

- Consider your first couple of sessions as preliminary, in which you must decide whether you like, respect and trust the therapist. If you don't, move on to the next name on your list.
- Good, experienced and qualified therapists for children with communication difficulties can be found in clinics, schools, hospitals and private practice.
- You'll be bringing your precious child for help so it's important to choose someone who is both caring and qualified and who puts you at ease.

NOTES:



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When your child needs help with a communication problem be prepared to search to find the best source of help. When you look for a therapist, competence and personal chemistry should be your priorities. Therapists who who have earned a Master's Degree or a Doctoral Degree, who hold a Certificate of Clinical Competence (CCC) and a State License are your safest bets. Experience with children is important but even entry level therapists working on their Clinical Fellowship Year (CFY) must be closely supervised by experienced therapists and sometimes the enthusiasm of a new therapist can be a valued asset.

To find the right therapist for you, take these steps:

- Check with your health care plan or call your plan's representative and ask the conditions of your benefit plan coverage for therapy. Find out if your health plan has a designee to assist you in finding an appropriate therapist.

- Investigate any other avenues of financial support. In most states Early Intervention and Preschool Support Programs provide diagnostic and treatment services to infants, toddlers and preschoolers who demonstrate significant difficulties in speech and language development. These services are funded through state and federal funds and are usually provided at no additional cost to the families. Sometimes the scope of state and federally funded programs may be limited and eligibility requirements preclude enrollment to only those with delays or disorders of sufficient magnitude.

- In some states, Medical Assistance (welfare) funds may be available to children with disabilities regardless of the income of their parents.

- Some employers offer options to allocate pre-tax dollars to funds, allowing families to allocate dollars to cover the cost of therapy during the year. While you are still paying privately for therapy, the money spent comes from your pre-tax income, lowering somewhat your tax liability for the year, offering some

degree of savings. Plan for these funds conservatively, for whatever dollars you do not spend cannot be recouped. An estimate of the amount to cover 80% of therapy for the year will allow for cancellations due to illness, vacations and inclement weather.

- To narrow your "shopping list" discuss your situation with a source you trust. This could be your child's pediatrician, family doctor, member of the clergy, school counselor or friend.
- When you have narrowed your list down to three or four names, call one and ask whether he or she is taking patients. If so, schedule a "get acquainted" session in which each of you have the chance to see if your philosophies and personalities match.