

**Module: Family-Centered Practices
for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments**

Session 1: Building Reliable Alliances

Handout A

Missions and Roles of Professionals From Different Disciplines

EIVI Training Center. (2002). *Mission and roles of professionals from different disciplines*. Chapel Hill, NC: Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-CH.

The following was adapted primarily from Jesien and Tuchman (1991), with additional material from Dote-Kwan, Chen, and Hughes (2001) and Topor (2002).

AUDIOLOGIST

Primary mission: *To identify and evaluate deafness and hearing impairments in infants and children as early in life as possible and to provide and direct the audiology services necessary for the successful use of residual hearing for learning, communication, and social development*

Major roles:

- Provide, direct, and promote quality hearing screening services for all infants, toddlers, and children who are at risk for deafness and its consequences
- Provide the evaluation services necessary to define accurately the magnitude and nature of the hearing loss and to define the potential consequences for communication and speech, language, cognitive, and academic development
- Facilitate appropriate medical evaluations and treatment for all hearing impaired infants, toddlers, and children
- Select and fit amplification devices, assistive listening devices and systems (ALDS), and sensory aids which are appropriate and necessary to optimize the use of residual hearing and the development of communication skills
- Provide comprehensive counseling and in-service information for parents, teacher, therapists, and caregivers to
 - ensure their understanding of the child's hearing impairment and the need for speech, language, cognitive, academic, and social development
 - ensure their understanding of the function of amplification devices, ALDS, and sensory aids to facilitate proper function, use, and maintenance

- facilitate, as soon as possible after the identification of a hearing impairment, the development of a comprehensive aural rehabilitation program for every hearing impaired infant, toddler, or child

The audiologist should collaborate with others in the development and provision of such programs, including auditory training, and speech reading and production curriculum.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

Primary mission: *To promote young children's development and learning by creating educational and caregiving environments which nurture the development of the whole child and provide support to families in their childrearing roles*

Major roles:

- Design and implement educational and caregiving services that are:
 - developmentally appropriate
 - appropriate for the specific needs of each individual child, including those with special needs
- Identify young children with potential special needs and serve as referral to other appropriate resources
- Integrate services for young children with special needs into mainstream early childhood education programs and settings
- Provide flexible forms of support to families in their childrearing roles
- Collaborate with other formal and informal resources, including early interventionists, to strengthen and provide communities of support to promote the well-being of all young children and their families
- Advocate for all young children and their families

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATOR

Primary mission: *To provide appropriate programming and to collaborate with families and other service providers to create environments for young children with special needs that will facilitate the development of the whole child; integrate social, play, motor, communication, self-help, cognitive and behavioral skills; and enhance children's self-concept, creativity, competence, and independence*

Major roles:

In collaboration with families and other service providers, early childhood special educators:

- Participate in child find efforts that include maintaining an informed referral network in the community
- Assist families in identifying strengths, concerns, priorities, and resources
- Assess each child's developmental status

- Working with families, plan and provide early intervention services that address family priorities and facilitate optimal development of the child
- Serve as consultants to other service providers and parents
- Coordinate interdisciplinary services
- Serve as a member of a collaborative team
- In conjunction with families, implement consultants' recommendations
- Plan and implement family support services that reflect family priorities
- Modify and adapt materials and activities that enable children with specific disabilities to participate in play and daily activities
- Access and coordinate appropriate services from multiple agencies
- Evaluate program effectiveness
- Advocate for children and families
- Integrate information from other disciplines
- In collaboration with other team members, including families, plan, implement, and evaluate transitions for children and families
- Supervise and train paraprofessionals and volunteers

EYE CARE SPECIALISTS

Primary mission: *To provide a variety of services for the diagnosis, management, and treatment of a variety of eye conditions (see specific roles of each type of specialist below)*

Ophthalmologist (M.D.)

- Performs surgery
- Diagnoses and treats eye diseases
- Tests for visual acuity and visual field
- Prescribes glasses and in some cases, low-vision devices and medication

Optometrist (O.D.)

- Diagnoses vision problems and prescribes glasses and contact lenses. May work with ophthalmologists to provide pre- and post-operative care
- May conduct low-vision exams and provides vision-training activities if a specialist in low vision
- May prescribe medication for eye disorders (allowed in some states)
- May practice behavioral optometry

Low Vision Therapist

- Tests for visual acuity and visual field
- Introduces patient to near and/or distance viewing low-vision aids
- Recommends adaptations to patient's home and work environment

Optician

- Grinds and fits lenses prescribed by ophthalmologist or optometrist

Ocularist

- Designs and fits artificial eyes (prostheses) and scleral shells

Orthoptist

- Evaluates and treats disorders of vision, eye movements, and eye alignment in children and adults
- Conducts diagnostic tests and measurements on patients with visual disorders, including lazy eye, strabismus (misaligned eyes), and double vision
- Helps the ophthalmologist design a treatment plan, which may involve treatment by the orthoptist, surgical treatment by the ophthalmologist, or some combination of the two

NURSE

Primary mission: *To diagnose and treat actual and potential health problems. For children with special needs, this means working with families to promote optimal health status for family members as they respond to challenges related to having a child with a disability.*

Major roles:

- Assess health and developmental status of the child and family
- Collaborate with families to meet basic needs of the child
- Enhance and empower parents to meet their needs as individuals and as parents
- Enhance the child's and family's abilities to respond to the child's special needs
- Recommend, plan, and/or implement interventions to improve the child's health and developmental status
- Assist families to achieve health and parenting objectives, including IFSP goals
- Serve as service coordinators
- Assist families in using community resources/services and other professionals

NUTRITIONIST OR DIETITIAN

Primary mission: *To assure that infants and preschoolers with disabilities achieve optimal development by facilitating physical and mental growth and development; enjoyment of food and eating within the social environment; independence in feeding and eating; and dietary treatment to compensate for metabolic disorders, nutrition-related health problems, or adverse drug-nutrient interactions.*

Major roles:

- Assess the nutritional status and quality and quantity of food intake
- Work with caregivers to develop nutritional care plans
- Provide caregivers with diet counseling and nutrition education
- With families, assess family needs and priorities
- Coordinate/collaborate with other members of the interdisciplinary team
- Refer families to relevant community services (e.g., food stamps, WIC program)

- Conduct regular follow-up and evaluations of services

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST (OT)

Primary mission: *To promote a child's independence, sense of mastery, and self-worth in their physical, emotional, and psychosocial development. Purposeful activity is used to expand the child's functional ability in skills such as: self-help, play, and daily living skills.*

Major roles:

- Collaborate with families and caregivers to identify needs/wants of the family in relation to the child's growth and development
- Assess child's level of development and functional performance in self-help, adaptive behavior, play, sensory, motor, perceptual, and postural development
- After identifying family priorities, develop and implement occupational therapy interventions to enhance performance in self-help skills, adaptive behavior, play, sensory, motor, perceptual, and postural development
- Serve as service coordinator

ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY SPECIALIST (OMS)

Primary mission: *To promote self-guided, purposeful movement and environmental awareness that will facilitate the optimal development of infants and toddlers with visual impairments*

Major roles:

Work with the family and other service providers of infants and toddlers with visual impairments to assess and provide appropriate programming that may include:

- Enhancing and developing optimal use of sensory information
- Facilitating acquisition of body concepts; environmental concepts; spatial awareness; positional, object, cause and effect, and spatial concepts
- Facilitating optimal motor development and self-guided movement
- Promoting safe, independent, and effective exploration of familiar and unfamiliar natural environments, including outdoor and community settings
- Facilitating the use of landmarks, cues, and landmark sequences while traveling routes within daily routines
- Evaluating and adapting environments for optimal safety, motivation, and ease of travel
- Fostering efficiency, problem-solving, and independent choice making in travel
- Introducing various types of tools (e.g., stick to play drum) and mobility-enhancing devices (e.g., commercial push toys) for exploring the environment, detecting obstacles and changes in depth and texture, and locating clear pathways for travel
- Promoting efficient search skills: locating items or places using broad exploration, trailing, and/or hand search
- Introducing laterality, directionality, and mapping skills

- Promoting the development of social and daily living skills that facilitate orientation and mobility (e.g., putting on coat to go outside)
- Using auditory cues to motivate children to move and to aid orientation and mobility
- Facilitating use of distance vision for age-appropriate orientation and mobility
- Acquiring age-appropriate human-sighted guide techniques: using an adult to aid in travel
- Acquiring developmentally appropriate protective techniques: use of hands and/or protective gear (e.g., helmet for head; lenses for eyes) for added protection in unfamiliar or unpredictable areas
- Providing in-service training for other team members such as childcare staff, early intervention specialists, TVI, family members, therapists
- Collaborating with other team members, such as physical and occupational therapists, early interventionists, speech-language pathologists, and family members
- Coordinating/collaborating with other members of the early intervention team
- Providing knowledge and skills about assistive technology related to orientation and mobility

PHYSICAL THERAPIST (PT)

Primary mission: *To maximize sensorimotor development, neurobehavioral organization, and cardiopulmonary status of infants and preschoolers with or at risk for disabilities*

Major roles:

- Assess the child's developmental status (neuromuscular-skeletal status, functional motor skills, cardiopulmonary status, and social status)
- Design and implement therapeutic interventions
- Evaluate intervention effectiveness
- Screen for neuromuscular-skeletal or cardiopulmonary dysfunction
- Develop and monitor family recommendations
- Participate in interdisciplinary planning
- Consult with other professionals and family members
- Recommend and/or fabricate adaptive equipment and mobility devices
- Recommend and/or implement environmental modifications
- Serve as service coordinator (case manager)

PHYSICIAN AND PHYSICIAN'S ASSISTANT

Primary mission: *To diagnose and treat actual and potential health problems. For infants and preschoolers with disabilities, this means (1) promoting optimal health and developmental status and (2) helping the family cope with changes in their lives resulting from the disabilities of the child.*

Major roles:

- Be aware of and stress physiological and developmental characteristics of the child and the family

- Work with parents to meet basic needs of the child (e.g., health, feeding)
- Enhance the child's and family's abilities to cope with the child's disabilities
- Recommend, plan, and/or implement interventions to facilitate optimal development
- Implement medical plans to help parents implement treatment plans
- Serve as service coordinators
- Refer to other programs or professionals
- Serve as a member of a team

PSYCHOLOGIST

Primary mission: *To derive a comprehensive picture of child and family functioning and to develop, implement, and/or evaluate psychological intervention*

Major roles:

- Assess psychological, social, and behavioral states of children and families
- Identify psychosocial needs and resources
- Plan and provide psychosocial/developmental interventions
- Coordinate interdisciplinary efforts
- Consult with families or other professionals
- Serve as case coordinator
- Design and implement evaluation of service effectiveness
- Advocate for children and families
- Provide referral to other agencies and programs
- Provide systematic parent education
- Provide in-service training to professionals around issues of a psychosocial or developmental nature and attend in-service training provided by the other professionals to enhance understanding of other disciplines/service delivery models

SOCIAL WORKER

Primary mission: *To strengthen and empower the family in its social context to provide the infant or preschooler with an optimal environment for development*

Major roles:

- Assess family functioning and basic nurturant needs (e.g., food, shelter, protection, medical care, employment) including assessing and building strengths
- Mobilize and link families to available supports (e.g., extended family, community groups, friends, churches, public agencies and programs)
- Assess and provide services related to problems in family functioning (e.g., marital relations, family violence, parent-child interactions, substance abuse, child support)
- Advocate for family rights and access to community services and the empowerment of families
- Serve as case coordinator
- Consult with other professionals about family issues

- Plan and implement child and family services such as parent support groups, family therapy, marital counseling, or individual counseling
- Evaluate the effectiveness of family services
- Change societal attitudes, belief systems, expectations, stereotypes

SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST

Primary mission: *To promote children's communication in the context of social interactions with peers and family members in homes, in schools, and in communities*

Major roles:

- Screen children for communication problems in collaboration with their families
- Evaluate and assess children's communication in the context of social interaction and overall development
- In collaboration with families and other professionals, recommend, plan, and/or implement individual or group interventions
- Reassess children periodically using a family-centered approach
- Coordinate assessments with families and other professionals
- Consult with and/or provide information to family members or other professionals
- Evaluate intervention effectiveness
- Refer the child and family to other programs or professionals
- Provide feeding and oral motor assessments and programming in collaboration with families and other professionals
- Serve as service coordinator
- Conduct research related to issues of early intervention and communication

TEACHER OF CHILDREN WITH VISUAL IMPAIRMENTS (TVI)

Primary mission: *To provide support to families and to collaborate with other professionals to promote optimal development of infants and toddlers with visual impairments*

Major roles:

- Collaborating/consulting with the family and with other professionals who provide support and services (educating others about the influence of visual impairment on the infant care provider relationship and early development; interpreting ophthalmological and other related medical information)
- Increasing visual functioning (increasing functional vision through environmental adaptations, visual skills training, and visual-motor skills training based upon functional low-vision assessment results)
- Developing or improving concept development
- Developing or improving compensatory skills
- Supporting the family's concerns, priorities, and resources
- Developing or improving communication skills
- Developing or improving self-help skills

- Establishing positive social relationships
- Developing or improving perceptual and motor skills
- Facilitating emergent literacy and developing beginning literacy skills including Braille (i.e. promotion of Braille literacy skills through the provision of Braille books, tactile development activities, and adult reading models)
- Coordinating resources related to the child's visual impairment

References

- Dote-Kwan, J., Chen, D., & Hughes, M. (2001). A national survey of service providers who work with young children with visual impairments. *Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness*, 95(6), 331.
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