

200 more devices at Shafallah soon



AILYN AGONIA - DOHA About 200 additional communication devices and 250 communication software will be added to the existing number of equipment at the Shafallah Center's Speech Therapy Department next month. The Speech Therapy Department, which is serving 95 percent of the students of the Center, is also ready to increase the number of specialists in order to extend its services to the existing students as well as those on the waiting list.



Talking to Qatar Tribune during the ongoing 4th Annual International Shafallah Forum here on Tuesday, Shafallah's Chief Speech Language Pathologist and unit supervisor Dalal Katari said that there were only 50 existing communication devices, which were being used by the students who have speech, language and communication disorders. The available technology and equipment at the Center include the voice output communication devices, communication hardware and software, educational material and communication boards.

The existing equipments were also being used to help even those students, who were on the waiting list, to address their immediate needs. About 500 children were on the waiting list.

"The Shafallah administration is keen on expanding the capacity of our department in order to serve all our students as well as to ensure that we maintain the quality of service we provide. We are expecting the arrival of additional 200 equipments as well as the 250 communication software next month. Besides addressing our concern on the number of machines available, we are also looking at increasing our staff. Right now we have 17 speech language pathologists and 11 speech therapy assistants. We could be adding other 30 staff to attend to all of our students and perform even better," Katari remarked.

The department's speech therapy pathologists, aside from enhancing the students' communication problems within the educational environment, also visit the parents of such children at their homes to help them learn how to maximise their communication abilities.

According to Katari, the centre also provides communication material when they visit such children at their homes, as they consider training the students in their homely environment should be a priority for them.

Shafallah's facilities for speech therapy are considered as among the best in the world. They make use of a combination of different approaches, which is tailored to the needs of their students.

Among their impressive line-ups of services and programme include the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) which is an alternative/augmentative communication system developed to teach functional communication to children; assistive technology, which searches and identifies the technology required for these students, and their family-centered programme to provide counselling, lectures and workshops for parents.