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A Child's Place

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Occupational Therapy Speech Therapy

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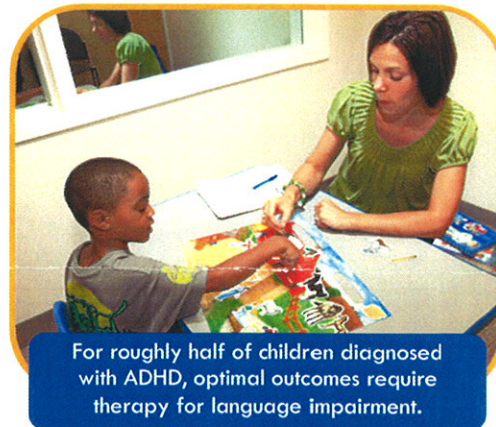


Children with ADHD Need a Speech/Language Evaluation



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Founder / Director

Studies have found up to 50% of preschoolers presenting for psychiatric services to have *undiagnosed* language impairment.^{1,2} Language impairment refers to developmental disorder of both expressive and receptive language not caused by injury, hearing loss, or other developmental disorders. Among children meeting the criteria for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), the prevalence of language impairment has been measured between 35% and 90% depending on the definition of language impairment used.¹⁻⁵ When comparing groups of children diagnosed with ADHD and children with different combinations of diagnoses, researchers find that **language impairment contributes more to variance in achievement, working memory, and executive function than does ADHD.**⁵⁻⁶ This remained true whether measuring verbal or non-verbal working memory. Language impairment is now also believed to be a primary reason for social impairment among children with ADHD.⁷ The treatment implication is that for roughly half of children diagnosed with ADHD, optimal outcomes warrant therapy for language impairment.



For roughly half of children diagnosed with ADHD, optimal outcomes require therapy for language impairment.

The diagnoses of language impairment and ADHD have strong overlap. For instance, the scientific literature shows that children diagnosed with ADHD have challenges with working memory, discourse organization, inferring, and executive function.^{8,9} Likewise, language impairment affects verbal and non-verbal working memory, expressive cohesion, topic maintenance, social-cognitive reasoning, and even cognitive functioning requiring inhibitory control.^{6,10,11} Behaviors common to language impairment also occur in the diagnostic criteria for ADHD (e.g. difficulty listening when spoken to, difficulty following instructions, talking excessively, blurting out answers, interrupting, and trouble taking turns in conversation).¹² **The prevalence of language impairment in ADHD bolsters the long-standing recommendation that pediatric speech language assessment and treatment should be part of a multi-disciplinary approach to ADHD diagnoses.**³

While the co-existence of language impairment (LI) compounds the challenges experienced by children with an ADHD diagnosis, there is an optimistic component to the LI / ADHD association. Some of the neural deficits involved in language impairment appear to be plastic and can be retrained. Snowling et al. demonstrated that when language delay is resolved by 5.5 years, children have particularly good psychosocial outcomes in adolescence.¹³ The preponderance of randomized, controlled trials - more than 23 - show various methods of pediatric speech-language therapy to be effective at improving expressive language, receptive auditory comprehension, lexical acquisition, and phonology in preschoolers.^{14,15} When children have an ADHD diagnosis, please tell parents about the possible involvement of language impairments and about the speech-language therapy services available at Emerge - A Child's Place.

The Fun Place for Therapy



At Emerge, children find skilled therapists, colorful surroundings, and lots of toys and playful equipment. In general, Emerge is a place children like at first sight and look forward to visiting again. Important therapy has never been so much fun.

Please tell parents about Emerge - A Child's Place
Believing in a Child's Potential to Flourish

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