

PARENT-TUTORING FOR FAMILIES OF CHILDREN WITH HEARING IMPAIRMENT

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GOAL:

To utilize the personal experience and knowledge of parents who have completed an auditory-verbal programme, in providing support, practical advice and encouragement to families of newly detected children in their home environment.

PARENT TUTORING HELPS:

- a newly diagnosed child and family in coping with the diagnosis, becoming familiar with the equipment and with the implementation of therapy in the home
- ESL families by modeling English for the child, siblings and parents and assisting in the integration of the family into the community
- any children who may need additional help in achieving their goals in learning to listen and speak
 - single parent families in modeling A-V techniques and activities but also to provide support or respite for the parent
 - parents who both work in providing extra therapy time and facilitating continuity of therapy among the various individuals involved with the child

PURPOSE & CRITERIA FOR PARENT-TUTORS:

- to supplement A-V sessions from the hospital: the parent tutor increases her/his knowledge of A- V practice and obtains individualised targets by participating in the child's therapy
- to shape and/or model therapy for the parents in informal teaching sessions in the home and the community through activities of daily living- dressing, eating, cleaning, and/or during outings
- to encourage parents and caregivers in the implementation of AV practice
- to assist in trouble shooting and familiarizing parents with the technological devices involved
- on occasion to provide respite for parents who are in need of assistance

DUTIES:

- to liaise with and provide feedback to professionals on the team, such as auditory-verbal therapists, audiologists, itinerant teachers of the hearing-impaired, and social workers
- to utilize AVT's short and long term goals in creating formal and informal lessons which are directed toward specific areas in audition, speech, language, cognition and communication in the home and community
- to develop the sessions according to the chronological, developmental and hearing ages of the child
- to have the ability and flexibility to work with varied children reinforcing behavioural management
- to be able to work independently and to understand the importance of client confidentiality

FREQUENCY OF VISITS:

- referral of a client to a parent tutor is usually made from an AVT and the department social worker who commonly assists in applying for funding through the various agencies- typically ACSD (Assistance for Children with Severe Disabilities or SSAH (Special Services at Home)
- the numbers of hours that are funded vary according to the circumstances and availability of funding (three visits a week is suggested but depends on the age of the child, the level of compliance and cooperation of the parent/caregiver.)
- a parent tutor is considered to be self-employed and is therefore responsible for his/her own insurance and other expenses

CHALLENGES:

- scheduling expectations from clients can be challenging and the parent tutor must recognize that they are a visitor to the family and in the house
- the parent tutor will benefit from assistance in understanding the cultures and backgrounds of the clients
- sensitivity on the part of the parent tutor is crucial, no one client or family is the same, acceptance is not automatic, and some clients may take time to accept the recommendation of a parent tutor
- the pay is minimal, many tutors really function as volunteers

CONCLUSION:

The intensity of the relationship that one builds with the child and family when spending so much time together develops a bond that is everlasting. The benefits are rewarding and immeasurable. Few things in life compare to the knowledge that you have helped a child learn to listen and speak.