

Discovering Mealtime Success: A Program for Parents of Picky Eaters

Jason Bonilla, OTD/S, Jennifer Hennessey, OTR/L and Danielle Friberg, OTD, OTR/L

Tichenor Pediatric Clinic

- Tichenor Pediatric Clinic: Outpatient clinic located in Long Beach, CA.
- Aims to provide services to children (0-18) with decreased accessibility to services or are underinsured.
- Developmental, musculoskeletal, or neurological deficits.
- OT, PT, ST, and orthopedic services.

Mission Statement

“To maximize children’s abilities by providing access to rehabilitation and enrichment services regardless of their ability to pay” (tichenorclinic.org, 2019).



Needs Assessment Summary

- Focus group interview
- Informal semi-structured face-to-face interview
- Areas of need at Tichenor clinic
 1. Increased parent-training and education with OT services.
 2. Feeding program development for children over the age of 2 y.o.
 3. Increased OT program funding.

Learning Objectives

1. Developed a parent-child feeding program with assistance from the DEI site mentor.
2. Demonstrated advanced knowledge with utilizing evidence-based feeding interventions to address feeding deficits
3. Fabricated a formal presentation and presented to involved parties to summarize overall effectiveness of the program.

Program Description

A parent-child feeding program for rigid eaters, with an emphasis on parent training & education, enhanced parent-child communication, and acceptance of new foods or textures.

- **Purpose:**
 - Family empowerment and education
 - Create a positive family mealtime experience
 - Build a parent support system
 - Develop parent understanding of their individual child’s feeding differences and behaviors
- **Program Structure**
 - Eight-week program
 - Parent-group sessions
 - Parent-child group sessions
 - Individual parent-child video consults
- **Participants**
 - 7 participants
 - Parents and children of ages 2-6 with rigid diets and/or difficulties with mealtime skills
- **Program Topics**
 - Mealtime challenges and creating positive mealtimes
 - Social-emotional development, parent-child attachment, and common behaviors
 - Defining a “picky eater”, typical feeding development, oral motor and sensory difficulties
 - Strategies for oral motor and sensory difficulties
 - Nutrition

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

- Behavioral Frame of Reference (Cooper, Strong, Stewart, Rigby, & Letts, 1996)
- Person-Environment-Occupation (PEO) model (Helfrich, 2014)
- Sensory Integration Frame of Reference (Lane, Roley & Champagne, 2014; Cohn, 2000)

Common Themes Identified

- Common Mealtime Behaviors
- Parent Training and Education
- Common intervention approaches for feeding therapy

Gaps/Limitations

- Differences in severity of disability limit research
- Limitations in research findings for variety of diagnosis

Methods

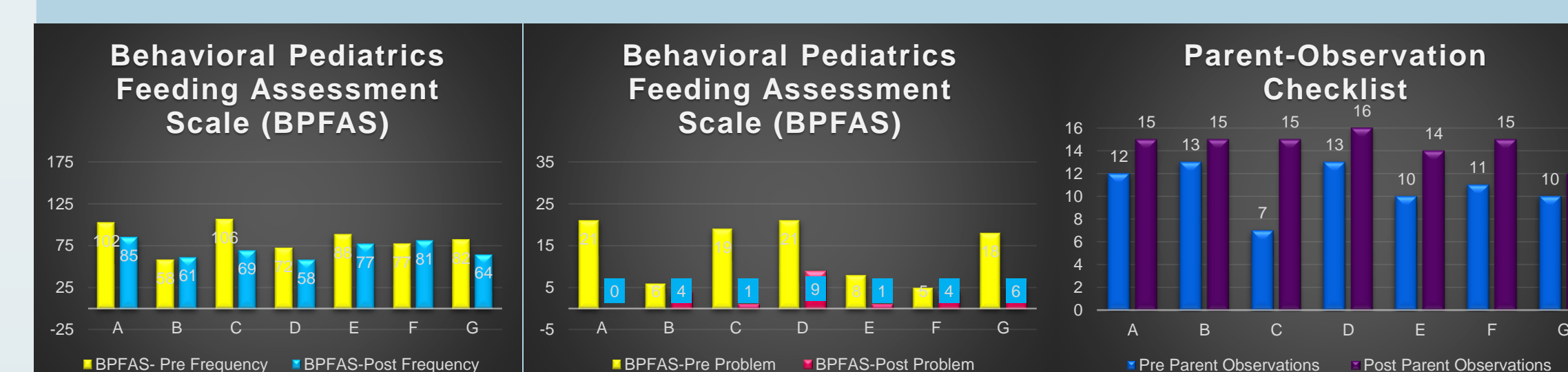
Data Collection

- Pre-test and Post-test
 - Behavioral Pediatrics Feeding Assessment Scale (BPFAS)
 - Parent-Observations Checklist
- Post Program Evaluation
 - 10 likert-scale questions
 - 7 open-ended questions
 - 4 yes-no questions

Outcomes

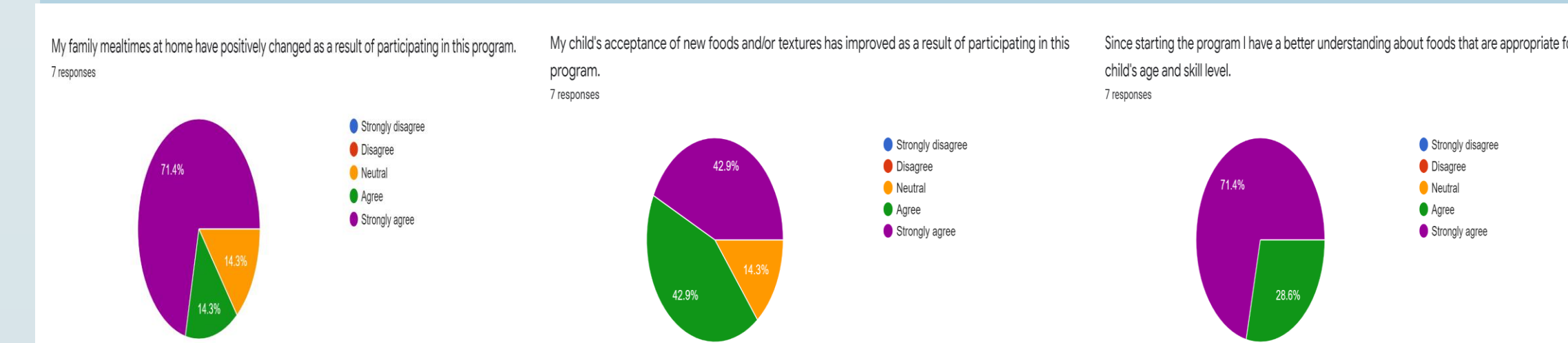
Quantitative Data

- Average BPFAS frequency scores improved by 13 points
- Average BPFAS problem scores improved by 11 points
- Average parent-observation scores improved by 4 points



Qualitative Data

- “The program helped a lot. My daughter is now able to eat a variety of different foods”.
- Take this class, it is very helpful. It is not just for the parent and child, but for the whole family”.



Conclusion

- Participants experienced positive mealtime changes in home environment
- Increased child intake with new foods/textures
- Improved child mealtime participation
- Decreased parent/caregiver stress
- Improved parent/caregiver knowledge of child’s individual feeding difficulties.
- Improved carryover with us of creative and fun strategies to introduce new foods

Scholarly Deliverables

- Program Protocol Development
- DEI Final Presentation
 - Audience: Board of Directors
 - Method: Infographic
 - Summary: Program effectiveness, outcome measures, strengths, limitations, and plan for sustainability

Implications for OT

- Highlights the importance of program implementation with emphasis on parent/caregiver training and education
- Promotes improvements in:
 - Well-being and quality of life for families
 - Parent/caregiver stress
 - Parent-child relationships
 - Long-term carryover

Future Direction

- Revised program structure
- Revised outcome measures
- Larger sample size
- Recruitment expansion
- Quantitative outcome measures for child-participants

Limitations

- Sample size
- Attendance
- Resources (Ipad, projectors, physical space)

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Friberg, Jennifer Hennessey, Lori Delaney, and Tichenor clinic for the ongoing generosity, mentorship, and entrusting in the development and implementation of the Discovering Mealtime Success feeding program for parents of picky eaters.

References

References available upon request