

## TOPIC: FLUENCY

**DEFINITION:** Fluent speech flows smoothly, while dysfluent speech, including stuttering (or stammering) and cluttering, does not. Stuttering is defined as a disruption in the forward flow of speech.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF STUTTERING:

#### SPEAKING BEHAVIORS:

- **Repetitions**--repeating sounds, syllables, or whole words; examples include "I-I-I-I want..." , "But-but-but I..."; these occur most often on the first word of a phrase or sentence; most individuals who stutter produce 3-5 repetitions per occurrence, but sometimes many more
- **Prolongations**--getting stuck on a sound, or elongating a sound within a word; examples include "ssssso you..." , "Buuuuuuut then..."; these may last less than a second, or as long as several seconds
- **Blocks**--these occur when the flow of speech stops; the speaker's mouth usually appears poised to produce a sound/word, but no sound is coming out; this may last less than a second, or as long as several seconds

#### SECONDARY BEHAVIORS or PHYSICAL CONCOMITANT BEHAVIORS:

- These are physical signs of tension/stress that often accompany moments of stuttering; the secondary characteristics often then call more attention to the disorder than the original speaking behavior of the stutterer.
- These include, for example, head jerks, blinking, facial grimaces, excessive movements of hands/feet/arms/legs, throat clearing, and constant looking around, to name a few.

### CHARACTERISTICS OF CLUTTERING (this disorder is much less common than stuttering):

- Rapid rate of speech, or talking in rapid spurts; "rhythm" of speech may sound irregular
- May have poor syntax and/or grammar, and phonological errors (like leaving sounds off)
- Spoken messages are difficult for the listener to understand, as the speaker seems to not be sure of what they want to say, or to be disorganized in their planning of spoken messages

### RECOMMENDATION FOR SERVICES:

- BETWEEN THE AGES OF 2-4 YEARS OLD:
  - Many very young children go through a period of "developmental stuttering", beginning between the ages of 2 and 4, when their language skills are expanding rapidly. If you notice your child stuttering during these ages, you may seek a speech/language consult or try to "wait it out"
- OLDER THAN 4 YEARS:
  - If your child is beyond this age range and has just begun stuttering, or continues to stutter longer than 6 months, seek out a screening by a licensed speech-language pathologist (SLP) who specializes in evaluating and treating fluency disorders to rule-out true beginning-stage stuttering at this age.

### WHAT TO DO AT HOME:

- Allow your child adequate time to communicate, without interrupting or attempting to complete their message for them.
- Provide good models by using a slow and relaxed pace when speaking with your child; do not tell your child to "slow down", "relax", or "start over". Talk about stuttering in an open and positive manner.