



UNC
SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

Engaging Parents and Family Members in Early Intervention

Partnering for Progress Conference

Kathryn Wilson, M.A., CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT

Director, *FIRST YEARS*

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A New Generation of Children

- Identified at or near birth
- Hearing aids in the first months of life
- Enrolled in Early Intervention by 6 months of age
- Implanted in the first year of life
- Bilateral Implantation
- Bilingual families
- Some with additional learning difficulties
- Most families choose listening and spoken language.

Early identification, intervention and family involvement...

- For children who are identified in the first few months of life and receive appropriate hearing technology (e.g., digital hearing aids and/or cochlear implants), numerous studies have shown **language outcomes that are comparable to their same-age hearing peers when appropriate, well-coordinated early intervention services are provided** (Houston, 2009).
- “Without family involvement, intervention is likely to be unsuccessful, and what few effect are achieved are likely to disappear once the intervention is discontinued.” (Bronfenbrenner, 1974).
- The best out-comes are attained when families become involved and when intervention is initiated early (Moeller, 2000).

A new generation of children calls for changes in professional practices.

.....a paradigm shift



Family-Centered Intervention

collaborative rather than dependent

- ...a systematic way of creating a partnership with families that (a) treats them with dignity and respect, (b) honors their values and choices, and (c) provides supports that strengthen and enhance their functioning as a family (Dunst, Trivette & Hamby 2007)

Engagement...

- To be truly family-centered we must “walk-the walk.”
- The ultimate goal is for parents/caregivers to become the primary teachers, decision makers and agents of change.
- How do we do this?

Engagement during the diagnostic and amplification fitting process

- Most parents are not prepared for the diagnosis of hearing loss.
- Parents usually report that it is challenging to process information following the diagnosis.
 - » Strategy: Have parents and other caregivers present at the time of diagnosis.
 - » Strategy: Parents/caregivers as test assistants.
 - » Strategy: Utilize tools such as the ELF to engage parents in the discovery process of how the child functions (Anderson, 2002).

Getting Started in Early Intervention...

- Parent-to-parent support
- What are the parents' goals and expectations for the child?
- What mode of communication do they want their child to utilize? Parents should have information regarding ALL communication approaches.
 - » www.ncbegin.org
- AG Bell Academy for Listening and Spoken Language Principles of Auditory-Verbal Therapy
- “What It Takes” (Walker 2008)

Principles (AG Bell Academy)

Promote early diagnosis of hearing loss in newborns, infants, toddlers, and young children, followed by immediate audiologic management and Auditory-Verbal therapy.

Recommend immediate assessment and use of appropriate, state-of-the-art hearing technology to obtain maximum benefits of auditory stimulation.

- “What It Takes”

Extra time for audiologic management. This may mean more trips to the audiologist than parents who choose a different approach.

Commitment to establishing full-time use of optimal amplification.

Principles (AG Bell Academy)

Guide and coach parents¹ to become the primary facilitators of their child's listening and spoken language development through active consistent participation in individualized Auditory-Verbal therapy.

- “What It Takes”

At least weekly early intervention therapy sessions.

Travel may be necessary.

On-time attendance.

» Entire family must support the communication choice.

At home, daily individual time with child in a quiet environment.

Getting Started...

- What questions and concerns regarding their child's audiogram, communication development, and services?
 - » Strategy: With parent, administer assessments in speech, language, audition, cognition, play/social skills, etc
 - » Review with parents:
 - What tests were given, why, what each score represents, where child's scores are in relation to chronological peers
 - With the parent(s) use assessment information to develop a plan including both short and long term goals.

Engagement in Early Intervention Services

- Parents/caregivers are with the child all those hours when the professionals are not.
 - » Strategy: Parent PARTICIPATION in sessions
- What happens during a Parent Participation session?
 - » Parents describe what they have been practicing at home/child's progress.
 - » New goals are introduced and strategies are modeled.
 - » Parents practice. The early interventionist coaches.
 - » At the end of sessions, ways to carry-over goals at home in the coming week are discussed.

Adults are not big babies... or are they?

- Some of the same rules of engagement that we apply to our intervention with children also apply to adult interactions.
- Strategies:
 - » Listening
 - The support provider creates a safe learning environment for family members where feelings are as valid a topic as are knowledge and skills (Hanft et al., 2004).
 - » Follow the adults lead
 - » Repetition
 - » Wait time
 - » Understand the adults learning style.
 - » Eye contact is critical (with all family members)

Engaging Parents & Family Members in the Transition Process

- Families need a game plan.
- We can support families by
 - » beginning the process EARLY
 - » ensuring parents know their rights
 - » helping parents understand assessment results
 - » visiting preschools
 - » providing placement checklists
 - (www.handsandvoices.org)
 - » continuing home visits

A final thought

It has been said that hearing a story is the single most neurologically engaging experience that a child can have.

Conclusions

- Early identification in combination with early & appropriate technology, and **appropriate intervention** by parents, family members & professionals during the period of maximum neural plasticity optimizes potential for the achievement of high levels of speech, language, reading, literacy & success in school.
- Family-centered intervention is collaborative and recognizes that parents are the key decision makers and primary teachers.
- Early intervention services for infants with confirmed hearing loss should be provided by professionals who have expertise in hearing loss, including educators of the deaf, speech-language pathologists, and audiologists (JCIH 2007).