Identify the Signs: Speech and Language Disorders in Adults

- Uses slurred or slowed rate of speech
- Has problems coordinating mouth or speech movements
- Struggles to get out sounds or words correctly
- Has trouble thinking of the words they want to say
- Has problems expressing what they want or need
- Speaks in short, fragmented phrases
- Says words in the wrong order
- Has trouble following directions or conversations
- Has difficulty understanding what others say
- Has new trouble reading, writing, spelling, or using numbers

Note: If you or someone you know are experiencing any of these signs, especially for the first time, seek out the services of your medical provider and an ASHA-certified speech-language pathologist.

Find more signs, and how you can connect with help, at https://IdentifytheSigns.org.

What Communication Partners Can Do

- Give the person time to communicate (rather than guessing or trying to finish their sentences).
- Ask the person what helps them communicate.
- Focus on understanding a person's message rather than stopping conversation to correct a word or pronunciation.
- Use other forms of communication when needed (e.g., gestures, pen and paper, text to talk, augmentative and alternative communication devices).
- Let the person know when you have trouble understanding them. Avoid pretending to understand.
- Break down directions into small, clear steps. Repeat directions or key information as needed.
- Give short, simple, less confusing questions. For example, “Do you want coffee or juice?” instead of “What do you want to drink?”
- Pause to let the other person think about what you've said.
- Check with the person to make sure that they understand you.

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