

Childhood Apraxia of Speech (CAS)

* CAS is a motor planning disorder that affects the complicated movements needed for speech. This is not due to muscle weakness or a structural problem, but rather a developmental disorder affecting the way the brain sends signals to the mouth and throat to produce speech.

* It is sometimes called Developmental Verbal Dyspraxia, or shortened to Dyspraxia or Apraxia. It is not the same disorder as Limb Apraxia, though they can co-occur. Adults may also have acquired Aphasia following a stroke or head injury.

* Children with CAS will often be very hard to understand. They will have difficulty saying long, multi-syllable words, consonant blends, or less common sound patterns. They may shorten words or leave out sounds, or simplify sounds. Younger children may have an extremely limited phoneme repertoire, only able to produce a few consonant and vowel sounds. Apraxic children's intonation may sound monotonous or uneven. They often say the same word differently each time they repeat it. They may have difficulty directly repeating words or phrases. They may move their jaws, tongues or mouths in attempts to say a word or sound (known as "groping" behaviour).

* Treatment for CAS includes teaching a child to say more speech sounds, improving the ability to alternate between different syllables, and practicing multi-syllabic words. Treatment is most effective when it is intensive and repetitive, to instill new motor plans.

* You can support a child with CAS in school by helping them with general communication as well as phonological awareness skills, drilling new vocabulary items, modeling simple sentences to repeat, using multimodal instruction (visuals, movement activities) and mediating between peers to help with social communication. Allow these students time to formulate responses, don't just put them on the spot.

* Children can qualify for a Code 34 if they have severe verbal dyspraxia and only moderate receptive language delay.

More information can be found here and the attached handout from the Childhood Apraxia of Speech Association of North America (CASANA):

* CASANA website

<http://www.apraxia-kids.org/>

* American Speech-Language-Hearing Association

<http://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/childhoodapraxia.htm>