

# Emerge



## A Child's Place

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Occupational Therapy  
Speech Therapy

### Chapel Hill Office

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Serving children from birth  
to 14 years old

Using therapy to improve  
conditions such as:

Delayed Speech  
Dyspraxia  
Speech Impairments  
Non-communicative Speech  
Oral/Verbal Apraxia  
Language Disorders  
Feeding Difficulties  
Autism/Asperger's/PDD  
Developmental Delay  
Cerebral Palsy  
Sensory Integration  
Disorders  
Sensory Modulation  
Disorders  
Handwriting Impairments  
Fine & Gross Motor Delays

A Private, Independent  
Provider

[www.EmergeAChildsPlace.com](http://www.EmergeAChildsPlace.com)

## New Research International Adoption & Behavior



Bonnie Hacker, OT  
Founder / Director

Children adopted from international institutions seem to experience a higher prevalence of difficulties with speech, language, social behavior, motor skills, and physical health.<sup>1-4</sup> This remains true even when comparing children adopted from international institutions to children adopted from international foster homes. The State of the Children Report from 2002 to 2005 shows that 73% of today's international adoptees spent some time in an institutional setting.<sup>5</sup> Foreign orphanages, baby homes, and other institutions may lack adequate resources to provide needed human interaction, freedom of movement, and health care for children.<sup>3,5,6</sup> Parents who have adopted internationally sometimes describe over-friendliness as one of the behavioral concerns. Internationally adopted (IA) children seem more prone to wander off with complete strangers, posing a safety concern. New research sheds light on this challenge and the roots of other challenges for IA children.



Joint attention, normally displayed after 9 months of age, is a critical building block in social and language development.

Authors have previously offered the reasonable theory that over-friendliness stems from some sort of parental attachment deficit.<sup>7</sup> However, the University of Minnesota's International Adoption Project recently conducted an experiment on IA children at age 3.<sup>8</sup> Parents feigned a knee injury in the presence of the children and staff members did the same. IA children and non-adopted children showed equal concern for their parents. IA children and non-adopted children showed some but less concern for the injured staff member. These results seem to suggest that IA children adequately attach to their new parents.

The International Adoption Project followed IA children starting at 18 months. They found that overly-friendly behavior at age 3 correlated with decreased joint attention behavior at 18 months. **Joint attention refers to the way very young children will point to things they want you to see as a shared experience with them (as opposed to pointing because they want you to give them something). All children should begin engaging in joint attention around age 9 months. Joint attention is a critical building block in social and language development.** In addition, overly-friendly behavior correlated with brain wave patterns also seen in children who develop attention problems. This research suggests that the overly-friendly concern more likely develops from challenges with attention and behavioral control. The absence or delay of joint attention, an early building block, may be at the root of other challenges often experienced by IA children.

Given the higher prevalence of difficulties with speech, language, motor skills, and behavior, some authors recommend that **all children adopted internationally receive an early screening for developmental milestones.** Indeed, early identification of delayed development has been found beneficial for both the child and the parent.<sup>9,10</sup> Refer children to Emerge - A Child's Place for expert assessment and for ongoing therapy that will help IA children more efficiently overcome early setbacks.



### The Fun Place for Therapy

At Emerge, children find spacious rooms, large windows, colorful surroundings, and lots of toys and playful equipment. In general, Emerge is a place children like at first sight and look forward to visiting again. Important therapy has never been so much fun.

**Please tell parents about Emerge - A Child's Place  
Believing in a Child's Potential to Flourish**

## References

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