



An Infant Development Program in a Speech and Language Clinic

The **Early Intervention Clinic (EIC)** is an infant development program that provides intensive speech and language therapy and occupational therapy in a small group, preschool-like setting for children ages 18 months to 36 months at risk for severe speech and language problems. Program components include:

1. A daily schedule which includes a language-rich circle time, gross and fine motor activities, adaptive skill facilitation, sensory experiences, opportunities for social interaction (e.g. snack time), and opportunities for cognitive development.
2. Occupational therapists collaborate with speech-language therapists in leading the gross motor, fine motor, adaptive and sensory activities to promote adequate motor and sensory development.
3. Instructional aides support clinical staff in facilitating the children's skill development and maintaining the children's safety (with a 2:1 ratio and about 8 children in each group).
4. EIC provides ongoing parent education and hands-on training (through parent participation). EIC professionals work with parents and other involved professionals (e.g. case manager, psychologist) to establish individual goals for each child.

CSLOT's EIC Philosophy

CSLOT's EIC program is designed with the philosophy of ***treating the whole child using principles of prelinguistic milieu therapy***. Speech-language pathologists, occupational therapists, instructional aides, and parents work as a ***team*** to facilitate each child's language, speech, and communication skills in the context of ***natural and functional activities*** that foster the healthy development of the child's personal/social skills, gross/fine motor skills, cognitive skills, and adaptive skills.

The Roles of the Occupational Therapist in the EIC

1. Attention and Motivation

An OT may suggest moving the child to the center of the circle during circle time and offering him a prop that is related to the activity if a child is fidgety and cannot sit through circle time.

2. Ability to self-regulate

An OT may offer familiar items, such as a blanket and deep pressure to calm a child down who is crying upon entering a new environment.

3. Level of arousal

The OT may have the child bounce prior to sitting down or sit on a ball to increase his level of arousal during circle time, if this child needs more movement and stimulation to be able to participate.

4. Adaptive strategies

An OT may offer a child a Q-tip to spread glue on a paper when this child cries and refuses to spread glue on paper using his index finger because of sensitivity to the stickiness of the glue.

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Treatment Models Used in EIC

Prelinguistic Milieu: the facilitation of the transition from pre-intentional to intentional communication of children functioning at the prelinguistic level by using the basic milieu teaching approach.

Communication Temptations: Creating a context that tempts a child to communicate with an adult who is expected to facilitate that child's desire for an object or action (e.g. a cookie in a tightly-closed clear jar).

Routine/Script Therapy: Establishing a routine within an everyday context to teach a child language while reducing his level of cognitive effort

Upping the Ante: A technique where the parent or professional elicits higher level of response from the child than the one previously given, by providing scaffolding and support to ultimately facilitate the child's advancement from his current level of intentional communication the next one.

The Present Study

CSLOT conducted a retrospective study to analyze the benefits of the EIC as an effective early intervention group therapy program. There were 23 subjects participating in EIC who were tested using the Battelle Developmental Inventory-2 (BDI-2). Pre- and post data were compared to determine the subjects' progress in the domains tested by the BDI-2 (communication, motor skills, cognition, adaptive skills, personal/social skills), and average monthly gain across domains was determined for the sample as a whole.

Analysis of the data showed that in many cases children made more than one month of gain in a single domain within one month's time. Expressive communication was the area in which the greatest gains were made. The data support that Early Intervention in the form of group therapy is critical in mitigating the effects of delayed development.

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