

Speech, Language, and Learning 2020 Program Evaluation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Speech, Language, and Learning Services had a dynamic year in 2020. The pandemic led to a year that looked much different than what was planned for at the end of 2019. In the this, the team was still able to make a quick pivot to maintain continuity of care and run grant-funded programs in innovative ways. At the end of 2020, the team continued to perform remote treatment and evaluation, along with serving some clientele in office.

REMOTE SERVICES

One of the department's greatest accomplishments this year was the transition to an agency that could skillfully provide remote treatment and evaluation services. When it became clear that the department would not be able to serve clients in-house for an unforeseeable amount of time due to the governor's stay-at-home order and the continued spread of the virus, a telepractice task force composed of staff SLPs was established to formulate a plan on how the department could serve our clients remotely. In a matter of a few weeks, the task force was able to find the best remote-service platform and train the entire speech team on providing remote services. The first remote client was seen on March 26, 2020, and the first remote evaluation took place on April 20, 2020.

Even though some team members were more comfortable with technology than others, everyone was able to become a proficient remote treatment service provider by April of 2020. This was a critical accomplishment for both the team and our clients. This remote services provision was key not only to seeing our formerly in-house clients, but also new clients.

SELECT GRANT-FUNDED SERVICES

Along with quick pivot that was made in the way treatment and evaluation services were provided, the team also made innovative changes to grant programs with funds that were originally allocated for in-person services.

The Preschool Language and Literacy Classroom (PLLC) has historically been provided by SLPs over the summer to children at Head Start locations and other preschools. Along with targeting the preschoolers' emergent literacy skills, the program also addresses teacher knowledge of preliteracy building skills. Services could not be provided in-person this summer, so a team of SLPs planned and executed a series of 13 videos using a green screen and props. The SLPs produced both videos targeted at the children and videos targeted at a teacher or parent. Links to these videos were shared with the Head Starts where in-person services would have been provided, and also shared with our clinic clientele.

The grant-funded FACEtime fluency program is usually held in person, but during the pandemic two Zoom-based fluency group for both younger school-age children and older teenagers. This is the first time the department has offered a group for younger children, and has provided proof-of-concept that this age group can benefit from group interaction.

The donation-funded NEO-ACT programming was moved from in-person to Zoom, which ended up making the programming more accessible to adult stroke survivors who had struggled with transportation in the past and opened up the door to out-of-state participants.

Toys to Talk was a grant-funded program borne out of the pandemic. By late April 2020, the department was providing exclusively remote services. The SLPs found that many of the young children they were working with did not have toys at home that could be used effectively for language enrichment (i.e., the children had electronic and overstimulating toys instead of toys such as pretend food, a ball tower, or Ms. Potato Head). Some homes did not have age-appropriate toys or books at all! The department was able to secure grant funds for the creation of bags of language-enriching toys for children at the 1-2 year developmental level and the 3-5 year developmental level. Colorful cards with multiple ideas of how to use each toy to enrich language at home were included in the bags. In July, a group of SLPs hand-delivered the bags to 21 families around the Cleveland area. Both the children and parents were thrilled! These toys are now be used both for play at home with the parent, and for materials during remote treatment sessions.

STAFFING

At the beginning of the year, the department employed 20 staff SLPs (13 full-time [13.0 FTE], 7 part-time [4.44 FTE]) and one per diem SLP (0.1 FTE). This was a total of 17.54 FTE dedicated to clinical services.

At the end of 2020 the department employed 12 staff SLPs (7 fulltime [7.0 FTE], 5 parttime [3.75 FTE]) and 1 per diem SLP (.1 FTE). Overall, 10.85 FTE were dedicated to clinical service.

Throughout 2020, the department had 1 business manager (.48 FTE), and 1 director (1.0 FTE).

BY THE NUMBERS

Overall, the department served 1,218 clients across all settings

- 1,177 unduplicated children (97%)
- 41 unduplicated adults (3%)
- 4,852 total clinical visits

In-House Breakdown

- 387 unduplicated pediatric clients
 - 0 – 3 years: 140
 - 4 – 8 years: 178
 - 9 – 12 years: 48
 - 13 – 17 years; 21
- 41 unduplicated adult clients

In-house Demographics

- **Gender**
 - Male – 71%
 - Female – 29%
- **Ethnicity**
 - Asian: <1%
 - Black/African American: 35%
 - Native Hawaiian: <1%
 - Other Polynesian <1%
 - White: 47%
 - Unanswered: 7%
 - Declined to specify: 9%