

**Early Language &
Literacy for All (ELLA)**



BE A PROJECT ELLA PARTNER

Cleveland Hearing & Speech Center (CHSC) is actively seeking community partners for Project ELLA (Early Language and Literacy for All) to help us reach all those who care for children birth to age 5.

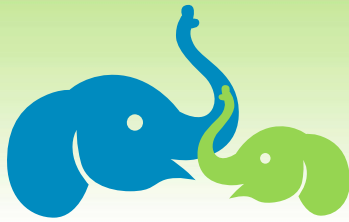


Partnerships can be built in a variety of ways, including but not limited to:

1. Inviting us into your daycare or preschool to perform speech and language screenings, and/or teacher and parent training in language building strategies
2. Inviting us to hold language and literacy activities for the children at your daycare or preschool
3. Inviting us to provide education about language building to staff that work with the community
4. Inviting us to give presentations to your community stakeholders
5. Donating space to us to hold playgroups or parent education events
6. Serving as a connection to other community organizations that would benefit from Project ELLA services

For a deeper dive into ELLA and the importance of the program for the greater Cleveland community, please review the information on the reverse side.

For questions or more information on becoming a CHSC Project ELLA partner, contact Daja' Newton at dnewton@chsc.org or call 216-325-7510. www.chsc.org/ELLA



Early Language & Literacy for All (ELLA)



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Project ELLA Abstract

Project ELLA (Early Language and Literacy for All) focuses on children's language skills from birth to age 5. Using a public health approach, we meet at-risk communities where they are through the use of community health workers and partnerships with community organizations. Caregivers' language development knowledge and language building skills are targeted through education and intervention. If a language disorder is suspected or identified, children and their families are connected to no-cost evaluation and treatment from a speech-language pathologist.

Statement of the Problem

From birth to age 5, children's brains are primed for language learning. Critical developmental windows are open, making the brain highly responsive to language-based input and experiences. Children who grow up in poverty are at risk of poor language outcomes that hinder their ability to excel in social and academic environments. Brain imaging studies have demonstrated that preschool-aged children born into poverty have weaker connectivity in the brain's language centers when compared to children born into families with higher incomes. Remarkably, scientists can explain most of the difference between these two groups by monitoring the spoken language in the child's environment. Entering preschool with a solid language foundation is essential children's language skills in preschool are a predictor of third-grade reading and writing proficiency. Third-grade reading proficiency is the top predictor of high school graduation, and children who drop out of high school are more likely to continue to be trapped in the cycle of poverty. Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are language experts, but most of their work is carried out downstream after the diagnosis of a language disorder. We must move further upstream, or we will never see changes at the community level.

Approach

To meet this need, Project ELLA takes a public health approach that includes community health workers (CHWs) as critical team members and partnerships with community-based organizations. SLPs train CHWs to become language experts in their own right. CHWs then support at-risk communities in a culturally sensitive and equity-informed way, focusing on helping caregivers better understand how language develops and how to support language growth. CHWs facilitate community playgroups with caregiver coaching and education components, participate in preschool push-in programs, present to community groups and organizations, provide in-service opportunities for other CHWs, and more. CHWs also screen children in the community for speech and language disorders and make referrals to an SLP when a delay or disorder is suspected. Children referred through Project ELLA never receive a bill for speech and language services, removing financial barriers to high quality treatment.

Theory of Change

Addressing disparities in language development from birth to age 5 is imperative due to the critical language learning windows open during that time. Project ELLA's public health approach will help establish trust in at-risk communities and improve children's language outcomes. Children with strong language skills at an early age will have the foundation to perform better in school, will go on to have more robust reading and writing skills, and will be prepared to enter college and the workforce. Project ELLA is helping build a better Cleveland.