



Speech-Language Pathologist

A lawyer giving a passionate closing argument in a trial, an opera singer hitting a “high C,” and a student presenting a history project—what do these people have in common? All of them rely on having strong voices and confident speech. Keeping this in mind, imagine the difficulties faced by someone born with a cleft lip or a stuttering problem. These are the people a speech-language pathologist helps.

It is the role of the speech-language pathologist, or speech therapist, to diagnose, assess, and treat disorders (physical or mental) resulting in communication or swallowing difficulties. The therapist works with patients of all ages, and the disorders to be treated vary from age to age. He might work with a baby who has difficulty feeding, a dyslexic elementary school student who has trouble reading or an elderly stroke victim. All of these people could potentially be brought to a speech therapist. Other potential patients include people with hearing impairment, trauma victims, or patients with Parkinson’s disease.

Speech-language pathology is also important in the treatment of autistic patients. People with autism frequently suffer from undeveloped communication skills, which can make it hard for them to integrate into society. The speech therapist can assist these patients with increasing their ability to express themselves in an effective way.



In order to become a speech-language pathologist, you must obtain at least a Master’s Degree, become licensed in the state you will be practicing and pass a national evaluation test offered by the Praxis Series of the Educational Testing Service. Many states also require you to attend an accredited graduate program in speech-language pathology.

A large number of speech therapists are employed by educational services, especially preschools and elementary schools, because the earlier a speech-language disorder is discovered, the easier it is to correct the problem and ensure proper development. Therapists are also employed by hospitals, private practitioners, nursing care providers, home health services, day care centers, and outpatient departments. A growing number are beginning to work in correctional facilities and youth detention centers.



Effective speech and language is a virtual necessity in today’s society, and its lack can be very detrimental. This is why the speech-language pathologist is such a critical health care profession for those people who suffer from the large number of speech-related disorders.