Connection Impacts Experience During Early Intervention and ELCO Process

A Partnership with MECDHH

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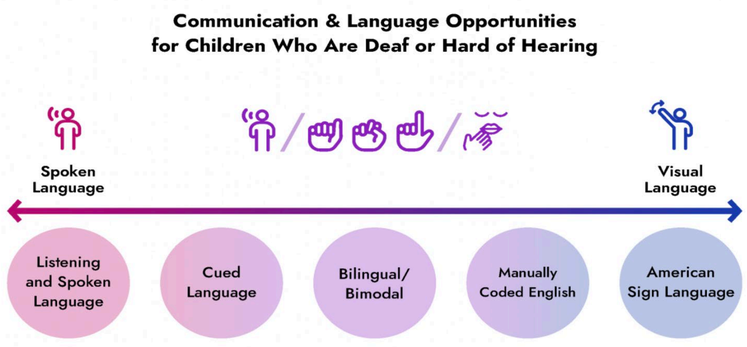
Abstract

The partnership with the Maine Educational Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing led to a comprehensive understanding of program management and immersion in the Deaf community, providing insight into their unique cultural norms. Professional activities, such as attending board and faculty meetings and interacting with families, occurred and constructive feedback was provided to Program Director Karen Hopkins on the ongoing research study. The proposed strategies aimed to extend outreach to diverse communities and included diversifying communication channels, leveraging social media, partnering with community organizations, providing multilingual educational resources, and hosting community events to increase participation and engagement among underrepresented groups.

MECDHH is a state-run organization that provides services and resources for individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or with hearing loss in the state of Maine. MECDHH offers a variety of programs and services, including early intervention, preschool, K-12 education, vocational education, and outreach services to individuals with hearing loss. Its mission is to provide high-quality education, improve literacy outcomes, and promote the well-being of individuals with hearing loss.

The poster showcases early intervention experiences of families and children through the ELCO process. A comprehensive research study was conducted by Karen involving rigorous interviews of families and a series of questions eliciting their perceptions concerning the support and empowerment they received while making vital decisions for their children and families .The process of electing a communication approach for language development requires extensive family involvement and a language-enriched home environment, recognizing the individual variability of each family.



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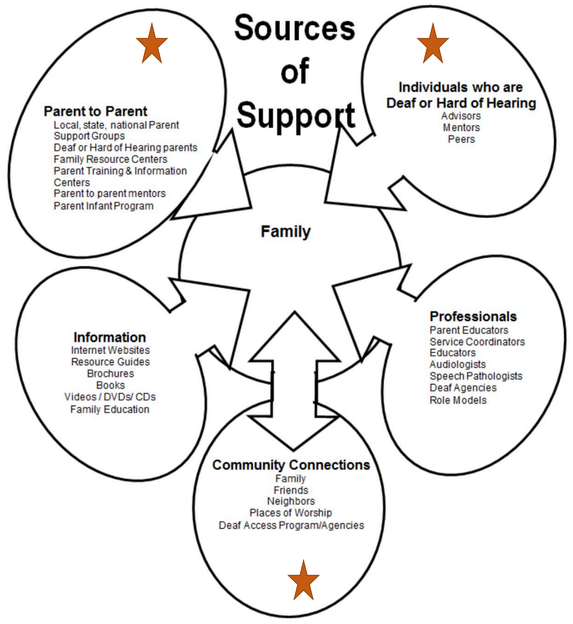
What is the ELCO Process?

The Exploring Language Communication Opportunities, ELCO process was created to help families provide their children with a strong foundation in language. Language is essential for children to learn and develop critical life skills, including communication, knowledge, literacy, socialization, and self-esteem. The process involves a four-stage approach, which includes an overview of language and communication opportunities, exploration of specific approaches based on parent interest, access to resources such as literature and research, and finally, the development of an evidence-informed communication plan that includes the appropriate supports and services for the chosen approach. These steps ensure that families receive complete, consistent, and digestible information on language development for their children.



Methods

To objectively determine the efficacy of such interventions in improving outcomes, Karen Hopkins, Director at MECDHH, conducted a research study using structured interviews to gauge the level of support and empowerment felt by families in making decisions for their children. The study aimed to provide insight into the extent to which early intervention within the ELCO process positively impacts the quality of the early experience of families and children.

Qualitative Data Coding

Qualitative data coding identifies ideas, themes, and patterns within raw data gathered from participant interviews. The process involves breaking down answers into smaller units and assigning a code to each segment, allowing for easier identification of patterns and trends. The goal of coding in this study was to identify key themes, patterns, and words that provided information and connections between each participant's experience of the early intervention and ELCO process.

TOP 15

Used Words

Results

1) In general, all participants expressed feeling supported and empowered to make the best decision for their children and families, and they appreciated having options to make the best choice.
2) Participants' education and economic status were major factors that affected their overall experience during the process and directly affected the decisions they made.
3) Families from varying cultural and linguistic backgrounds reported intense feelings of being overwhelmed during the initial stages due to the substantial amount of information that needed to be processed to make informed decisions.
4) Families involved in the early intervention process shared the same desire for increased peer to peer and parent to parent connections before making important decisions.
5) Research has shown that early diagnosis and early support from CDS services can have a significant impact on the outcomes and experiences of children and their families. When children receive early intervention and support, they are more likely to develop the skills necessary for success in school and in life.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Karen's study emphasizes the positive experience of families and children in the ELCO process, highlighting the importance of support and empowerment in decision-making regarding communication approaches for language development. Extensive family involvement and a language-enriched home environment are crucial to implementing effective communication and language strategies. However, data coding suggests a need for more peer support and parent connections. Networks of support for families in similar situations may enhance the overall experience of the process and improve outcomes for children.

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