



Clinical and Educational Support in Early Intervention: The Impact of the Educational Specialist in Pediatric Hearing Healthcare

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INTRODUCTION

- Educational support is essential for optimizing long-term academic, language, and psychosocial outcomes in children with hearing loss.
- Children spend more than 1,000 hours annually in early childhood and school environments, making educational planning a critical component of care.
- Approximately 64% of students with hearing loss spend at least 80% of their time in mainstream educational settings, emphasizing the need for access, inclusion, and appropriate accommodations.
- Families must navigate complex systems including Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs), Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), and Section 504 plans alongside audiologic and communication interventions.
- Educational specialists play an important role in supporting families within clinical settings by facilitating system navigation and resource access.
- This study aimed to characterize parental educational support needs for children with hearing loss within the Children's Hearing Program (CHP) at the University of Miami.

EDUCATIONAL SPECIALIST

At CHP, the Educational Specialist plays a key role in supporting families as they learn about and navigate educational and early intervention services after a child is diagnosed with hearing loss. This role may include:

- Reviewing and guiding families in addressing IFSP/IEPs including attending meetings.
- Consultations on educational options available to families.
- School trainings for early childhood centers, private schools, and public schools (when appropriate).
- Community and organizational outreach.
- Coaching and support in college planning.
- Support and coaching for self-advocacy.

METHODS

This study used a retrospective chart review design to examine referral patterns to the educational specialist within CHP. Following Institutional Review Board approval, 128 clinical records were reviewed for children with hearing loss who were referred to the educational specialist beginning in June 2025 to February 2026. Relevant demographic and clinical data were extracted from existing medical records and summarized using descriptive and analytic methods.

Characteristics: age, gender, school interventions, hearing intervention

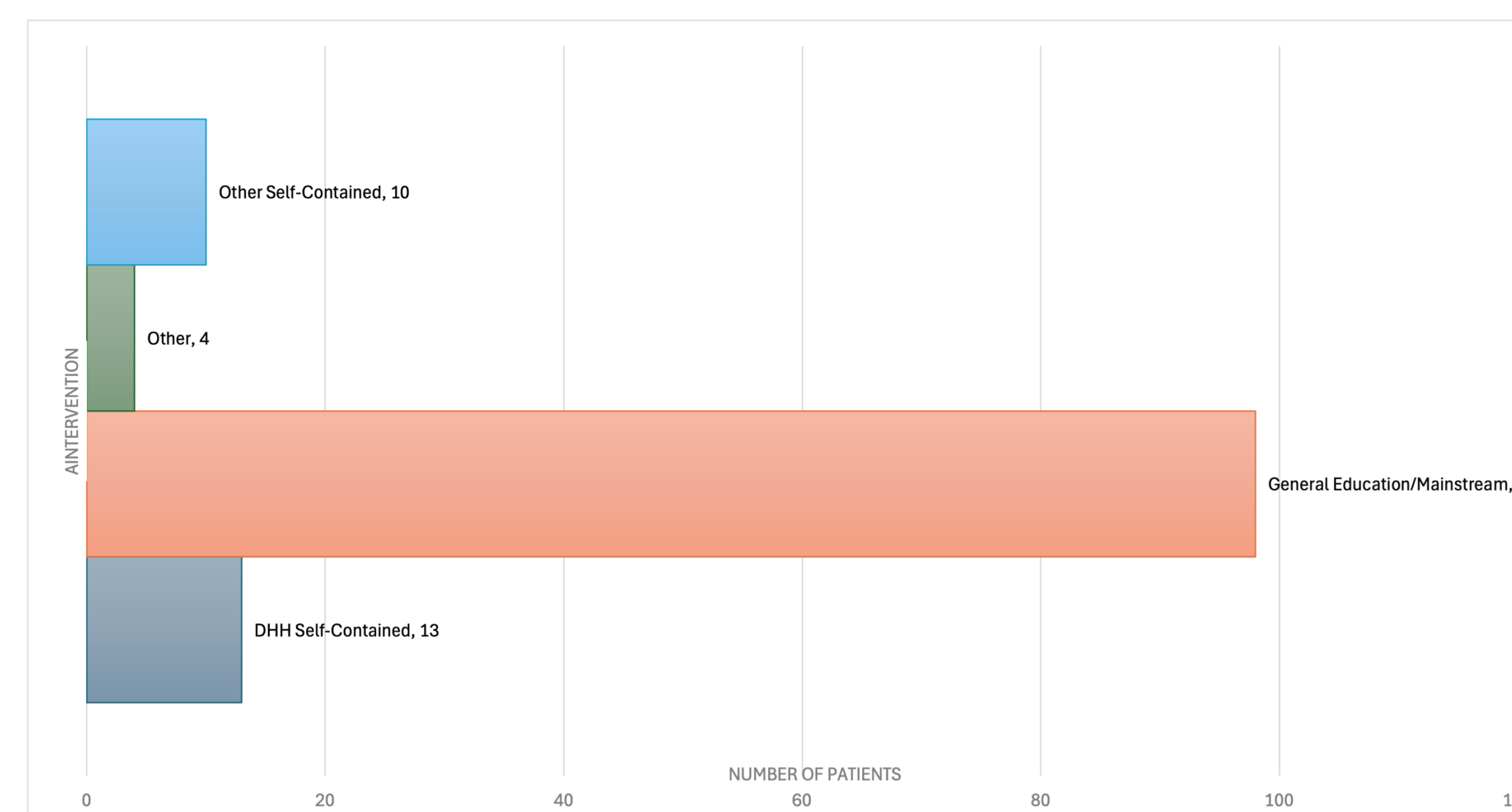
Categories: early steps/early intervention, IEP/504 consultation, IEP development, IEP support/issues, private school trainings, college planning, scholarship support, school forms, school options, VR support, other

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

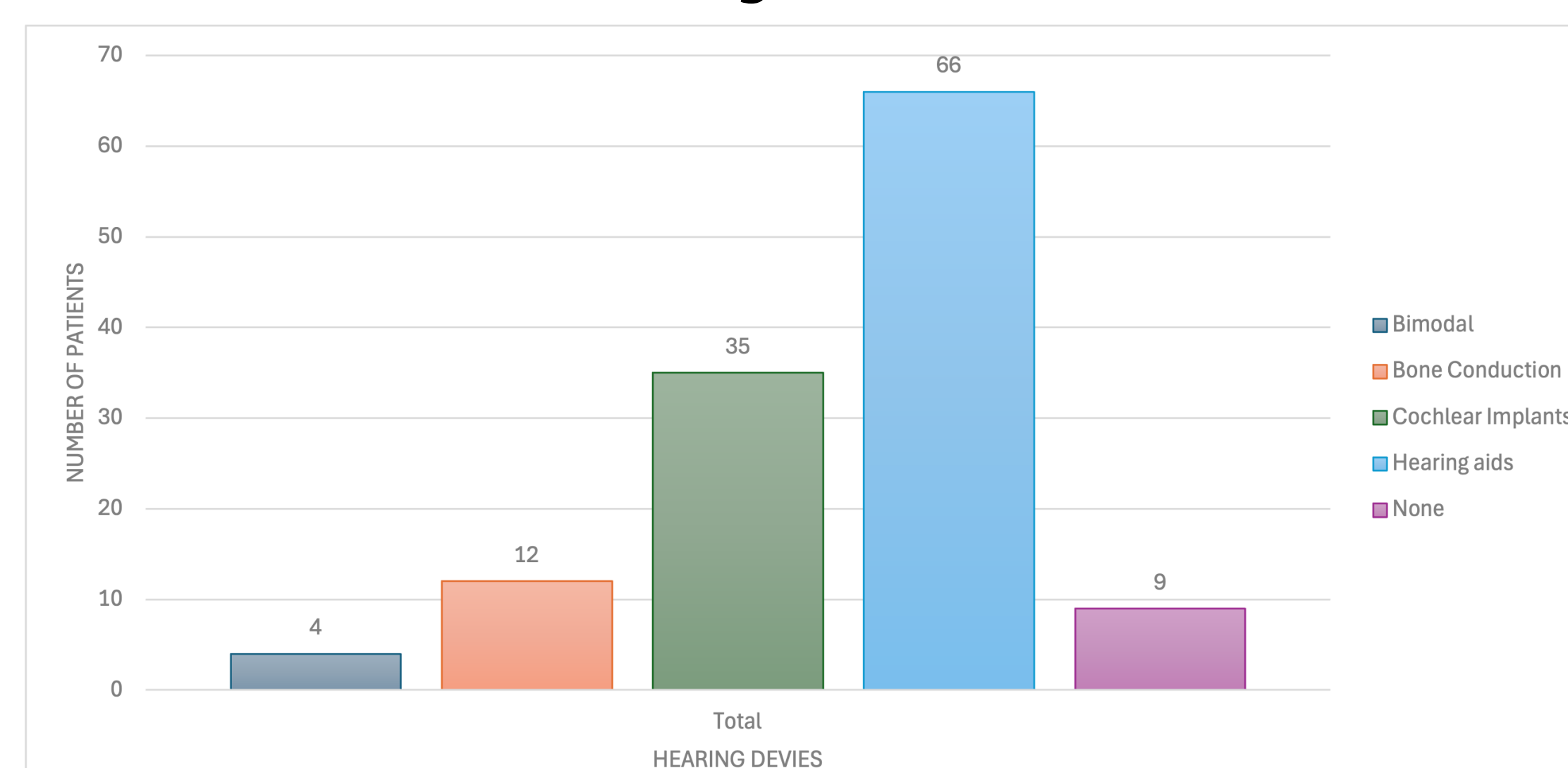
| Characteristic | Number (N) | Percentage (%) |
|----------------|------------|----------------|
| Gender | | |
| Male | 59 | 46% |
| Female | 67 | 54% |
| Age | | |
| 0-2 years | 12 | 9% |
| 3-5 years | 20 | 15% |
| 6-8 years | 34 | 25% |
| 9-11 years | 24 | 19% |
| 12-14 years | 16 | 12% |
| 15-18 years | 14 | 11% |
| 19+ years | 6 | 4% |

INTERVENTION CHARACTERISTICS

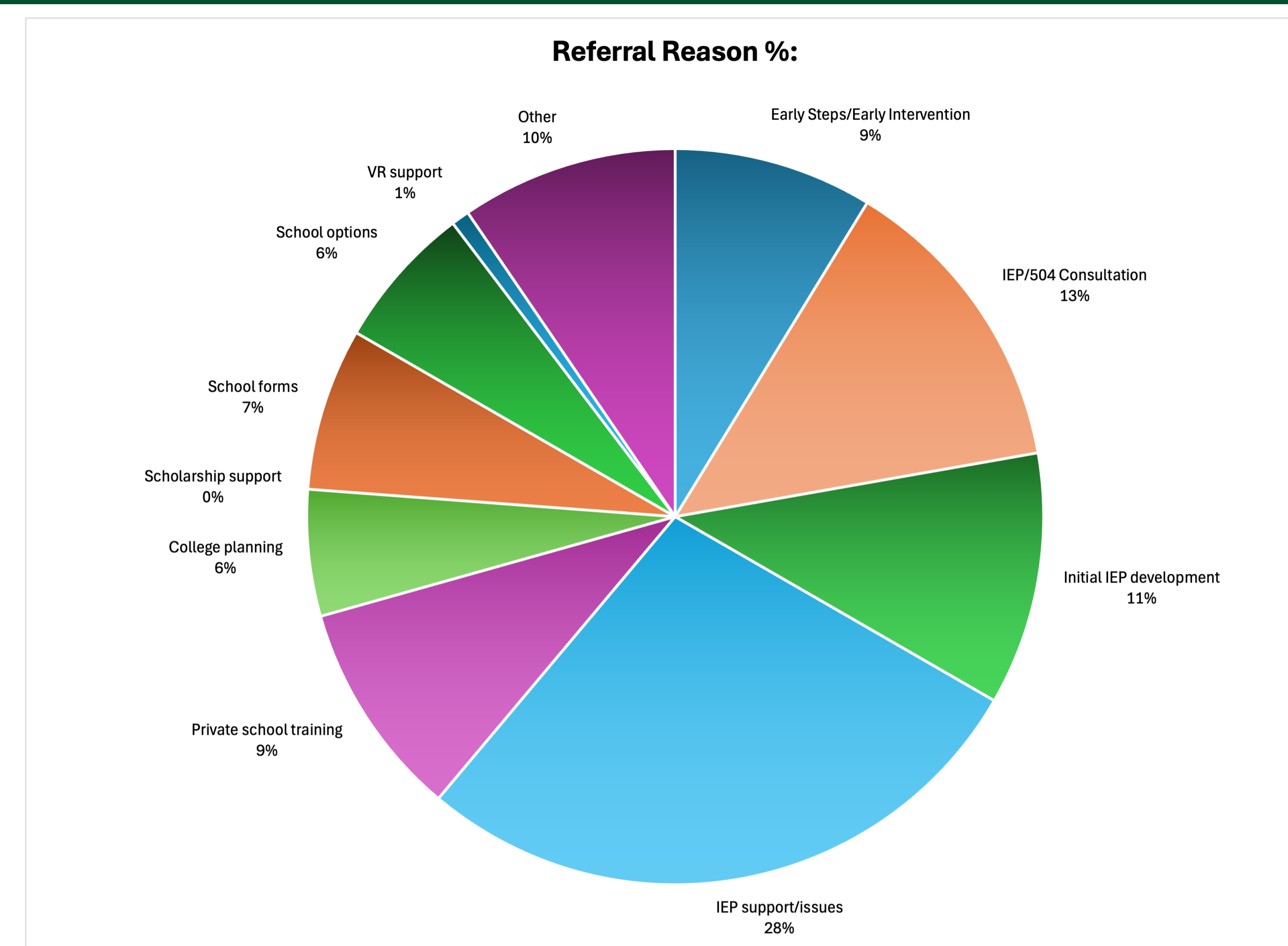
School Interventions



Hearing Interventions



REASON FOR REFERRAL



STUDY RESULTS

- The most common parental concern involved issues with the child's current Individualized Education Program (IEP) (27%).
- Counseling regarding available educational services through IEP or 504 plans was needed by 14% of families.
- Assistance with initial IEP development and transition planning from Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) to IEP services was required by 11% of families.
- Educational guidance and training related to private school or early childhood settings were requested by 10% of families.
- Eight percent of families needed assistance accessing early intervention services.

Key Finding: Parental support needs were primarily related to navigating individualized educational services and care transitions.

DISCUSSION

- Early intervention and educational support are critical for maximizing developmental outcomes in children with hearing loss.
- Families demonstrated substantial need for assistance navigating educational systems, particularly related to current IEP concerns, counseling on available accommodations, and IEP development and transition planning.
- Support needs also included guidance for early childhood or private educational settings and early intervention access.
- These findings highlight the importance of structured, multidisciplinary family navigation support within clinical care.
- Integration of an educational specialist improves coordination of early intervention and school-based services, extending care beyond audiologic treatment alone.
- Within the Children's Hearing Program at the University of Miami, educational specialist services represent a key strategy for family-centered, comprehensive hearing care.

CONCLUSIONS

These findings highlight the clinical value of integrating educational specialists into multidisciplinary hearing care teams. Providing structured support for early intervention access, IEP development, and educational navigation may improve care coordination, facilitate timely service access, and strengthen family-centered outcomes for children with hearing loss.

Thank 

