



May 1, 2017

Dear Parents:

Many parents do not recognize the early signs of a critical health issue: communication disorders. Speech, language, and hearing disorders are among the most common disabilities in the United States. This month, during the national observance of Better Hearing and Speech Month, I encourage parents to take stock of their child's communication health. Sometimes, problems achieving academically, or social or behavioral issues in school, may be the result of an undiagnosed speech or hearing disorder. It is important for parents to be attuned to the early warning signs of these conditions.

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), through its Identify the Signs campaign, offers many resources to help parents learn about these disorders. Visit <http://identifythesigns.org> to learn more about what to watch for and treatment options.

Prevention, especially when it comes to noise-induced hearing loss, is of growing importance with skyrocketing use of personal audio technology among kids. Many children have access to smartphones, tablets, and other devices—and use these with accompanying headphones or ear buds at high volumes (and for long periods of time). One in 5 kids ages 12–19 is suffering from hearing loss, an increase of 31% since the late 1980s/early 1990s. Year-round, but especially as we move into the summer months with increased leisure time, it is important to impart safe listening habits to your children. These include listening at half volume and taking listening breaks. It is also key to demonstrate this behavior—practice what you preach. You can find helpful resources from another ASHA initiative, the Listen To Your Buds campaign, at www.facebook.com/listentoyourbuds.

If you have any concerns about your child's speech or hearing, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached at (phone number, e-mail address).

Sincerely,

(Name)