



Information Paper



What is a Speech Pathologist? (Early Years)

A speech pathologist is an allied health professional who supports people of all ages with communication and swallowing.

A speech pathologist may work on building a person's understanding of spoken language; their ability to use speech, gestures or other forms of communication to express themselves; and their skills in navigating social interactions with those around them. They can also help children who need support to eat, drink and swallow safely.

What does speech pathology look like in the early years?

Speech pathology uses fun, play-based therapy with children to build communication and interaction skills that allow the child to participate in meaningful and motivating activities such as play time with their peers and story time with their educators.

Speech pathologists may also use technology, visuals and other tools to support communication and learning. This is often referred to as augmentative and alternative communication or AAC for short.

Therapy can take place at a clinic, the child's home or their early childhood settings. It generally involves the therapist working directly with the child, alongside indirect support such as coaching and upskilling the important people in the child's life and guiding them to make reasonable adjustments to activities and the environment to better support the child's communication and interactions.

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As an educator, when should I recommend a child sees a speech pathologist?

A speech pathologist can be recommended if a child is not meeting their developmental milestones for communication, or the child's differences/delays in communication and interaction are impacting upon their participation in everyday activities.

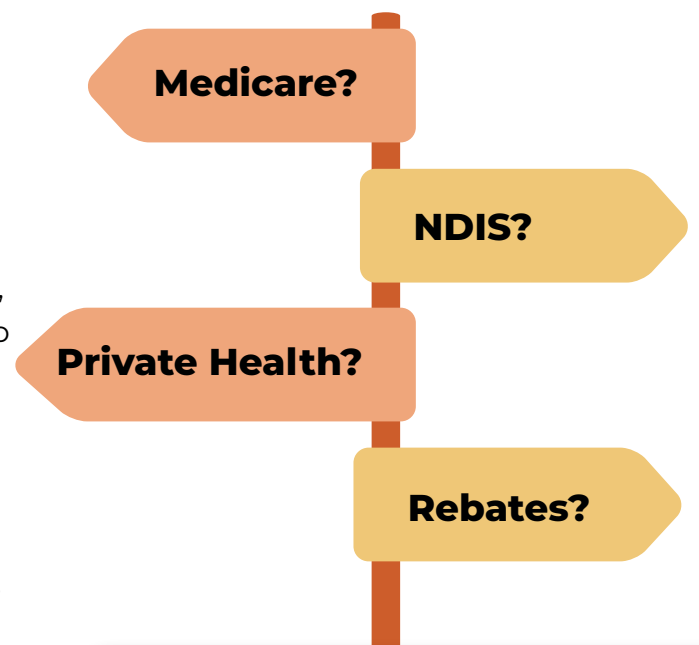
Does a family need a referral for their child to see a speech pathologist?

Families do not need a referral for their child to see a speech pathologist. However, they may wish to speak with their General Practitioner/doctor about a referral as they may be able to provide a Medicare plan that will allow them to access rebates on sessions.

Apart from Medicare, what other funding is available for speech pathology?

Children with a diagnosed disability or who are acknowledged as having a developmental delay, may qualify for NDIS funding that can be used to access speech pathology services.

Children without a diagnosed disability may be able to access rebates through the family's private health fund. Families can also contact their NDIS Early Childhood Partner to see if their child might be eligible for speech pathology through the *NDIS Early Childhood Approach*.



Scan QR code to visit the **Speech Pathology Australia** website to learn more.



Scan QR code to view other resources, services and supports offered by Autism Queensland.

Autism Queensland is here to help—get in touch to learn more:



Email: css@autismqld.com.au

Phone: (07) 3273 0000

Website: autismqld.com.au

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