The Roles of Speech-Language Pathologists in Service Delivery to Infants, Toddlers, and Their Families

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Families and their infants and toddlers (birth-36 months) who are at risk or have developmental disabilities, present a broad spectrum of needs that the appropriately certified and/or licensed speech-language pathologist is uniquely qualified to address. These include delays and disabilities in communication, language, and speech, as well as oral-motor and feeding behaviors. Speech-language pathologists, as independent practitioners, assume various roles in addressing these needs of families and their infants. These roles include, but are not limited to: (a) screening and identification; (b) assessment and evaluation; (c) the design, planning, direct delivery, and monitoring of treatment programs; (d) case management; and (e) consultation with, and referral to agencies and other professionals providing services to this young population and their families. These roles should be implemented in a comprehensive, community-based program that is family-centered and is also coordinated with other services that the families and their children may need or receive. The speech-language pathologist should be an integral member of any interdisciplinary team serving families and their infants or toddlers.