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(A unit of Bangalore Speech and Hearing Trust)

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Best practices

1. **Title of the project:** Neonatal Hearing Screening
2. **Objectives of the practice:**

Neonatal hearing screening is a crucial process aimed at early identification of hearing loss in newborns. The primary objectives of neonatal hearing screening are:

1. **Early Detection of Hearing Loss:** Identifying hearing impairments early allows for timely intervention, which is critical for speech, language, and cognitive development.
2. **Facilitating Early Intervention:** Early diagnosis enables prompt referral to audiologists, speech therapists, and other specialists. This can lead to early interventions such as hearing aids, cochlear implants, and early speech & language therapy.
3. **Improving Communication Skills:** By addressing hearing loss early, children have a better chance of developing normal communication skills, which are essential for academic success and social interaction.
4. **Reducing the Impact on Development:** Early identification and intervention help mitigate the effects of hearing loss on a child's overall development, including their social, emotional and educational growth.
5. **Providing Family Support:** Hearing screening program often include counselling and support for families, helping them understand their child's condition and navigate available resources.
6. **Monitoring and Follow-up:** Early detection allows for on-going monitoring of the child's hearing and development, ensuring that any changes or new issues are addressed promptly.
7. **Promoting Awareness:** Hearing screening program help raise awareness about hearing loss and the importance of early identification & intervention, contributing to broader public health goals.

3. The Context:

Designing and implementing neonatal hearing screening programs requires careful consideration of several factors to ensure effectiveness and inclusivity. Adequate equipment

and trained personnel are necessary for conducting screenings and follow-ups. The screening program should be integrated with maternal and child health services to streamline processes and data management. Rural and underserved areas may have limited access to screening facilities, requiring mobile units or tele-health solutions. Tailor services to accommodate diverse populations, including providing multilingual support and addressing cultural attitudes towards hearing loss. Understanding and addressing cultural attitudes towards hearing loss and disability will help. Ensuring affordable cost of screening and addressing potential financial barriers for follow-ups & implementing robust systems for tracking and managing screening results, referrals, and follow-ups & also keeping up with advancements in screening technology and practices.

The Practice:

In the context of higher education, neonatal hearing screening is integrated into curricula for program in Audiology. This includes theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and understanding of screening protocols. Students participate in practical sessions where they learn to use screening equipment, perform tests, and interpret results under supervised conditions. Collaborating with local hospitals to provide practical experiences for students ensuring they are equipped with the necessary skills to implement and manage neonatal hearing screening programs effectively often emphasizing on evidence based practices. Students and faculty involve in collaborative research developing innovative solutions to address gaps in current screening practices, such as developing software for systems for tracking and managing screening results, referrals, and follow-ups.

Evidence of Success:

Overall, the success of neonatal hearing screening program is evidenced by increased early identification, improved developmental outcomes, positive public health impact & enhanced quality of life ie better family support and social integration for children with hearing loss. Under the neonatal hearing screening program, 5510 newborns (both well baby & high risk) were screened & more than 300 newborns were referred for detailed audiological investigation & management.

Problems Encountered & Resources Required:

Ensuring a quiet, controlled environment for accurate testing can be challenging in busy or noisy settings. Ensuring that families follow through with referrals for diagnostic testing and intervention can be challenging. Some families may face logistical, financial, or personal barriers. Effective coordination between screening programs, diagnostic centers, and intervention services is crucial but can be complex. Adequate funding is essential for purchasing screening equipment, hiring staff, and maintaining the program. Limited budgets can restrict the scope and effectiveness of the program. Proper training for healthcare professionals involved in screening, diagnosis, and follow-up is essential. There may be a shortage of trained audiologists required for comprehensive follow-up and intervention. Rural and underserved areas may lack access to screening facilities or follow-up services, leading to

disparities in detection and intervention. Managing and tracking screening results, follow-ups, and outcomes requires robust data management systems. Ensuring the privacy and security of personal health information is critical and can be challenging.

2. Title of the project: Parent Support Network

Objectives of the Practice:

A Parent Support Network gives access to people who have come across similar difficulties with their children. Professionals can give you valuable tips and strategies to overcome the challenges parents face on a daily basis.

The Parent Support Network is designed to help find families just like theirs, to reduce stress and help the parent deal with disability issues, to empower the parent and provide a sense of belonging, to learn about the processes and professionals that will help them, to discuss school options and therapeutic services, to find voice in matters of advocacy, to gain skills that will help the parent to support child better, to socialize with parents who have similar interests, to plan activities, to share story and support others who need your help.

The context:

Parents visiting speech language pathologists have one-to-one interactions with the therapists of their children. This allows for professional interactions, however, parents also need emotional and psychological support from other parents of children with disabilities. They need to be a part of a community that understands their experiences. A platform for this peer interaction among parents of children with disabilities was thus the need of the hour. Strategies to improve skills in their children and ways to cope with their own fears and anxieties can be shared on such a platform. In addition, parents need to be empowered to navigate the challenges that arise. Knowledge-sharing sessions from professionals can help in this empowerment. There is evidence that parent support networks lead to better outcomes for children with disabilities as parents become more effective in care-giving and advocacy. Hence the parent support network was conceptualized to encourage peer interactions and empowerment.

The practice:

The parent support network, talks delivered by Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) and Psychologists provide essential insights for parents of children with disabilities, offering tailored advice and strategies for their child's development and emotional well-being. The talks given by Speech Language Pathologist helped the parents to understand and address communication challenges their children may face and offer strategies to support speech and language development. The talks given by clinical Psychologist provided emotional and behavioural support strategies to help parents manage their child's psychological and developmental needs, while also addressing family dynamics and emotional well-being.

A WhatsApp group was created to facilitate interaction between parents and professionals, providing a convenient platform for real-time communication, support, and information sharing. This group allows parents to ask questions, share experiences, and receive advice from experts, while also enabling them to connect with and support one another. It serves as a

dynamic space for immediate feedback, on-going discussions, and community building making it easier for parents to stay informed and engaged with the support network.

Evidence of success:

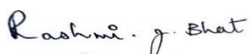
Written feedback about the talks is collected from attendees at the end of each session. Parents have reported that the sessions are informative and helpful, provide a lot of insights, are interactive, and provide better opportunities to learn. Google forms with rating scales have also been used to obtain feedback of the sessions. The parent has to rate the content of the talk, adequate time provided for questions and discussion, and overall effectiveness of the talk. Overall, parents have given a good or excellent rating of the sessions. The feedback from these sessions is used for planning of further sessions.

Problems encountered and resources required:

Parent support network is facing **limited participation** due to busy schedules, particularly for parents managing multiple responsibilities. This can undermine the effectiveness of the group and the reach of valuable information from professionals.

Technological barriers, such as poor internet access or unfamiliarity with virtual platforms, can prevent some parents from joining online meetings, even if they are eager to participate. Difficulty navigating these tools can lead to frustration and disengagement, resulting in the support network losing a crucial segment of its audience. Addressing these issues is essential to ensure all parents have equitable access to the network's resources, regardless of their technological abilities.

To effectively manage and enhance the parent support network, several key resources and supports are essential. **Volunteer leaders or co-leaders** are needed to assist with organization and decision-making, ensuring smooth operation and effective planning of network activities. **Guest speakers or workshops** on relevant topics provide valuable insights and education for parents, addressing their specific interests and needs. Adequate **funding or budget** is crucial, with grants or donations covering network activities and expenses like speaker fees. **Support materials**, such as printed or digital resources, are needed to offer accessible information on pertinent subjects. **Technology and equipment**, including computers or laptops for online meetings and audio-visual gear for presentations, are needed to facilitate effective communication and engagement. Additionally, arranging **childcare or respite care** during meetings or events is needed to ensure that parents can participate fully without worrying about caregiving responsibilities.


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