

Speech, Language and Learning Services 2021 Summary

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pandemic continued to rage throughout 2021, but the Speech, Language, and Learning Services department was strong enough to weather the storm. Our team of 17 speech-language pathologists (SLPs) showed remarkable adaptability in how they served our clients this year. Whether it was making a quick pivot to teletherapy when schools suddenly shut their physical doors, providing unexpected remote services for a child whose family member tested positive for Covid, or tirelessly adjusting their communicator masks to make sure their articulators were visible, each SLP took care to provide uninterrupted and high-quality services for our clients. By mid-2021, most of our in-house clients returned to services in person, made possible by our masking policy and cleaning protocols. The majority of school services for Fall 2021 also took place in person, and we were able to transition back to in-person services at almost all of our Head Start sites by the second half of the year. Although we did not meet our budget, we did finish the year with a net gain. The Care Fund helped us with our bottom line, but our success falls back to the department's strong team. They are the ones who provide the kind of services donors and funders can't help but be compelled to support.

SERVICE AREAS

Office

The department served clients in our University Circle, Lyndhurst, Broadview Heights, and Westlake locations. As the year went on, more and more of our clients came back for in-person services. Highlights included the return of Parent-Toddler Group at University Circle starting in June! This was fantastic for our families – there are no better individuals to facilitate a child's language growth than the child's own parents! The return was so successful that we now have three groups, up from two. We were also able to run our FACETIME fluency camp at University Circle this summer after having to take last summer off. It's an understatement to say that the kids were thrilled to be back together! Many of them now continue to see each other regularly at our now-returned monthly fluency groups. We also invested more time into our adult programming and brought on an Adult Services Coordinator who has already increased our adult client caseload. Our Lyndhurst location has proved to be quite popular, and we ran an enjoyable group summer program there called Toys to Talk, inspired by our Toys to Talk toy drop-off program from last year. Although only one SLPs was assigned to Lyndhurst at the beginning of 2021, we now have three with usually-full schedules. Although minimally staffed, the SLPs at Broadview Heights had fuller daytime schedules than usual; however, the office did not meet its performance goals. Westlake also did not meet its performance goals and continued to be a location that struggled with lack of demand. Overall, everyone was glad to be back in the office, masks and all!

Schools

We continued our charter school contracts with Breakthrough Public Schools and Intergenerational Schools. The school SLPs demonstrated considerable flexibility with service delivery. They wrapped up Spring 2021 with about 90% of their caseload remote and then

returned to in-person services in Fall 2021. At the last minute, the schools decided services would not start until two weeks into the school year. This meant that the SLPs had to start the already behind, which led to a lot of scrambling to get kindergarten screenings done. A few months into the semester, services switched back to remote for a few weeks and then back to in-person. This happened multiple times. The middle schools went completely remote about halfway through the semester due to a staffing shortage. In sum, this means that the SLPs had to change their schedules often – sometimes weekly – to serve their students. The school SLPs have handled this year with grace, and our Schools Coordinator has been a massive help in the retention of our SLPs in this very stressful year.

Head Start/Early Childhood

At the beginning of the year, most of our early childhood locations were still not allowing us in their buildings to provide in-person services. Lake Geauga United Head Starts were the exception; they allowed us to provide services with a clear divider, masking, and a strict cleaning protocol. We did not have a contract with Catholic Charities Head Starts (CCHS) for the 2020-2021 school year, but we did sign one for the 2021-2022 school year as soon as we were permitted to return to in-person services. It's of note that CHSC was the first provider allowed back in person at CCHS. That might have been because we showed up in the summer for Preschool Language and Literacy Classroom (PLLC) with a stack of fun books! PLLC, our flagship summer program for building language and preliteracy skills for preschool children, returned to in-person at CCHS and The Music Settlement this year. Although The Centers Head Starts were not comfortable having us return for in-person services yet, we still provided them with recordings of our sessions at other sites. We were also able to return to our regular screening work at Head Starts, schools, and daycares starting in the fall. Screening is essential to catch children with speech and language challenges during a critical developmental period. It was hard not to do these screenings during the height of the pandemic because we knew kids might slip through the cracks. We are grateful that we are back in the position to help identify children who need support.

STAFFING

January 2021

At the beginning of 2021, the department employed 12 staff SLPs (7 full-time [7.0 FTE], 5 part-time [3.75 FTE]), 1 per diem SLP (.1 FTE), and 1 director(1.0 FTE). This was a total of **10.85** FTE dedicated to clinical service.

January 2021 Clinical FTE by Location

Location	FTE
University Circle	3.17
Lyndhurst	0.80
Broadview Heights	1.05
Westlake	0.95
Contracts	4.88
Total	10.85

December 2021

At the end of 2021, the department employed 16 staff SLPs (9 fulltime [9.0 FTE], 7 part-time [4.26 FTE]), 1 per diem SLP (.1 FTE]), and 1 director (1.0 FTE). This is a total of **13.26** FTE dedicated to clinical service. The FTE change was due to the department taking on three clinical fellows in August and one SLP reducing their FTE slightly after having a baby.

December 2021 Clinical FTE by Location

Location	FTE
University Circle	4.83
Lyndhurst	1.55
Broadview Heights	1.05
Westlake	0.95
Contracts	4.88
Total	13.26

BY THE NUMBERS (UNDUPLICATED)

Category	Number
Clients seen in-office	425
Peds	379
Adults	46
Students served through school contracts (direct service and screenings)	1,148
Preschool Language and Literacy Classroom	193
Clients served through Head Start and other Early Childhood Contracts	721
Demographics	
Black	51%
White	28%
Asian	0%
Latino	11%
Other	6%
Offices	4
Head Start Counties Served	3
Charter Schools Served	10
Private Schools Served	3
Number of Screening Sites (non-head start)	7
Community Presentations	8
Number of Grants	12
Total Number Served	2,541