

Question: Can I take a child into therapy if he doesn't have a language disorder, but just has poor English?

Regarding the labeling of students with limited English proficiency as "speech impaired" when actually it has been determined that they are not speech impaired, TEA is very clear--this is not a legal practice. The commissioners rules of the State Board of Education state the following:

§89.1230. Eligible Students with Disabilities.

*(a) Districts shall implement assessment procedures which **differentiate between** language proficiency and handicapping conditions in accordance with Subchapter AA of this chapter (relating to Special Education Services)*

In other words, the assessment results must conclude that the language problems the student is experiencing are not due solely to their status as an English language learner in order for the student to be identified and served as "speech impaired." The paperwork of ARD proceedings usually addresses this issue when it requires the committee to assure parents/students that the determination of disability has not been made solely due to a student's limited English proficiency.

ASHA's position is that speech and language pathologists may provide ESL instruction to students if they possess the necessary knowledge and skills to do so (ASHA, 1998); however, these services should be clearly identified as English as a Second Language instruction rather than speech therapy.

Resources:

American Speech-Language Hearing Association (1998). Provision of Instruction in English as a Second Language by Speech-Language Pathologists in School Settings. **ASHA**, 40, (Supplement 18).