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Introduction

This pilot study details the implementation of a family-focused, home-based, child development program in an effort to expand access for families of Arkansas Children's who have chosen a listening and spoken language option. Play and Learning Strategies (PALS; Landry, 2008) is a research-based curriculum developed at Children's Learning Institute in Houston, Texas and supports social-emotional, cognitive, and language development in children from birth to five in at-risk home environments. A speech-language pathologist, trained and certified in the PALS curriculum and preparing for LSL Cert, AVT provided the intervention with an emphasis on systematically overlaying listening and spoken language strategies onto the existing PALS curriculum. Families learned specific behaviors that helped them tune into their child's needs, respond in a sensitive and contingent manner, and provide appropriate cognitive and language stimulation. Videotapes of sessions were obtained as part of the curriculum delivery and this study. Preliminary analysis of videotaped sessions and initial recommendation regarding the utility of implementing PALS with infants and toddlers who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH) are reported here.

PALS Infant Topics:

- Caregiver interview
- Signals
- Responding
- Review with alternate caregiver
- Maintaining
- Introducing
- Labeling
- Reading
- Daily routines
- Review II with alternate caregiver
- Putting it all together

Layout of a PALS session

Session videos:

- ❖ Coach introduces session topics as directed by scripted dialogue
- ❖ Video clips that feature parents using session topic (e.g. signals, responding, maintaining) are reviewed
- ❖ Coach pauses video to allow parent to observe and recognize highlighted session behaviors
- ❖ Parent is asked questions related to content to demonstrate comprehension of key concepts

Play activity:

- ❖ Parent and child play for 5-7 minutes while being recorded
- ❖ Focus of play is to target the topic discussed during the session

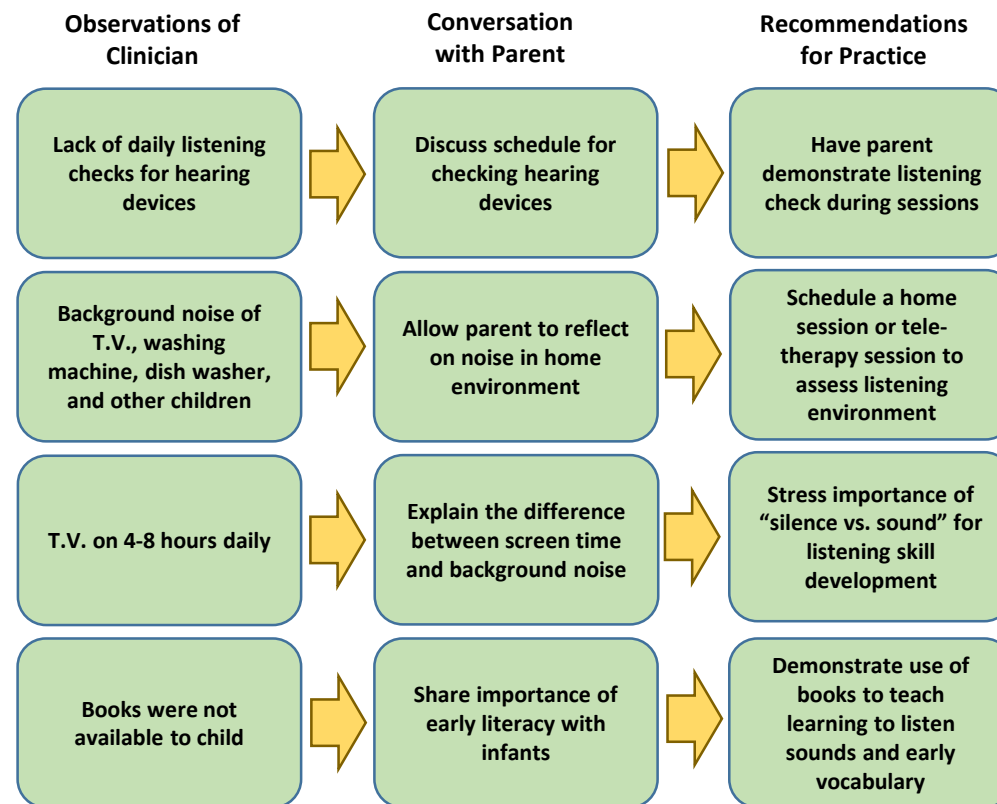
Review recorded play:

- ❖ Parent and coach review play session together
- ❖ Coach pauses videos at strategic moments to acknowledge positive behavior or to point out missed opportunities to demonstrate behavior

Listening and Spoken Language Overlay

Topics discussed in addition to the the PALS Program:

- Reviewed hearing tests to ensure parent's and alternate caregiver's understanding of hearing test results
- Demonstrated a listening check and communicated the importance of ensuring equipment function daily
- Provided examples of learning to listen sounds and phrases throughout the child's daily routine
- Offered strategies to encourage spoken language input through audition first
- Coached parent to model auditory awareness strategies at home, (e.g. "I can hear it!")
- Expressed the importance of vocabulary development in daily routines
- Utilized home environment to identify background noise and encourage its management
- Outlined typical development of hearing, language, speech, and cognition to contextualize development across domains



Parent Feedback:

"I think after three kids, just like driving, you kind of forgetfully fall into habitual parenting and may forget small stuff because you've done it so many times before. PALS is like being stopped by a cop, in a good way; it makes you more aware of the small details you are forgetting, making you better at the things you've let get a little too slack."

"I think PALS really brought to light better parenting ideas and made me more aware of small things that could help me out, to be better at parenting."

"PALS was a great program and we really enjoyed our time. I'm still learning how to parent a deaf child and PALS helped."



Conclusion:

Implementing the PALS program gives the interventionist the opportunity to look across a broad range of development through play and routine activities in the home. As a framework for typical development PALS has high utility due to its structured presentation and robust research support. Further investigation of a listening and spoken language overlay with this proven curriculum holds promising potential.

References

1. Landry, S. H., Smith, K. E., Swank, P. R., & Guttentag, C. (2008). A Responsive Parenting Intervention: The Optimal Timing Across Early Childhood For Impacting Maternal Behaviors And Child Outcomes. *Developmental Psychology*, 44(5), 1335-1353. <http://doi.org/10.1037/a0013030>