Speech-Language Impairment Leader Training

Created as part of "Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities" Gold Award Project by Alyssa Lee
Girl Scouts of North-Central Alabama

girl scouts greater los angeles

Consultant:
Meredith Hankins
PRC Satillo Alabama Representative

prc-saltillo

Training Guide Contents

This training guide is intended to support troop leaders in providing the best Girl Scout experience for girls of all abilities. If you have a scout in your troop or service unit with a speech language impairment, this training guide will:

- Define speech language impairments
- Explain difficulties your scout might encounter during meetings, outings, and overnight trips.
- Provide a list of strategies, techniques, or equipment that will assist you in providing the best Girl Scout experience for a scout with speech and language impairment.
- Provide a list of other resources that might be helpful.

Create a Welcoming Girl Scout Troop

Every scout communicates in her own way. By valuing all forms of communication and creating a patient, supportive environment, troop leaders can help every scout feel heard, included, and confident.

What is a Speech-Language Impairment?

A speech-language impairment is a communication disorder that affects a person's ability to express themselves and/or understand others. This can include challenges with speech (such as articulation, fluency, or voice) and/or language (understanding and using words, sentences, and social communication).

Some scouts may have difficulty pronouncing sounds clearly, speaking smoothly (such as stuttering), or using an appropriate volume or tone. Others may have difficulty understanding directions, expressing ideas, or participating in conversations.

Some scouts may also use alternative or augmentative communication (AAC), such as communication devices, picture systems, or gestures, to support their communication.





Impact of Speech-Language Impairment

A speech-language impairment can affect participation in troop meetings, activities, outings, and overnight experiences.

A scout with a speech-language impairment may:

- Need extra time to express her thoughts or respond to questions
- Experience frustration when others have difficulty understanding her
- Have difficulty following multi-step directions or group conversations
- Struggle with social communication skills, such as taking turns in conversation or staying on topic
- Feel hesitant to speak in front of a group

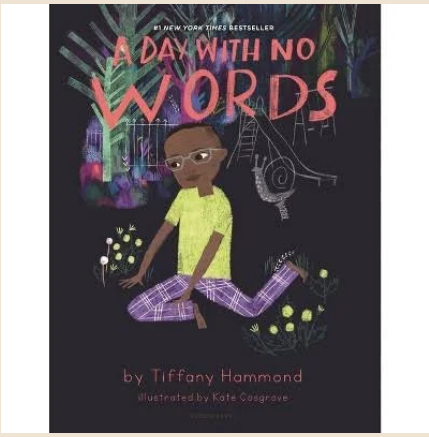
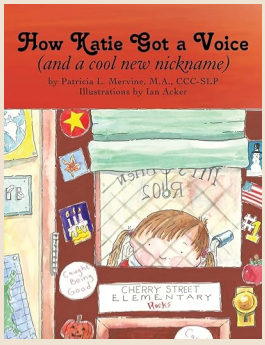
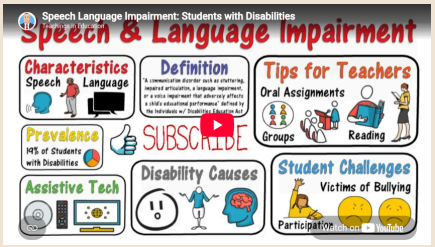
In group settings, fast-paced conversations, background noise, or interruptions can make communication more challenging. However, with supportive strategies, scouts can successfully communicate and fully participate in all activities.

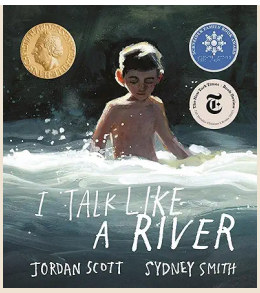
How to Help Mitigate Challenges Realated to Speech-Language Impairment

In order to provide a scout with a speech-language impairment equal access to being a Girl Scout, here are some helpful strategies:

1. **Communicate with the scout and her family** to understand her specific communication needs and supports that are most effective.
2. **Give extra time for responses.** Allow the scout time to finish her thoughts without interrupting or completing her sentences.
3. **Use clear, simple directions** and break down multi-step instructions when needed.
4. **Model appropriate communication.** Demonstrate clear speech, appropriate pacing, and conversational turn-taking.
5. **Encourage all forms of communication**, including AAC devices, gestures, visuals, or written responses.
6. **Reduce background noise when possible** to make communication easier during group discussions.
7. **Create a supportive and respectful environment** where all communication attempts are valued and encouraged.

Additional Resources for Leading Scouts with Speech-Language Impairment

Books	Video Links	Websites
A Day With No Words by Tiffany Hammond  (Children's book)	 What is AAC? Explaining Communication devices to kids. (Children's Resource)	 10 Things You Should Know About Kids with Speech Language Impairment
How Katie Got a Voice by: Patricia Mervine  (Children's Book about communication devices)	 Stuttering: For Kids, By Kids (Children's resource)	 How to Have a Conversation with Someone Using AAC: Embracing Their Voice
I Talk Like a River by Jordan Scott	 	

	Understanding Speech Impairments in Kids (Adult Resource)	Resources for Working with Individuals with Speech-Language Impairment

Conclusion

The Girl Scout experience should be accessible for girls of all abilities. If you need additional support to help with inclusion, please contact your local service unit or council.



Girl Scouts for ALL Abilities

Gold Award Project, 2026