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[www.saslha.co.za](http://www.saslha.co.za)

### Mission statement

SASLHA will promote the professions to the public and will promote the best interests of members in all spheres of professional activity; SASLHA will provide opportunities to enhance professional competence through providing and/or co-ordinating learning activities for its members; SASLHA will access knowledge and resources to share with its members to their benefit and that of their patients/clients; SASLHA will lobby and advocate for recognition of the professions by government, the private sector, international bodies; SASLHA will encourage members to aspire to the highest standards of ethical conduct.

### Vision statement

To be the acknowledged voice of Speech-Language Therapists and Audiologists in South Africa.



## The Role of Health Professionals in Down Syndrome

# Down Syndrome

A person who has Down Syndrome was born with it. They have an extra chromosome, which affects their brain and body's development. We do not know what causes Down Syndrome. We know it is not because of age, race, religion or poverty. About one in every 500 children born in South Africa has Down Syndrome. There is no cure for it.

Most people with Down Syndrome will learn more slowly than other people do, but they can still go to school and learn the skills they need to work. They can be helped to become more independent with support from their family, community, school and health professionals.

People with Down Syndrome tend to be very friendly, lovable and loving. They are affectionate and easy-going. They often need help from health professionals to overcome their health problems and reach their full potential.

**Health professionals who can help a person with Down Syndrome are:**

**Doctors and nurses:** *diagnose Down Syndrome and provide medical support.*

- Persons with Down Syndrome often have ear and chest infections.
- Some children with Down Syndrome are born with heart problems.

**Audiologists:** *help if your child has any hearing difficulties or ear infections.*

- Children with Down Syndrome tend to get wax blockages in their ears, which affects their hearing.
- They may also be born with poor hearing.

**Speech and Language Therapists:** *help you feed your child with Down Syndrome and teach them how to speak and understand what they hear.*

- Children with Down Syndrome may have difficulties with eating.
- Children with Down Syndrome are usually slower than other children to learn to speak and understand what other people say.
- Children with Down Syndrome often have learning difficulties.

**Occupational Therapists:** *to help children with Down Syndrome to learn physical skills, such as sitting, walking and dressing themselves.*

- Children with Down Syndrome usually have developmental delays.
- They often have low muscle tone and are quite floppy.

Persons with Down Syndrome can live a long life, if they get help for their medical problems. They have feelings and rights just like any other person. They should be treated with the same respect and dignity as anyone else.

The sooner you get help for you and your child with Down Syndrome the better.

For a Speech and Language Therapist or Audiologist close to you contact the South African Speech Language and Hearing Association

(SASLHA)  
0861113297  
[www.saslha.co.za](http://www.saslha.co.za)

For More information about Down Syndrome contact Down Syndrome South Africa

(DSSA)  
0861-369-672 (DOWNSA)  
[www.downsyndrome.org.za](http://www.downsyndrome.org.za)

[www.saslha.co.za](http://www.saslha.co.za)