



OchsCenter

Evaluation Report for Signal Center's Home-based and Community Developmental Therapy Services

For:

Signal Centers, Inc.

Submitted by:

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Ochs Center

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Purpose and Methodology

The mission of Signal Center's Home-based and Community Services (Developmental Therapy) program is to provide support, guidance, and insight on best practices for growth and development to primary caregivers that have children with special needs. To better understand how the Home-based and Community Services program is meeting the needs of families and children with special needs, Signal Centers contracted with the Ochs Center to seek feedback about the program. The Ochs Center designed and administered a 25-item online survey to measure caregiver attitudes toward early intervention services. The survey used a 4-point scale with the following response categories:

- Most of the time
- Some of the time
- A little
- Not at all

Of the 36 parents or caregivers invited to participate, 28 completed an online survey, for a response rate of 78%. Of those completing the online survey, 13 parents or caregivers elected to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Results from the online survey¹ and follow-up interviews are discussed below.

Results and findings

Overall, the program received exceptionally positive ratings and parents expressed extreme gratitude for the program. Parents reported that their developmental therapists are consistently providing high quality services for their child. As one parent stated, ***"This program has been a game changer."***

Typical visit

Those who took part in a follow-up interview were asked to describe a typical visit with their developmental therapist. The descriptions offered were quite similar across families and therapists.

The typical visit generally follows the following format:

- The developmental therapist checks in with the parent to review what was discussed and the goals set during the last visit.
- Parents provide feedback on what goals from the last meeting have been met and any challenges they have faced with meeting the goals.
- The development therapist engages the parent while "playing" and interacting with the child to model strategies and techniques to help meet the child's developmental needs.
- As a team, the developmental therapist and parent determine goals and strategies for meeting those goals.
- The developmental therapist reviews what was discussed to ensure the parent understands and agrees on the goals and strategies.

¹ Full results of the online survey are reported in the Appendix.

These descriptions were further corroborated by responses to the online survey. **All survey respondents indicated the following things were done "most of the time":**

- Assessment results and reports concerning my child are clearly explained to them.
- The developmental therapist involves the entire family in our home visits as needed.
- The developmental therapist reviews what we have discussed during the visit.
- The developmental therapist helps me to identify routines and/or activities in which the goals can be worked on.

While the responses were not unanimous, an overwhelming majority indicated that the following statements were true "most of the time":

- The developmental therapist listens to me regarding what is working / not working for my child and helps us adjust accordingly (96.4%).
- The developmental therapist explains and demonstrates what the next steps are for our child's growth and developmental skills (89.3%).
- I interact with my child during the visit time as the developmental therapist offers feedback (96.4%).
- I feel that I am encouraged to participate in developing goals for my child (96.4%).
- The developmental therapist helps me find ways to use household items to enhance development (96.4%).

Value of the program

All parents who completed the online survey reported they value the information and strategies tried during their sessions. A picture of camaraderie and teamwork was painted by parents who completed the follow-up interview. Parents indicated they felt like the developmental therapist truly cares about their child and it isn't just a professional relationship, but instead a partnership.

"She's also very down to earth and very light. Okay, let's be real about this and figure it out together."

"Very helpful in the goal setting. When I'm like, I don't know what should come next, she's like, okay, this is what I think we should do next. How do you feel about that? So she wasn't like steamrolling me or anything like that. She very much involved me in the process and how the things would look and do. If I didn't know how to do them, she would help me and model that for me."

"I really appreciated that she would like get excited about things when my daughter did new things. She would get excited about them with me, and I feel like she knows her better than anybody else does beside me. And so she [developmental therapist] really valued any progress she made. That was just important to me because like her pediatrician or speech therapist when I tell them things that my daughter does, they're like, 'oh good', but she seemed to really understand how impressive some things were that she would do."

Parents also expressed that they felt "heard" by the therapist and that the parent's participation and input was valued.

"She listens to me. I had a lot of issues with people - pediatricians and things not listening to my opinions or my thoughts on things. So I really appreciate her listening to me and valuing my opinion."

Parents also expressed that they were appreciative of the therapist offering a different perspective and being honest and straightforward with them.

[Developmental therapist] listened to us and gave us constructive feedback and then she'll do things with [the child] to demonstrate things we can be doing with [the child]. ... And I appreciate the second set of eyes that knows what to look for. She has no issues with being honest with us and we really appreciate that."

Many of the parents shared that their child was receiving occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy in addition to developmental therapy. For many of them, the developmental therapist was instrumental in helping to interpret and integrate the information from the different doctors and professionals.

"Just someone that will listen and kind of understand and help me take those different voices... from different doctors or different therapists and things like that and kind of process it in a way that I can break it down and it makes sense for me and it's applicable at home. "

Child's progress

All parents who participated in the follow-up interview shared that their child had made tremendous progress during their time working with the developmental therapist. Parents shared different milestones that their child had met – ranging from the child being able to lift their head, rolling over, crawling, developing fine motor skills, and being able to communicate what they wanted.

One parent stated, "I mean from where he was at to where he is now is just incredible to me - he is on target now." Another parent shared:

"I'm very happy with the progress that she's made. And you know, like I said, when we first started, she just kind of existed in her own thing. She couldn't tell me what she wanted. She didn't, she didn't give hugs. She didn't play any games. She didn't do anything like that. Now she does all those things and she's very good at telling you what she wants you to know."

Challenges

The restrictions resulting from the COVID pandemic impacted the developmental therapy program. During the pandemic, therapy sessions were conducted using a virtual platform. Only about 6 out of 10 parents who completed the online survey (60.7%) reported that virtual sessions were effective for their family most of the time. Parents shared they understood the need to conduct the sessions virtually, but it did not allow the therapist to be “hands-on”. According to several parents, this part of the session is very valuable for the success of the program.

“[Child} just did a lot better being able to see her and interact with her and sometimes it was just hard for her to explain things to me over the phone instead of in person.”

“She would give us ideas and she would give thoughts, but it was just harder because she couldn't actually interact with my children though. Like I couldn't see the model of what how to do things. She did all she could do was explain it the best that she could.”

Recommendations

Overall, parents are extremely complimentary of the developmental therapy program offered by Signal Centers. However, parents shared there is a need to better market the program to ensure that **all** parents who have children with developmental delays are made aware of the program and its benefits. Parents whose child was premature or who spent time in the NICU after birth were immediately made aware of the program. However, those parents whose child was not born premature or who had not received services for an older child, were less likely to know about the program. During their interview, several parents shared that their child would have benefitted from earlier enrollment in the program. For these parents, often time first-time parents, they either did not realize that their child was missing milestones or when they asked their pediatrician, were told that children advance at different rates and not to be concerned. They expressed frustration that their pediatricians did not recognize the need or recommend the program. These parents expressed an opinion that pediatricians should be more sensitive to their concerns and be able to provide information about resources that might be available to address the parent’s concerns.

APPENDIX

	Most of the time	Some of the time	A little	Not at all
I feel comfortable talking to my child's Developmental Therapist about all of my concerns regarding my child.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
I believe my child's Development Therapist understands my child's strengths and needs.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Assessment results and reports concerning my child are clearly explained to me.	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
I am shown how to research and/or locate answers to specific questions related to my child's disability or medical needs.	85.7%	14.3%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist involves the entire family in our home visits as needed.	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist respects our family's beliefs (religious/cultural) our home and our family.	100%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist explains and demonstrates what the next steps are for our child's growth and developmental skills.	89.3%	10.7%	0.0%	0.0%
I interact with my child during the visit time as the developmental therapist offers feedback.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
I use the suggestions/demonstrations shown the remainder of the week.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
I feel that I am encouraged to participate in developing goals for my child.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist helps me to have a better understanding of my child's diagnosis.	89.3%	10.7%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist helps me find ways to use household items to enhance development.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist reviews what we have discussed during the visit.	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist helps me to identify routines and/or activities in which the goals can be worked on.	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist listens to me regarding what is working / not working for my child and helps us adjust accordingly.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
I have seen progress in my child's developmental skills this past year.	78.6%	10.7%	10.7%	0.0%
I feel that our family is prepared for transition into the local education agency and understand what will happen during the transition and eligibility meetings.	64.3%	14.3%	21.4%	0.0%

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	Most of the time	Some of the time	A little	Not at all
The developmental therapist helps me promote my child's participation in family and community activities.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
The developmental therapist helps me balance the needs of the whole family with managing the care of my child who is receiving services.	89.3%	7.1%	3.6%	0.0%
The interventions selected for my child promote social interaction, exploration, and work towards my child increasing independence.	89.3%	3.6%	7.1%	0.0%
I feel that my family's developmental therapist provides high quality services.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
Working with the developmental therapist gives me the confidence to work on goals between visits.	96.4%	3.6%	0.0%	0.0%
I value the information and strategies tried during the sessions.	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Virtual sessions are effective for my family.	60.7%	17.9%	10.7%	10.7%