



What Medical Professionals Should Know About Signing

Here are some of the ways that using sign language can help facilitate communication between medical professionals and their preverbal or nonverbal patients. The Sign2Me program is based on ASL (American Sign Language.) For more information on the benefits of signing visit www.sign2me.com.

Diagnosing

In American Sign Language, the sign for **PAIN** is localized. Signs allow children to tell a parent, nurse, or doctor exactly where they are experiencing pain.

Managing pain

Signs like: **PAIN**, **NO PAIN**, **MEDICINE**, **NOW**, and **LATER** can help a child provide valuable input for pain management plans.

Preparing patients for procedures

Even simple procedures like x-rays can cause fear that can lead to resistance. Signs can help young children understand the sequence of an impending procedure. Using signs like **SIT**, **STAND**, **SHIRT**, **CAMERA**, and **NO PAIN**, for example, will help reduce anxiety by putting the x-ray procedure into familiar terms.

Working with hospitalized children

Signs like **DRINK**, **EAT**, **MORE**, **FINISHED**, **HELP**, and **POTTY**, help medical staff more easily determine the basic needs of the preverbal and nonverbal children in their care. These signs are not only useful for babies and toddlers, but also for older children who may temporarily lose their capacity for speech following surgery or treatment.

Working with children who speak a different language

Because most signs are iconic, they can effectively be used to facilitate communication between medical professionals and families whose primary language is not English.

Working with children and adults with special needs

Speech and language therapists routinely use American Sign Language to communicate with people with Down Syndrome, autism, and expressive language difficulties. Here are some of the ways that using sign language can help facilitate communication between medical professionals and their preverbal or nonverbal patients.