

Module: Developmentally Appropriate Orientation and Mobility

Session 1: Foundations of Developmentally Appropriate Orientation and Mobility

Handout B: Missions and Roles of Professionals From Different Disciplines

EIVI Training Center. (2003). *Mission and roles of professionals from different disciplines*. In D.D. Hatton, R.A. McWilliam, & P.J. Winton, *Family centered practices for infants and toddlers with visual impairments* (participant packet, pp. 29-38). Chapel Hill, NC: Early Intervention Training Center for Infants and Toddlers With Visual Impairments, FPG Child Development Institute, UNC-CH.

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 hearing for learning, communication, and social development.*

Major roles:

- Provide, assist, direct, and promote quality hearing screening services for all infants, toddlers, and children who are at risk for deafness and its consequences.
- Provide the audiological evaluation services necessary to accurately define the magnitude and nature of the hearing loss and to define the potential implications for communication and speech, language, cognitive, and academic development.
- Facilitate appropriate medical evaluations and treatment for all infants, toddlers, and children with hearing impairments.
- Select and fit amplification devices, assistive listening devices and systems (ALDSs), and sensory aids that are appropriate and necessary to optimize the use of hearing and the development of communication skills.
- Provide comprehensive counseling and in-service information for parents, teachers, therapists, and caregivers to:
 - ensure their understanding of the child's hearing impairment and the implications for speech, language, cognitive, academic, and social development.
 - ensure their understanding of the function of amplification devices, ALDSs, and sensory aids to facilitate proper function, use, and maintenance.
 - facilitate the development of a comprehensive aural rehabilitation program for all infants, toddlers, and children with a hearing impairment.

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

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR

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

Major roles:

- Design and implement educational 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 refer them to other appropriate resources.
- Integrate services for young children with special needs into general early childhood education programs and settings.
- Provide flexible forms of support to families in their childrearing roles.
- Collaborate with other formal and informal resources to strengthen communities and provide them with the 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 intervention 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:

- 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.
- Work 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.
- Implement consultants' recommendations in conjunction with families.

- Plan and implement family support services that reflect family priorities.
- Adapt materials and modify 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.
- Plan, implement, and evaluate transitions for children and families in collaboration with other team members.
- 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).*

Major roles:

Ophthalmologist (M.D.)

- Perform surgery.
- Diagnose and treat eye diseases.
- Test for visual acuity and visual field.
- Prescribe glasses, low-vision devices, and medication.

Optometrist (O.D.)

- Diagnose vision problems and prescribe glasses and contact lens. May work with ophthalmologists to provide pre- and post-operative care.
- Conduct low-vision exams and provide vision-training activities if a specialist in low vision.
- Prescribe medication for eye disorders (allowed in some states).
- Practice behavioral optometry.

Low Vision Specialist

- Test for visual acuity and visual field.
- Introduce patient to near and/or distance viewing low-vision aids.
- Recommend adaptations to patient's home and work environment.

Optician

- Grind and fit lenses prescribed by ophthalmologist or optometrist.

Ocularist

- Design and fit artificial eyes (prostheses) and scleral shells.

Orthoptist

- Evaluate and treat disorders of vision, eye movements, and eye alignment in children and adults.
- Conduct diagnostic tests and measurements on patients with visual disorders, including amblyopia, strabismus, and double vision.
- Help 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 health 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/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.
- Collaborate with caregivers to develop nutritional care plans.
- Provide caregivers with diet counseling and nutrition education.
- Work with families to assess family needs and priorities.
- Coordinate and collaborate with other members of the interdisciplinary team.
- Refer families to relevant community services (e.g., food stamps, WIC program).
- Conduct regular follow-ups and evaluations of services.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST

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

Major roles:

- Collaborate with families and caregivers to identify needs and 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 (case manager).

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:

- Interpret ophthalmological and other related medical information.
- Enhance and develop optimal use of sensory information.
- Facilitate acquisition of: body concepts; environmental concepts; spatial awareness; positional, object, cause and effect, and spatial concepts.
- Facilitate optimal motor development and self-guided movement.
- Promote safe, independent, and effective exploration of familiar and unfamiliar natural environments, including outdoor and community settings.
- Facilitate the use of landmarks and cues and landmark sequences while traveling routes within daily routines.
- Evaluate and adapt environments for optimal safety, motivation, and ease of travel.
- Foster efficiency, problem solving, and independent choice making in travel.
- Introduce various types of tools (e.g., stick to play drum) and mobility-enhancing devices (e.g., commercial push toys or long canes) for exploring the environment; detecting obstacles and changes in depth and texture; and locating clear pathways for travel.
- Introduce prescribed optical devices.
- Promote efficient search skills: locate items or places using broad exploration, trailing, and/or hand search.
- Promote laterality, directionality, and mapping skills.

- Promote the development of social and daily living skills that facilitate orientation and mobility (e.g., putting on a coat to go outside).
- Use auditory cues to motivate children to move and to aid orientation and mobility.
- Facilitate use of distance vision for developmentally appropriate orientation and mobility.
- Teach developmentally appropriate human guide techniques (i.e., using an adult to aid in travel).
- Acquire developmentally appropriate protective techniques, i.e., use of hands and/or protective gear (e.g., helmet for head; lenses for eyes) for added protection in unfamiliar or unpredictable areas.
- Provide in-service training for other team members such as childcare staff, early intervention specialists, teachers, family members, and therapists.
- Collaborate and coordinate with all team members, such as physical and occupational therapists, early interventionists, speech/language pathologists, and family members.
- Provide knowledge and skills about assistive technology related to orientation and mobility.
- Interpret medical information.

PHYSICAL THERAPIST

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

Major roles:

- Assess the child's developmental status (e.g., 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 adaptations.
- Serve as service coordinator (case manager).

PHYSICIANS AND PHYSICIANS' ASSISTANTS

Primary mission: *To diagnose and treat actual and potential health problems. For infants and preschoolers with disabilities, this means (a) promoting optimal*

health and developmental status and (b) helping the family to 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 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.
- Design and implement evaluation of service effectiveness.
- Advocate for the child and family.
- 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.
- Serve as case coordinator.

SOCIAL WORKER

Primary mission: To strengthen and empower families in their social contexts to provide infants and preschoolers with optimal environments for development.

Major roles:

- Assess family functioning and basic 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, access to community services, and the empowerment of families.
- 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, and stereotypes.
- Serve as case coordinator.

SPEECH/LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST (SLP)

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

Major roles:

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

TEACHER OF STUDENTS 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:

- Collaborate and consult with the family and with other professionals who provide support and services (i.e., educate others about the influence of visual impairment on the infant-care provider relationship and early development; interpret ophthalmological and other related medical information).

- Increase visual functioning (e.g., increase functional vision through environmental adaptations, encouraging children to use vision as efficiently as possible, visual skills training, and visual-motor skills training based upon functional low-vision assessment results).
- Introduce prescribed optical devices.
- Develop or improve concept development.
- Develop or improve compensatory, communication, and self-help skills.
- Support the family's concerns, priorities, and resources.
- Facilitate involvement in family and community activities.
- Establish positive social relationships.
- Develop or improve perceptual and motor skills.
- Facilitate emergent literacy and develop beginning literacy skills including braille (i.e., promote braille literacy skills through the provision of braille books, tactile development activities, and adult reading models).
- Foster independence and self-initiation.
- Promote problem solving.
- Coordinate resources related to the child's visual impairment.

References

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