative and information and training specialist at the Oklahoma Parents Center. "Parents need to, because they know their child best, be able to advocate for them."

Synar understands firsthand the questions and concerns many families have. After earning her master's degree, she returned to the University of Oklahoma for classes to work toward being a licensed professional counselor.

"One of the classes was really heavy in statistics, and I knew right away, oh boy, this is making me nervous," Synar says.

There was a section on the back of the syllabus encouraging students to call a phone number if they needed accommodations for the class. Synar says her fear of failure regarding math prompted her to make the call. She met with an educational psychologist who conducted a series of educational testing.

"Three hours later after a battery of tests and [after] three to four weeks of waiting on the report, I had my own IEP at 43 years old, and it showed I had five different learning disabilities," Synar says.

Although the findings were initially difficult for Synar to process and accept, she says she feels "so much stronger now" and is using her experiences to help others.

"I think a lot of parents are fearful of what the repercussions are for a child who may have a learning disability – will their friend base changed, will they be removed from a classroom because they need special services?," Synar says. "The life they had dreamt of seems to be changing. Then there are a lot of families who are prepared and are ready to accept the change in their family and are willing and able to affect change for their child because they know them best and want to see them succeed."

Both Synar and Long stress that above all, they want families to not hesitate to call when questions or situations arise. The Oklahoma Parents Center can be reached toll free at 877-553-4332. Long says they field about 10,000 calls a year, talking with many parents about behavior issues and understanding the basic laws that protect students with disabilities.

"My mantra for a long time has been that we're not pro-parent, we're not pro-school, but we are definitely 1,000-percent pro-child," Long says.

About the Oklahoma Parents Center

Our goal is to educate and support parents, families and professionals in building partnerships that meet the needs of children and youth with the full range of disabilities ages' birth to 26.

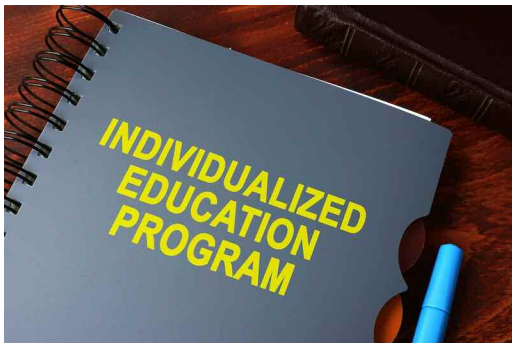
Who should call the Oklahoma Parents Center?

Parents of children with disabilities, or suspected disabilities age birth to 26;
Parents of children with emotional or behavioral problems age birth to 26;
Youth with disabilities age 18 to 26; and
Professionals in educational, medical, or human service fields.

Contact information:
Toll Free: 877-553-4332
Phone: 405-379-6015
info@oklahomaparentscenter.org
- from oklahomaparentscenter.org

SERC Helps Resolve Special Education Issues

by Brandon Schmitz



Despite being identified as an exemplar program by the Office of Special Education Programs, Oklahoma's Special Education Resolution Center (SERC) is a resource that continues to fall under many parents' radars.

"Sometimes I think special education is the best kept secret in Oklahoma," said Program Manager Jo Anne Pool Blades. "People ask me what I do, and when I tell them, they say 'I didn't even know that that was an issue.'"

Founded in 2005, the SERC helps parents and school districts settle disputes centered on the Individualized Education Programs (IEP) of disabled students. Specifically, IEPs cover learning needs, school services and progress measurement of students with special needs.

The SERC itself offers several services and programs, including mediation, due process hearing and stakeholder training. Since its inception, the Center's mission statement has been to help schools and families resolve disputes at the earliest stage possible.

Blades herself often counsels parents in an attempt to understand the nexus of their problems.

"A lot of the time, it's because somebody doesn't understand the requirements of education," she said. "Sometimes it's because the school has become a brick wall and they're not listening. Sometimes it's because the parent is so upset that they don't know how to communicate what the problem is."

Indeed, based on Blades' experiences, there are many instances in which parents are driven by fear. When that becomes apparent, she helps parents express their concerns in more educational terms so that the school has a better understanding of what they are saying. Unless specifically told not to by the parent, the Center always makes contact with the school district.

Parents will often make what Blades calls "positional demands," the most common of which is "I want a one-on-one paraprofessional for my child."

"That's always requested because that's all parents know about, but they (paraprofessionals) are really there for only the most seriously disabled children," Blades said. "They believe if someone is sitting there with them and doing their homework, then they'll get it done in class, but there are other ways for that to be accomplished."

That being said, the SERC focuses on the interest of the child rather than the positional demands of the parent.

"What we're doing is looking at solutions," Blades said. "Why is the child not getting his work done in school? Are there peer buddies that they can work with? Does the teacher need to be watching the child more? We want to know what's going on because the child will eventually need to learn how to do that."

Blades often hears from both parents and teachers that a student who doesn't complete his or her homework is "just lazy." However, she encourages them to use more direct language such as "the child is not completing assignments," as it's all about looking at the child's behavior and figuring out how it can be modified.

"It could be that they have trouble focusing and it just takes them a bit longer to turn to something new," Blades said. "They could just be distracted. What's causing them not to do it?"

According to the manager, children being put on reduced school days is the Center's No. 1 issue. When children have behavioral issues and the school doesn't know how else to handle the issue, it will often shorten the student's school day by as much as several hours.

"We are seeing more and more severe behavior in children where they'll clear the classroom and throw desks," Blades said. "These kids are allowed to go to school from only 8 to 11 a.m. because the school says they're overstimulated for the rest of the day, but that's not really the case. They need to bring someone in with behavioral knowledge to help the teachers learn how to deal with the child's behavior."

Perhaps the most common misconception regarding special education is that these children are not intelligent.

"You can be gifted and still be in special education," Blades said. "All special education means is that we need to somehow adjust the requirements to give them the ability to show that they're learning, or to teach them in a little bit of a different way."

Before the SERC was founded, Blades represented parents as an attorney for 10 years. Although lawsuits and litigation may change things for one child at a time, she said that that line of work fails to change the system itself.

"We're trying to resolve things before they break down because children benefit when we're working together," she said. "The most rewarding thing is helping people come to a place where we can focus on the child and get past whatever anger or issues are keeping us from helping them."

The SERC is located at 9726 E. 42nd Street, Suite 203. It can be reached via telephone at 918.270.1849.

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The Importance of Estate Planning

by Clair Combs



For most people, thinking about their own death probably ranks somewhere near the very bottom of things they want to do.

That was certainly true for me, but after the birth of our second son (and with some helpful prodding from our family) my husband and I eventually contacted an estate attorney. We found that going through the process definitely instigated some important conversations we hadn't been having, but perhaps the most surprising part was the comfort I felt when our estate plan was complete.

Still, I had been a parent for years before taking the estate planning plunge. Why the hesitancy? Well, like many other parents, I was thinking: 'Can we afford it?' 'Is it really necessary?' And mostly, 'I don't want to DIE!' (The truth is: probably, yes, and tough luck.)

Estate Planning 101

An estate plan is the mechanism by which you can take care of the

people or causes that are most important to you after you pass away. One common misconception is that you need to be wealthy to consider an estate plan. In reality, most Americans are likely to leave assets behind after their death. An asset could be anything from physical property, like a car or a house, to a standard checking account.

Plans are as unique as the people they serve, but some common elements include a will, a trust, a power of attorney, and a health-care directive. Many estate attorneys offer a fixed price to help put together an estate plan, though rates will vary by practice and based on the complexity of your situation.

Wills and Trusts

Wills communicate what you want to happen after your death. If you pass away without a will, state laws determine who receives your property. Trusts are legal agreements that can transfer property to another person without going through probate. When you make a trust, you designate someone to distribute or manage your assets when you die or become incapacitated.

Trusts are commonly recommended for all types of families, but they can be especially useful in the event that a loved one is disabled or receiving special assistance.

Laura Knapp's son, Luke, has muscular dystrophy which requires him to use special equipment like a power chair and a feeding tube. Many children like Luke rely on services that are predicated on certain income and asset ratios, which can be impacted if a child receives an inheritance.

"We were really surprised when we learned the importance of wording your trust so that your child can still get [support] if you and your spouse pass away," says Laura. "We wanted to make sure [Luke] would be able to continue to get government benefits and still have money to make his life fulfilling and fun."

Mark Loeber is the CEO and Founder of The Advancement Group, an organization that offers estate planning support to Little Light House families.

He says that once a family has a plan in place, it gives them a sense of control in a world that often feels out of control. In addition to understanding the ins and outs of special needs trusts, he says that parents should also think about the legacy that they want to leave on behalf of their child. Like anyone else, when a special needs person passes away, the assets from his or her trust can be designated to support groups or nonprofits that have a special meaning for the family.

"I have been doing this for 31 years, and when you share that concept with parents, [it can be] very emotional...knowing that their child can be honored with a legacy," says Loeber.

Guardianship

For parents, finances are just one part of the estate planning process. It's also important to designate who you would want to care for your child if

you could not.

There are different factors that go into selecting a potential guardian, but some common considerations include parenting style, age, location or school district, religious views, or financial situation. Whatever those factors are for your family, it's important that you not assume your loved ones know what your wishes are.

Amber and Alex Gates created their estate plan with the help of B. Gail Brown, an attorney who was recommended by another parent at their children's school. Amber says that considering custodial arrangements was the hardest part of the planning process for her. The couple considered their own values when determining who they would want to care for their children.

"You want someone who's going to parent in a similar way," says Amber. "But mostly [we considered] personality. Do they have a sense of humor? Can they raise our kids with confidence? Is education important to them?"

Rachel Mouton is the director of development at the Little Light House. In addition to working with children who have special needs, she also has a son with Asperger's syndrome.

Mouton says it is important for parents to name guardians who really understand the commitment as well as the day-to-day experiences of the child. She says there can be specific challenges for children with special needs; for example, the child may require guardianship far beyond the child's 18th birthday.

"You want to think about someone who can really care for that child, who can keep up," says Mouton. "Some really involved children receive nursing care daily. That is something to consider when planning. Make sure they are in a home where they can receive that care."

"It's not something you want to think about, but it's actually a relief when you get the paperwork done and know that your child will be taken care of," agrees Laura Knapp.

Getting Started

Meghan and Jacob Johnson have a 1-year-old daughter, and the couple is currently using the online tool LegalZoom to complete their first estate plan.

There haven't been any major disagreements as they work through the process, which Meghan attributes to the fact that they had discussed a lot of the relevant issues before they ever started the legal paperwork.

"Having those conversations ahead of time is really important," she advises. "For the most part we have been on the same page."

The Johnsons say they will take an iterative approach to their estate plan, which also takes some pressure off of the planning process.

"For us it hasn't been a really painful process, because I don't think we're looking at it as the 'final' plan," says Jacob. He says their goal is to get a basic structure in place that makes their intentions known. "The more we can have in there the better, but our thinking right now is let's just get some-

thing done that would tactically make this all a lot easier for everyone else," says Jacob.

"Something is better than nothing at this point," agrees Meghan.

Building an estate plan was particularly important to Alex and Amber Gates because they both lost their fathers unexpectedly at an early age. That firsthand experience motivated them to act when they were in their thirties, but they still had concerns.

"I was hesitant about [estate planning] because I was afraid it was going to be expensive and there were a lot of unknowns about the process," says Alex. "Part of it was the trauma of my dad dying, but it's really about acknowledging your own mortality."

"It sounds really scary and cumbersome," acknowledges Amber. "But at the end of the day…[Alex] wouldn't want me to struggle [after his death] and vice versa." The pain of losing your loved one is already more than anyone wants to deal with, she says.

The couple says that their attorney, Gail Brown, made the process as comfortable as possible and asked a lot of thought-provoking questions. Brown says she understands that there can be challenging moments, but her advice is to just jump in.

"Estate planning is important because you decide while you are still alive what you want to have happen upon your death," she says. Opting out of that process doesn't mean that decisions won't be made - just that you won't be the one making them. Simply put: "Either you decide or the state decides for you."

In retrospect, Alex wishes he had known how comforting it would be to have a plan in place. It took three in-person sessions plus some homework for the couple to pull everything together. Brown advises her clients to revisit their estate plans every five years or any time there is a major life change, including in the life of your designated guardian.

While planning for our own deaths may not always be comfortable, experts say it is a responsible choice, particularly for parents. "We can't get away from it, so let's just plan for it," says Brown.



Core Symptoms of Autism

(Originally published at http://www.tulsakids.com/Ways-Movement-Benefits-Autistic-Children/)autism never speak.

The severity of symptoms varies greatly, but all people with autism have some core symptoms in the areas of:

Social interactions and relationships. Symptoms may include:

Significant problems developing nonverbal communication skills, such as eye-to-eye gazing, facial expressions, and body posture.

Failure to establish friendships with children the same age.

Lack of interest in sharing enjoyment, interests, or achievements with other people.

Lack of empathy. People with autism may have difficulty understanding another person's feelings, such as pain or sorrow.

Verbal and nonverbal communication. Symptoms may include:

Delay in, or lack of, learning to talk. As many as 40% of people with autism never speak.

Problems taking steps to start a conversation. Also, people with autism have difficulties continuing a conversation after it has begun.

Stereotyped and repetitive use of language. People with autism often repeat over and over a phrase they have heard previously (echolalia).

Difficulty understanding their listener's perspective. For example, a person with autism may not understand that someone is using humor. They may interpret the communication word for word and fail to catch the implied meaning.

Limited interests in activities or play. Symptoms may include:

An unusual focus on pieces. Younger children with autism often focus on parts of toys, such as the wheels on a car, rather than playing with the entire toy.

Preoccupation with certain topics. For example, older children and adults may be fascinated by video games, trading cards, or license plates.

A need for sameness and routines. For example, a child with autism may always need to eat bread before salad and insist on driving the same route every day to school.

Stereotyped behaviors. These may include body rocking and hand flapping.

For Additional Resources, go to www.tulsakids.com/SpecialNeeds



RESTAURANTS

Andolini's Pizzeria
Charleston's Restaurant Midtown
Charleston's Restaurant South
Chick-fil-a at Regal Plaza
Chick-fil-a Tulsa Hills
El Guapo's Cantina
Elote Café & Catering
Joe Momma's
Marshall Brewing Company
McDonald's-91st & Memorial
McDonald's-Jenks
McNellie's
Upper Crust Wood Fired Pizza

ENTERTAINMENT

Andy B's
BOK Center
Broken Arrow Historical Society Museum
Camp Loughridge
Champs Foundation
Circle Cinema
Cox Convention Center
Guthrie Green
Tulsa Children's Museum
Tulsa State Fair
Tulsa Zoo & Living Museum
Woody Guthrie Center

SPORTS

Oklahoma State University Athletics Department
Oklahoma City Thunder & Oklahoma City Blue
ONEOK Field-Tulsa Drillers and Tulsa Roughnecks
Tulsa Oilers Hockey
Jenks Trojan High School Baseball
Metro Tulsa Soccer Club
Rebel Yoga
Tulsa World of Gymnastics
Seattle Seahakws
YMCA-Camp Takatoka
YMCA-Daily Family
YMCA-Downtown
YMCA of Greater Tulsa
YMCA-Metropolitan Office
YMCA-Owasso Family
YMCA-R.C. Dickenson Family
YMCA-South Neighborhood
YMCA-Thornton Family
YMCA-Westside
YMCA-W.L. Hutcherson

PROVIDERS

Active Life Chiropractic
Mark Andregg, DDS, PC
Art Therapy Tulsa
Cravens & Stevens Pediatrics
DC Family Healthcare and Wellness

Clinic
First Wellness Family Chiropractic
GIFTED Healthcare
The Griffin Promise Autism Clinic
Group Home of the Innocents
Imagine Pediatric Therapy
Tina Linn
The Little Lighthouse, Inc.
Multi-Family Counseling
RenuYou Neurofeedback Center of Tulsa
Dr. Andrew Revelis with Tulsa Pain Consultants
Shadow Mountain Behavioral Health System
Speech and Beyond Center
Therapy and Beyond
TherapySource for Kids
TherapyWorks
The Spot for Kids
Tulsa Center for Child Psychology
Tulsa Sunshine Center
Dr. Robert Zoellner, OD

RETAILERS

Appliance Solutions
Goodwill
Ideally Yours Photography
Kicks for Kids Shoes
John E Koller Jewelry Designs
Liv a Little Boutique & Gifts
Mammoth Comics
Microsoft Store
Morgan Stanley Tulsa Branch
New Medio
Oklahoma Fit
Precision Security of Oklahoma
Tatermash Oilcloth
Theraganics
Titan Quality Roofing & Construction

FIRST RESPONDERS

Emergency Medical Services Authority (EMSA)
Tulsa County Sherriff's Office
Tulsa Fire Departments
Tulsa Police Department

HOSPITALS

St. John's Hospital
St. John's Hospital Broken Arrow
St. John's Hospital Owasso
St. John's Hospital Sapulpa

CHURCHES

The Assembly of Broken Arrow
Christian Chapel
Kirk of the Hills Church
Memorial Drive Church of Christ

OTHER BUSINESSES

Alorica
Citizens Security Bank
Coldwell Banker Select, Realtors
Ernie Graves Company
Explorer Pipeline
Factory Tile, Inc.
Gateway Mortgage
State Farm
Tulsa World
Magellan Midstream Partners, L.P.
Riggs, Abney, Neal, Turpen, Orbison & Lewis
Tulsa Public Schools
Valley National Bank Company
Wilkerson Law Firm, PC
Williams Company

This list was provided by Autism Friendly Locations. Learn more at www.autismfriendlylocations.com

Does Your Child Have a Learning Disability?

(Content provided by Town & Country School; originally published at http://www.tulsakids.com/October-2011/Does-your-child-have-a-learning-disability/)



DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE TROUBLE WITH:

Spoken or Written Language
- Learning new vocabulary
- Following directions
- Understanding requests
- Responding to questions
- Understanding concepts

Attention and Concentration
- Completing a task
- Acting before thinking
- Restlessness
- Daydreaming
- Distractibility

Memory
- Remembering directions
- Learning math facts
- Learning new procedures
- Spelling
- Studying for tests

Organization
- Managing time
- Completing assignments
- Organizing thoughts
- Locating belongings
- Carrying out a plan

Social Behavior
- Making and keeping friends
- Impulsive behavior
- Frustration tolerance
- Accepting changes in routine
- Interpreting nonverbal clues

Physical Coordination

- Manipulating small objects
- Learning self-help skills
- Handwriting
- Climbing and running
- Mastering sports

If you feel as though your child may have a learning disability, discuss this checklist or your own observations with his or her teacher (see below).

Parent-Teacher Meeting: Initial and on-going conversation tips for parents whose children may have a learning disability.

- Discuss your child's reading level and ask if he is reading at an appropriate pace.
- If your child is struggling with homework, be sure to discuss that and ask if he is struggling in the classroom as well.
- Explain how your child learns best, what may distract him and specific measures that might help in the classroom that you've experienced at home.
- Inquire about classroom rules and discipline and discuss how your child may respond and behave. Explain that your child may learn differently than the other children in the classroom – for example, he may not follow oral instruction, so written may be better.
- Discuss others at school who may interact with your child – tutors, coaches, after-school club leaders – and how best to communicate special strategies with them, if you and your child's teacher determine that that is necessary.
- Encourage open communication throughout the school year and keep these conversations going throughout the school year, not just once or twice during parent-teacher conferences.

Use the tools that are available to you – email, web-based communication, the telephone and, of course, face-to-face conversations.





Clinical and Non-Clinical Options for Speech Therapy

by Mary Smith
(Originally published in TulsaKids' August 2017 issue)

When a toddler wraps his arms around you and says, "I WUV you!" or charms you with her little lisp, you may be overwhelmed with the adorableness, but if those speech patterns continue, it might be time to call in the speech-language pathologist, also known as a speech therapist. Speech therapy is not only for correcting stuttering, disfluency, or the "l" or "r" sounds that young children often struggle with. Speech therapists also work with children who have autism to increase their communication skills and can help children overcome oral sensory issues that may get in the way of their eating.

In addition, speech therapists can treat other issues, including: trouble understanding or expressing language, voice problems, using verbal and nonverbal communication appropriately in social situations, and difficulties in organizing thought or paying attention as a result of trauma or injury.

If you believe your child may be behind on his or her developmental speech sounds or could use some help in any of these areas, a professional speech-language pathologist can address your concerns. And, when an abnormality or issue is identified early, it could potentially prevent future problems from developing.

However, figuring out where to start can be overwhelming for parents. Clinics, nonprofits, individual therapists and even teletherapy are some of the options locally available. The professionals suggest finding an environment that is best-suited to your child's specific needs.

Speech Therapy Clinic

A clinic setting has many benefits and can be a good place to have your child's hearing or speech screened to better see how to proceed.

"I think one of the unique things about working in a clinic is collaborating with your colleagues; it's a lot easier in a clinic setting," Mandy Foster, TherapyWorks' lead speech therapist, said.

TherapyWorks, a full-service therapy clinic in Tulsa, has not only speech therapists but physical and occupational therapists as well. Having a variety of therapy backgrounds all in one place allows for quick consultations and second opinions in a single visit.

The multidisciplinary team can help a child with multiple needs and can even help better identify areas to work on or provide additional screenings for potential problems.

Another benefit of a clinic such as TherapyWorks is that the facility has on-site gyms, a quiet room, various therapy rooms for different ages and a kitchen. Utilizing a variety of environments helps children generalize, or apply, what they've learned in therapy to everyday life more quickly since some of the activities or objects used resemble real-life activities and objects.

At TherapyWorks children have the opportunity to work with other children at the center to practice their practical skills and social skills in a controlled setting. The opportunity to interact with their peers motivates them to communicate and is beneficial to a child's improvement.

Something that Foster encourages parents or guardians to look for when researching clinics or speech therapists is one that specializes in what their child needs most help with. For example, TherapyWorks offers six speech therapists, each with a different focus. One works more with children with autism, one works with feeding disorders and so on. The staff also includes a bilingual speech therapist.

While speech therapists know how to treat a variety of disorders, most often they specialize in one area, so it's beneficial to find a therapist that can best meet your child's specific needs.

University Teaching Clinic

Another clinic in the Tulsa area is the Mary K. Chapman Center for Communication Disorders at The University of Tulsa. The clinic doubles as a teaching facility where students offer therapy and assessment under American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA) certified supervisors.

"Students are usually highly motivated to do well because they have

hearts for serving and hearts for learning, and they have been in courses with the most up-to-date information," Clinic Coordinator Suzanne Thompson Stanton said.

Some of Mary K. Chapman services include free speech-language and hearing tests for children, speech-language and hearing assessments, speech-language therapy, audiologic rehabilitation and "food school" for food sensory issues. Because it is a university clinic, rates are low.

The Chapman Clinic's unique accessibility to a variety of demographics is possible because of its status as a teaching facility. The Chapman Foundation gives scholarships to those in need of therapy and a portion of the donated funds is dedicated to reaching out the Hispanic community in Tulsa, so interpreters are also available at no additional charge, Stanton said.

The Mary K. Chapman Center also offers seasonal and year-round programs such as the Language Lab and summer programs such as Articulation Boot Camp. The Language Lab is a play-based service available twice a week for an hour-and-a-half that teaches therapy through play and allows for children to learn language by interacting. Articulation Boot Camp is a more rigorous therapy for sound disorders and meets for an hour a day, four days a week

"Research has shown that more intensive, frequent training can often lead to better outcomes in improving speech disorders or delays," Stanton said.

These programs use familiar, real-life themes such as farms or airports to help children practice everyday vocabulary, allowing them to more quickly generalize what they learn in therapy sessions.

Some advantages to the clinic are the various playrooms and objects used to engage motor and fine motor skills while children learn and practice those skills.

"We believe that children learn language and speech through play," Stanton said.

Incorporating motor skills with therapy makes it more enjoyable and memorable, so children generalize what they've learned faster.

An aspect of the clinic setting that may be overlooked is the sense of camaraderie among of the parents that frequent the same clinic or who have kids with similar disorders, Stanton said. Meeting other parents who understand what you're going through can often be reassuring.

Teletherapy

Ever heard of it? This type of speech therapy hasn't quite caught on in the Tulsa area yet, but is widely used in other states, including Illinois and Washington. The object of Teletherapy is to receive speech therapy (and even physical or occupational therapy, depending on the company) through a video chatting program similar to Skype but much more secure.

It may sound strange, even unsafe, but local teletherapist Stacy Puckett assures parents otherwise.

"When you think about traditional speech therapy, you think of sitting on the floor and being really hands on, so I wasn't sure how that would trans-

fer over through the Internet," Puckett said.

After working in school and clinical settings as a speech therapist for years, Puckett now works for the Utah-based company eLuma Online Therapy, which employs 80 to 90 speech, occupational and physical therapists from across the country. Puckett works from an office in Jenks and has had clients in an Illinois school, and now works with elementary and middle schoolers at a school in Washington.

After working for several years as a traditional therapist, Puckett transitioned to teletherapy and can't see herself ever going back.

"I was really shocked because I felt like I truly saw more results working with kids that way than through any other methods I'd used before," Puckett said. "I don't know that I'd ever go back to traditional therapy because I just feel like it's the next new thing."

Since technology has become so ingrained in everyday life, having therapy on a digital platform is more intuitive for children than most people would think, Puckett said. From an early age, children are surrounded by devices and understand how to use them. Making therapy available online has had enormous benefits both for the children and their families.

The accessibility of the therapy has been one of the biggest benefits, Puckett said. It allows for therapy anywhere and anytime, so a child could even receive therapy on vacation or from home, making it easy for children who may have physical disabilities or for working parents.

Teletherapy provides highly individualized therapy for one or two children at a time, so the intentional attention often leads to trust and attachment formed between therapist and child despite communicating through screens.

"I get really attached to the children, and you wouldn't think you'd have that kind of connection with them, but, to me, it's almost more intense because you don't have the outside distractions, and you can both really focus in," Puckett said.

She regularly sees children with autism, receptive and expressive language disorders and behavioral disorders for 30-minute sessions, and often has children with the same or similar issues pair up for their therapy. A teacher's aide or other adult is usually in the same room with the children to keep them on task, but Puckett can alter what the children see on their screen to limit distractions. They often play games that use language or sounds or go through stories and practice reading comprehension together, activities that are all lead and monitored by the therapist.

For parents who are unsure of this newer form of therapy, Puckett always invites parents to observe the end of the child's session and decide whether they want to continue or not. In her experience, having parents see that they're not just playing games and instead legitimately learning and practicing new skills is reassuring.

While teletherapy isn't for every child, it has been a positive option for many. Puckett encourages parents to consider teletherapy if they're looking for a speech therapist, but also to do their research beforehand.

"I've dismissed a lot more kids in the past two years than I ever did in a

traditional therapy session," she said. "I think it's important for parents to know that they have options, and that this can be done in Tulsa."

Home Speech Therapy

Speech therapists also commonly offer their services in their clients' homes or out of their own homes, depending on the client's preference. These speech therapists offer similar services to clinics limited to each individual's specializations and travel radius.

Kristen Harris is a speech therapist who moved to Tulsa from Arkansas, struggled to adjust to the Oklahoma clinic settings and instead decided to do speech therapy from clients' homes. As her own boss, she has the freedom to charge hourly rates and see clients as often as their parents want.

When sessions are in a child's home, Harris can use toys or everyday tasks to put therapy lessons in an already familiar context. She even uses an activity such as baking so that children can practice certain speech and language skills.

"I try to implement their world into therapy," Harris said. "I think speech is ideal to do in the home."

Her main goal in therapy is to treat symptoms and not a diagnosis because she believes that placing emphasis on a label limits what a child can do in her mind. Instead, she focuses on individual issues and examines the possible neurological factors behind them.

Harris also makes an effort to meet her clients where they're at and observe their behaviors to see what the underlying issue may be instead of jumping to correct certain behaviors, something other speech therapists are taught to do. Ultimately, she wants to see her clients' communication potential be recognized and to see them confidently progressing in their own unique ways.

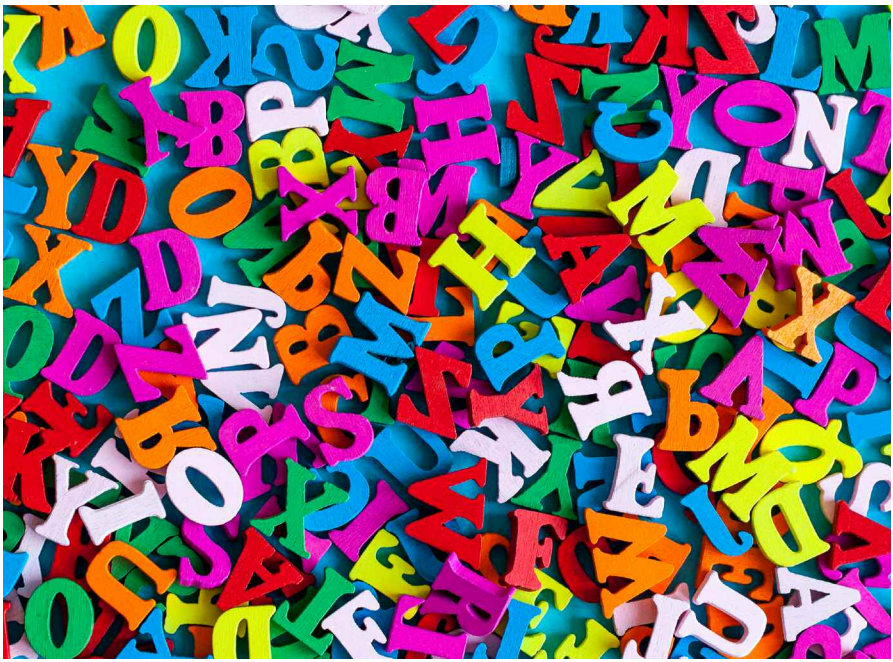
"I want to get them thriving, not just surviving," Harris said. "That's why I love my job, because everybody I see is a puzzle, and it's a really fascinating job."

To learn more about speech developmental milestones, check out the American Speech-Language Hearing Association's (ASHA) website. However, if you suspect that your child may not be meeting a speech developmental milestone or even if something seems "off," consult your doctor or a speech therapist for a screening.

"If you have an inkling that something isn't right and everyone is saying that everything's fine, go with your gut and do something about it because that early intervention is key," Harris said.

Signs of Dyslexia

(from www.interdys.org. Originally published at http://www.tulsakids.com/Web-2013/Dyslexia-Common-Childhood-Disability-Can-be-Treated/)



YOUNG CHILDREN

Signs of dyslexia in young, preschool children include talking later than expected, a slowness to add new words, difficulty rhyming, and trouble following multi-step directions. After a child begins school, the signs of dyslexia include:

- Difficulty reading single words, such as a word on a flashcard
- Difficulty learning the connection between letters and sounds
- Confusing small words, such as at and to
- Letter reversals, such as d for b
- Word reversals, such as tip for pit

Having one of these signs does not mean your child has dyslexia; many children reverse letters before the age of 7. But, if several signs exist

and reading problems persist, or if you have a family history of dyslexia, you may want to have your child evaluated.

ELEMENTARY-AGED CHILDREN
Does Your 1st, 2nd or 3rd-Grader:

- Remember simple sequences such as counting to 20, naming the days of the week, or reciting the alphabet?
- Have an understanding of rhyming words, such as knowing that fat rhymes with cat?
- Recognize words that begin with the same sound (for example, that bird, baby, and big all start with b)?
- Easily clap hands to the rhythm of a song?
- Frequently use specific words to name objects rather than words like "stuff" and "that thing"?
- Easily remember spoken directions?
- Remember names of places and people?
- Show understanding of right-left, up-down, front-back?
- Sit still for a reasonable period of time?
- Make and keep friends easily?

Answering "no" to some or most of these questions may indicate a learning disability. Not all students who have difficulties with these skills are dyslexic. Formal testing is the only way to confirm a diagnosis of suspected dyslexia.

WHAT IS DYSLEXIA?

Dyslexia is a learning disorder characterized by difficulty reading. Also called specific reading disability, dyslexia is a common learning disability in children. Dyslexia occurs in children with normal vision and intelligence. Sometimes, dyslexia goes undiagnosed for years and isn't recognized until adulthood. There's no cure for dyslexia. It's a lifelong condition caused by inherited traits that affect how your brain works. However, most children with dyslexia can succeed in school with tutoring or a specialized education program. Emotional support also plays an important role. (definition from www.mayoclinic.com)

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