

Discipline Explanations

COGNITION

Your child's development in cognition relates to mental processing, thinking and reasoning skills which progresses through play and social interaction in early childhood. Problem solving, sound localization, symbolic play, object discrimination and classification are elements of cognition, which can be observed in the way your child interacts with people, objects and their environment.

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY

The development of communication skills begins in infancy, before a first word is ever spoken. A Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP) addresses so much more than how to produce spoken words. SLPs work on developing **language** skills, such as receptive language (e.g. understanding word meaning, following directions), expressive language (e.g. gestures, sign language, spoken words), and pragmatic language (e.g. appropriate eye contact, greet others, recognize and respond to non-verbal aspects of language, participate in a conversation by taking turns with another speaker or speakers, introduce conversation, use proper body language, and other important social skills). SLPs also target **speech**, more commonly referred to as "talking." It is different from language and is the verbal means of communicating. Speech consists of articulation (e.g. how speech sounds, such as how consonants and vowels are made), voice (e.g. pitch, intonation, prosody), and fluency (e.g. repetition or prolongation of sounds, words or phrases during speech). In addition to language and speech, the field of speech-language pathology also addresses **swallowing**. When children have difficulty chewing and swallowing, a feeding program can be developed to indicate what foods are appropriate or inappropriate. There are also many techniques that help children eat safely including modifying the textures of foods and positioning the body.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY

Occupational therapy is concerned with a child's ability to participate in daily life activities or "occupations." Therapists encourage the development of infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families or other caregivers, in everyday routines. These routines include play, rest and sleep, activities of daily living, education and social participation. At The Bell Center, occupational therapists carry out the following tasks:

- Encourage the development of fine motor and visual motor skills to develop eye-hand coordination.
- Work to develop skills for the child to gain independence in self-care tasks, i.e. feeding and dressing.
- Provide opportunities to integrate sensory skills needed for balance, coordination and tactile exploration.
- Utilize adaptive equipment to support the child in purposeful and meaningful activities.

PHYSICAL THERAPY

Physical therapy helps enable your child to play and explore by working on the development of his or her large muscle groups. Physical therapists primarily focus on:

- Mobility – Assisting the child in using his or her highest level of function to get from here to there at home and in the community.
- Positioning/Body Alignment – Providing the child with the best body alignment in lying, sitting or standing to complete the task.
- Developmental/Gross Motor Skills – Helping the child with rolling, sitting, crawling, pulling to stand, cruising and walking.

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Your child's development in this area follows their social interactions, emotions and behaviors as they interact socially with you and their environment. It is within the context of your child's relationship with their family and peers that he or she experiences security of relationships, learns which emotional expressions are acceptable and learns to interact socially with others. Attachment and separation, development of self, expressions of emotions, learning rules, social interaction and play are aspects of how your child develops socially and emotionally.