



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

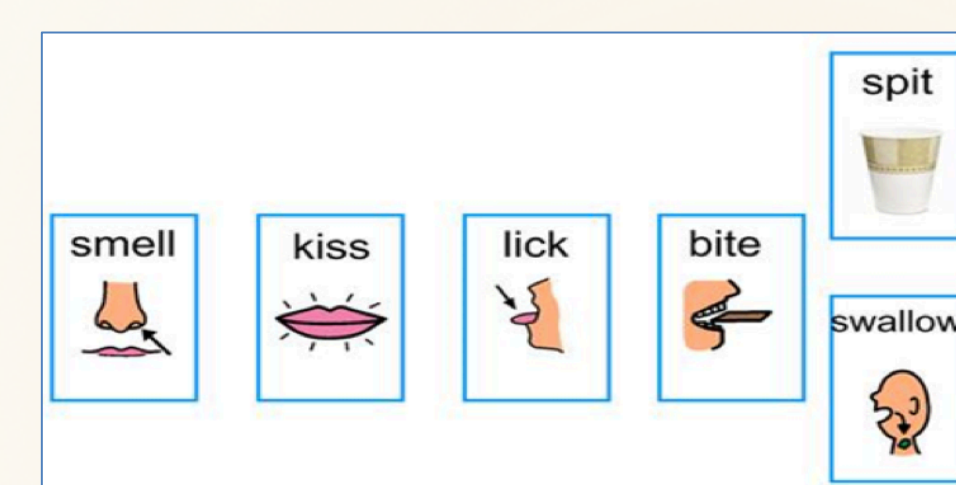
A five-week program of food and sensory-related activities with emphasis on peer interaction, modeling, and play
100-minute weekly session

Program Goals

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

30 min	Preparation and Cleanup Activities Prepare an appropriate environment for children by responding to environmental and vestibular activities
15 min	Circle Time Prepare an auditory comprehension/imitation skill to track and eating through books and songs
30 min	Ready, Set, Go! Prepare an auditory comprehension/imitation skill to track and eating through books and songs
15 min	Visuals to Use for Feeding Prepare to prepare for feeding and to track a number of working books
30 min	Feeding and Cleanup Prepare to introduce ability to novel non-preferred foods and to prepare child's readiness to eat/track and to prepare feeding and cleanup (based on the "Steps to Feeding Therapy" for SDC Approach to Feeding)
15 min	Oral Sensory Activities and Circle Time Prepare to respond to child's sensory system by responding to books with oral sensory activities
15 min	Wrap up session Prepare to hand out weekly homework/feedback forms and answer parent's questions

Session Outline



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

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Design a group feeding therapy manual with weekly homework/handouts for children with sensory-related feeding difficulties
2. Demonstrate advanced knowledge and skills to implement group feeding interventions for children using play-based activities
3. 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

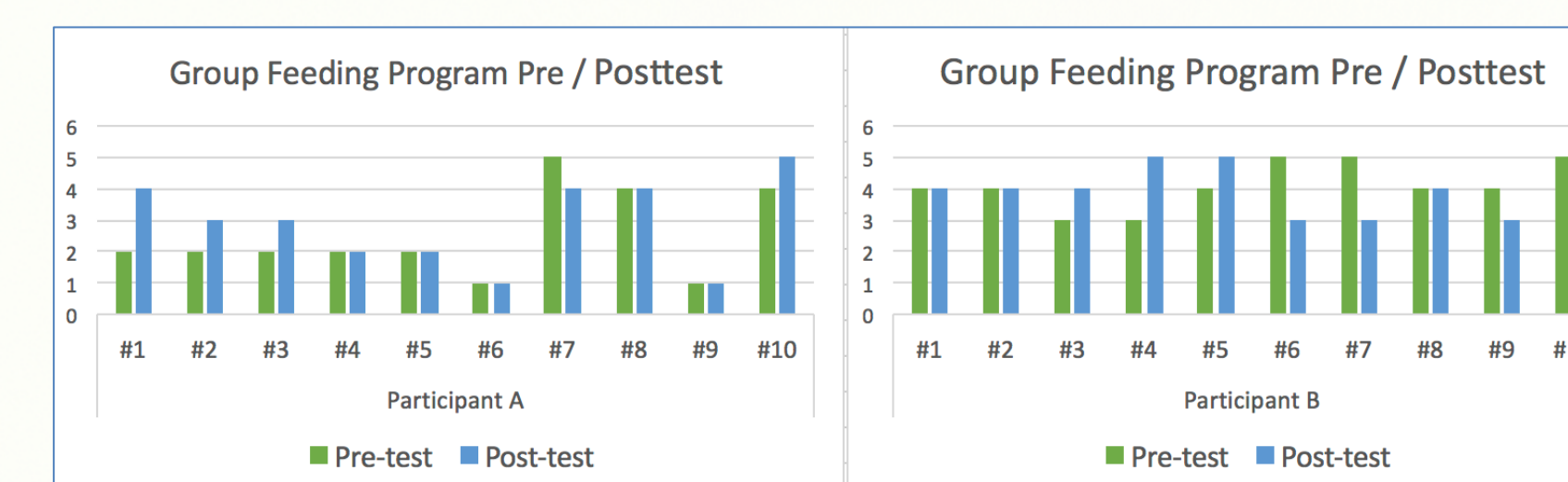
Program Evaluation

- 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



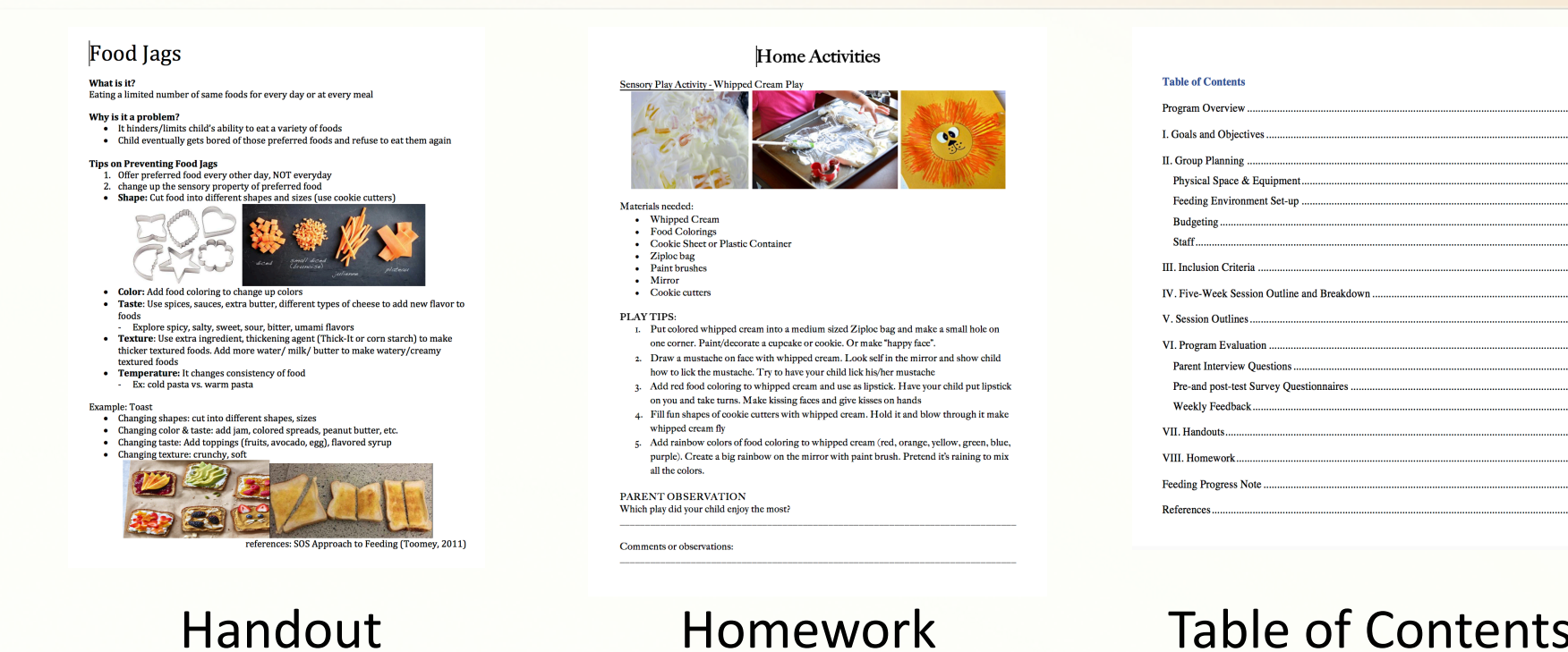
- Due to multiple limitations to the project, above graphs do not fully represent the effectiveness of the program implemented
 - Limitations include:
 - Frequent cancellations
 - Sickness during program
 - Small sample size
- Parents/caregivers demonstrated increased understanding of strategies and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

My deepest appreciation goes to Dr. Friberg, OTD, OTR/L, Anna Holley OTR/L, and Miladys Rivas, OTR/L for their meaningful support and guidance that contributed to the completion of this capstone project.

References available upon request.