There is evidence that parent involvement can enhance outcomes of speech therapy. However, there has not been systematic examination of what parents know about their child’s intervention.

Parent involvement appears to be an important positive factor in remediation of children’s speech and language delays (e.g., Girolametto, Pearce, & Weitzman, 1997; Norris & Hoffman, 1990). Parents’ different cultures will likely have different expectations of their speech-language pathologist, and given the number of culturally and linguistically diverse children now living in the United States, understanding these expectations is also relevant. This project is an attempt to estimate a percentage of parents who are actively involved in their child’s therapy and what factors may contribute to their participation or lack thereof. A prospective study of parent involvement in therapy was conducted by asking parents of preschool and elementary-aged children to respond to a questionnaire about their knowledge of goals and participation in intervention.

Summary: Parents of children referred to Mayo Clinic for speech-language evaluation were asked to complete a questionnaire about their child’s current intervention, if the child was enrolled in any type of speech therapy services. The children presented with a wide range of speech-language problems, from “simple” speech sound problems to children with significant communication problems related to other conditions, such as Down Syndrome or autism. Results showed that more than half of parents surveyed could not specifically identify goals their child was working on in therapy. There were differences in knowledge about therapy goals related to factors such as age of the child and parent education.

In a sample that included a large number of middle-class, well-educated parents, slightly more than one half of the group was able to list specific goals relating to their child’s speech-language treatment. Level of education and participation in private therapy appeared to be factors in parents’ knowledge about their child’s treatment.

There are barriers in terms of time, financial resources, competing priorities, etc. that must be carefully examined if parents are to become partners in the therapy process. Activities that can be integrated into daily activities should be considered an important means for parents to become partners in treatment without significant expenditure of time and effort.