



A Group Feeding Program Manual For Children With Sensory Processing Difficulties

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INTRODUCTION

- 40-80% children with disabilities have a form of feeding disorders (Nationwide Children's Hospital, 2020)
- Children with tactile hypersensitivity are more likely to demonstrate food refusal and picky eating behaviors (Farrow et al., 2012)
- Sensory-related feeding difficulties affect a child's occupational participation, family functions, routine, roles, socialization, and cultural participation

SITE DESCRIPTION

Step-by-Step Pediatric Therapy, Inc.

- Outpatient pediatric therapy clinic located in Hacienda Heights and Walnut
- Target population: children ages birth – 18 years old with various diagnosis and conditions
- Mission Statement:
 - "Help children with special needs achieve their maximum potential in their everyday 'occupations' by providing them the highest quality service in a collaborative, family-oriented, nurturing, and compassionate natural environment" (Step-by-Step Pediatric Therapy, 2008)
- Services offered:
 - Consultation and evaluation
 - Individualized developmental and feeding therapy
 - Early intervention
 - Mommy and Me playdates (A Step Ahead Pediatric Developmental Services, Inc.)

SUMMARY OF NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Three identified needs of the site:

- Social interaction during feeding therapy
- Developing a *Step-by-Step Group Feeding Therapy Manual*
- Providing a parent/caregiver support system and education



LITERATURE REVIEW

- Social Learning Theory explains that people learn from one another by observing, imitating, and modeling (Rosenstock et al., 1988)
- Modeling has a robust impact on promoting food intake and positive mealtime behaviors (Vartanian et al., 2015)
- Repeated exposure to non-preferred foods may enhance children's willingness to touch and taste foods (Dazeley et al., 2015)

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

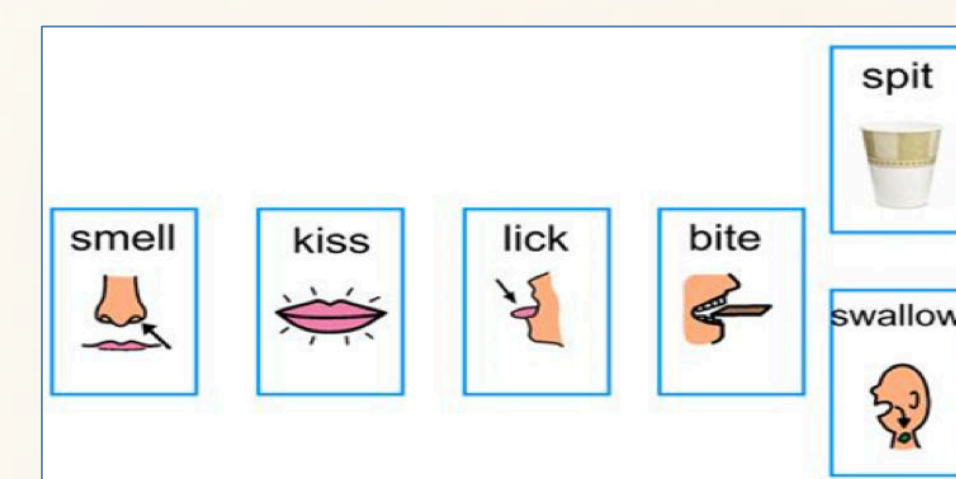
A five-week program of food and sensory-related activities with emphasis on peer interaction, modeling, and play
100-minute weekly session

Program Goals

- To improve children's interaction with novel foods through positive peer interaction and positive modeling in a play-based group environment
- To provide opportunities for parents/caregivers to share their experiences, needs, and concerns in relation to their child's feeding

20 min	Preparation and Cleaning Activities Purpose: to prepare appropriate environment by engaging in preparation and cleaning activities
10 min	Clean Time Purpose: to engage children in cleaning activities by engaging in preparation and cleaning activities
20 min	Sensory Play Purpose: to engage children in sensory play by engaging in preparation and cleaning activities
10 min	Feeding and Cleanup Purpose: to engage children in feeding and cleanup activities by engaging in preparation and cleaning activities
10 min	Debrief Preparation and Cleaning Time Purpose: to engage children in debriefing and cleanup activities by engaging in preparation and cleaning activities
10 min	Wrap up session Purpose: to engage children in wrap up session by engaging in preparation and cleaning activities

Session Outline



Sequential Oral Sensory Approach to Feeding (Toomey et al., 2011)

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Design a group feeding therapy manual with weekly homework/handouts for children with sensory-related feeding difficulties
- Demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills to implement group feeding interventions for children using play-based activities
- Effectively apply communication skills to provide parent education at the end of each session

METHODOLOGY

Inclusion Criteria

- Children ages 18-36 months
- A limited food repertoire due to oral/tactile sensitivity
- Physically stable to travel to clinic
- Parent's commitment to a five-week program

Participant Recruitment

- Posted program flyers in clinics
- Sent out emails and reached out to the therapists
- Observed feeding therapy session for potential participants
- Interviewed parents & distributed participation form

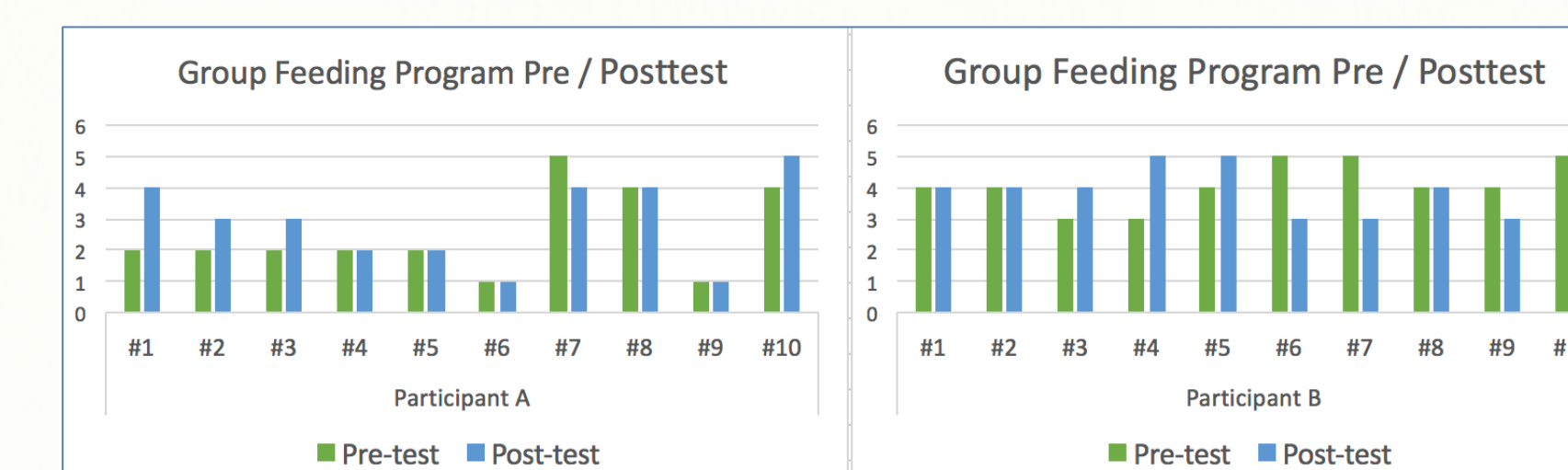
Program Evaluation

- Pre- and post-test parent survey
- Feeding specialist occupational therapist's review of the finalized manual

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Pre-and Post-test Survey Results

Results from parents of two participants



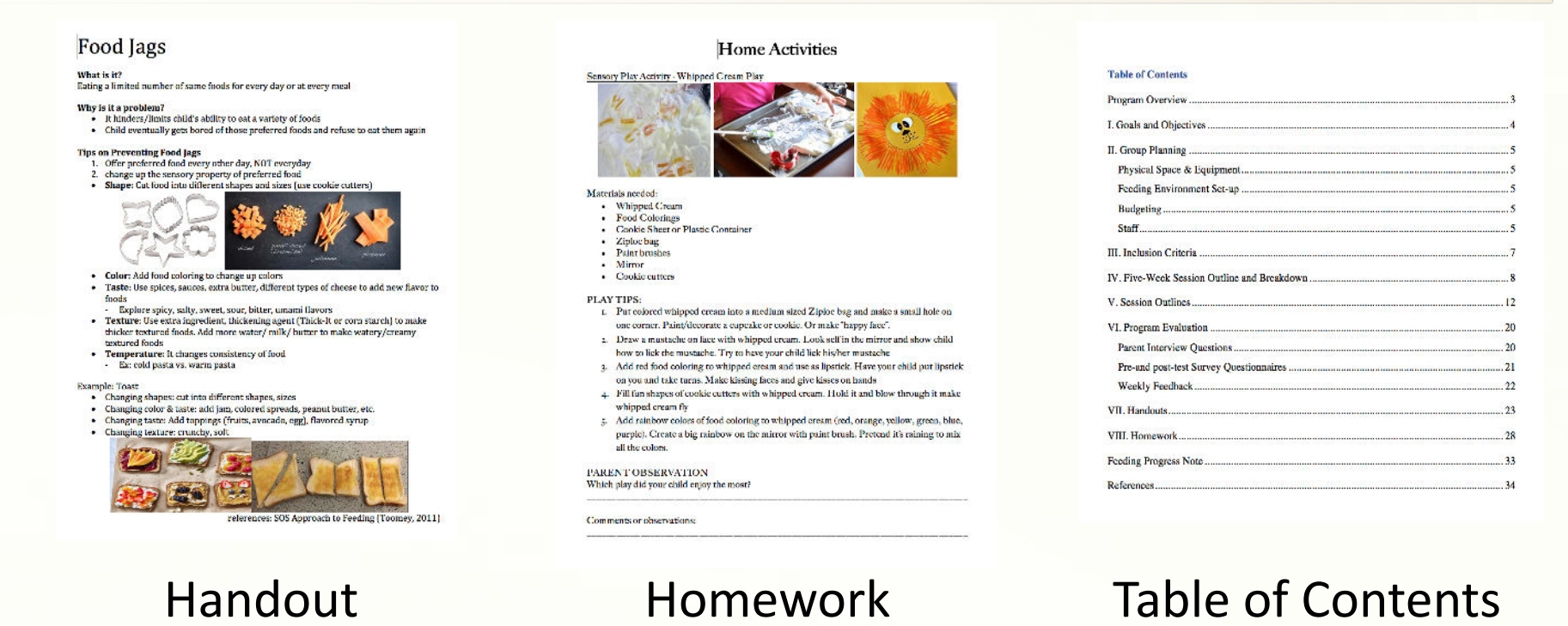
- Due to multiple limitations to the project, above graphs do not fully represent the effectiveness of the program implemented
 - Limitations include:
 - Frequent cancellations
 - Sickness during program
 - Small sample size
- Parents/caregivers demonstrated increased understanding of strategies and importance of play when introducing non-preferred foods

Step-by-Step Group Feeding Manual Evaluation by Miladys Rivas, OTR/L

- "Contents involved are relevant, evidence-based, and thorough" (M. Rivas, personal communication, April 2, 2020)
- "Homework and handouts provided are very appropriate and useful for parents"
- "Session breakdown is detailed and specific to the SBSPT Inc."

SCHOLARLY DELIVERABLES

- A compiled evidence and current literature relevant to feeding and group feeding therapy
- A group feeding therapy manual with resources such as homework and handouts
- Program evaluation tools: original survey questionnaires and weekly feedback forms



IMPLICATIONS

- Implementation of group feeding therapy may promote increase in occupational participation and play-based learning for children
- Children benefit from watching and interacting with peers and learn desired behaviors from each other
- Provision of comprehensive parent education can advance knowledge and skills about feeding and promote transfer of skills

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Further examine the benefits of group feeding therapy and expand literature and services offered
- Future students should implement a full group feeding program with emphasis on peer modeling and imitation to corroborate group program effectiveness with supporting data

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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References available upon request.