



Case Study:

Remote Team Sets Up Telepractice Services for Child With Autism

SIG 18: Telepractice

Summary

A team of educational professionals worked together to set up speech-language pathology telepractice services for a 6-year-old child diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who had recently moved to a rural school district. By coordinating with an educational assistant working in the classroom, the speech-language pathologist (SLP) was able to observe and provide services remotely. The team worked with the boy to help him increase his communicative intents.

Student Info



MARCO ALVAREZ
6-YEAR OLD

Current Diagnosis:
ASD

Meet The Team



Occupational therapist (OT)



School psychologist



Special education director (SPED)



Special education teacher



Telepractice SLP¹



Student



Family

¹ Due to its rural location, the school provided speech and language services via telepractice.

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Background

Marco is a 6-year-old boy with a diagnosis of ASD. Marco recently started to gesture to objects and say words during sensory play. While reading books with an adult, Marco showed positive affect and rising intonation with single words while pointing to pictures. Marco also used pointing and some words to ask for things. After starting kindergarten, Marco moved to a rural school within the same state. Despite the move, Marco's family wanted him to continue with the multidisciplinary communication intervention that he had started in preschool. Marco's new classroom consisted of six students with ASD from grades K-2. Four of the students, including Marco, were nonverbal or minimally verbal. Classroom instruction was based on an Applied Behavior Analysis approach. The school used the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) for all nonverbal and minimally verbal students.

How They Collaborated

During the initial meeting, the team decided that the SLP, special education teacher, and OT would work together to develop classroom goals and objectives. They also discussed the logistics of setting up telepractice services in Marco's new school. Because the SLP's home was a 4-hour drive away, the special education director and OT assessed whether the school had the resources needed for telepractice. This included high-speed Internet for video conferencing and access to web cameras, touchscreens, and pointing devices. The team found that the school's resources were adequate.

Once the assessment was completed, the special education teacher and telepractice SLP worked together to set up telepractice technology in the classroom. When the technology was in place, the SLP would observe Marco remotely while he worked on short activities with the classroom-based educational assistant. The SLP would then provide direction to the assistant.

The school psychologist's role was to reach out to Marco's parents and orient them to their child's new school. The psychologist reported that Marco's parents were pleased with their son's classroom placement and the warm welcome that he received. However, Marco's mother was apprehensive about whether Marco would benefit from telepractice therapy. The interprofessional practice (IPP) team arranged for the telepractice SLP to address her concerns.

The team met to discuss their findings and identified two main goals for Marco. These goals included (1) increasing the number and variety of communicative intents and (2) initiating use of vocalizations paired with gestures. The team decided that the telepractice SLP would give instructional strategies and directions to the educational assistant twice a week. The special education teacher and the educational assistant would incorporate these strategies into Marco's day-to-day classroom routine and would update the telepractice SLP at each treatment session.

Outcome

Marco's use of communicative intents continued to grow during the academic year. At the end of the year, Marco demonstrated the ability to initiate vocalizations with gestures at least seven times during each 5-minute interaction.

Ongoing Collaboration

Marco's IPP team agreed that they would meet at least every 6 months to monitor his progress. The team facilitator suggested that the team reflect on the frequency of future meetings, acknowledging scheduling difficulties. The special education teacher and the SLP committed to posting Marco's session data online biweekly.

Case Rubric:

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Special seducation teacher



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History and Concerns

(Share key information gathered from team)



Marco is a 6-year-old boy diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). He attended Pre-K in a school-based preschool program and began kindergarten in August. His preschool intervention team used a multidisciplinary transactional approach to intervention (Social Communication, Emotional Regulation and Transactions – SCERTS), and his family expressed a preference for Marco to continue with this approach to communication intervention. In October, he moved to a school in a rural community but within the same state. His multidisciplinary evaluation was completed two months before.

Marco has recently started to initiate joint attention acts: making eye contact with positive affect during sensory play and while looking at books; and saying words and phrases as part of joint action routines, showing positive affect and rising intonation with single words while pointing to pictures during book-reading with an adult. Marco also uses gestures and some words to request desired objects.

Marco's new classroom consists of six students from grades K-2 who are diagnosed with ASD. Four of the students, including Marco, are nonverbal or minimally verbal. Classroom instruction is based on an Applied Behavior Analysis approach for all aspects of intervention, and a Picture Exchange Communication system (PECS) is used for communication intervention for all nonverbal and minimally verbal students.

At the PreK – 8 school, the IPP team consists of the special education director, the student's special education teacher, the occupational therapist (OT), and the school psychologist. Due to the school's rural location, speech and language services are delivered exclusively via telepractice. For Marco's case, the school's existing IPP team asked the telepractice SLP to join the team. During the preliminary meeting, the team discusses each member's role in providing Marco with an individualized plan. Collectively, the team decides that the SLP, special education teacher, and OT will work together to develop goals and objectives for implementation in the classroom.

Assessment Plan

(Determine roles/
responsibilities for
evaluation)

Given Marco's recent change in school setting, the team agreed that an assessment was necessary to determine the most effective means of providing telepractice SLP services. Through collective discussion, the team initially determined that the telepractice SLP should make a one-time trip to the school that was 4 hours from her home. The SLP's point of view was that local members of the IPP team could assess the school's resources and Marco's ability to engage in services using technology as a communication medium. Through discussion, the team concurred that an assessment by the local IPP team would meet Marco's needs. **The team reached consensus on an assessment plan and on the roles and responsibilities of each member:**



Special education director (SPED) and OT: School's current resources for telepractice, including access to webcams, touchscreens, pointing devices and internet speeds.



Special education teacher and the telepractice SLP: Classroom-based set up of telepractice technology, including location and activities for Marco to maximize engagement.



School Psychologist: Meet with Marco's parents to help orient them to the new school and discuss concerns/questions that they may have and schedule another meeting.



Assessment Results

(Summarize key diagnostic results)



SPED and OT: internet speed was adequate for video conferencing, and the school had access to a laptop with a touch screen and a web camera. Access to a wired mouse was secured in case touch capabilities were not sufficient.



Special education teacher and the telepractice SLP:

Marco adequately sustained attention to short (5 minute) activities with the classroom-based educational assistant when Marco and the assistant were away from the larger class, in a quiet corner of the room (where the SLP observed and provided treatment direction to the assistant). Also, Marco engaged in up to four, 5-minute activities in a row with at least a one-minute break between activities. He exhibited an average of 4 communicative intentions (joint attention, gestures, etc.) over the 5-minute task.



School Psychologist: Marco's parents were pleased with their son's classroom placement and the warm welcome that he received by teacher and classmates. Marco's mother expressed apprehension about whether Marco could benefit from telepractice therapy; the psychologist made arrangements for the SLP to address these concerns with Marco's mom.

IPP Treatment Plan

(Discuss, reflect, and modify recommendations to develop a coordinated plan)

The entire team discussed the results of Marco's assessment and identified two main goals, to increase: **(1)** communicative intents; and **(2)** use of vocalizations paired with gestures. The IPP team agreed that language-based SLP services would be accomplished through telepractice; the SLP will provide the educational assistant with directions for activities/interactions twice a week. Strategies recommended by the telepractice SLP during these sessions will then be incorporated into Marco's day-to-day classroom routine by his special education teacher and assistant. Implementation of the strategies/approaches to increase communicative intents will be discussed at each language treatment session with the telepractice SLP.

Treatment Outcomes

(Discuss results of treatment)

Marco's use of communicative intents continued to grow during the academic year. At the end of the academic year, Marco was using eye gaze and initiating vocalizations with gestures a minimum of 7 instances during each 5-minute interaction.

Team Follow-Up

(Determine meetings & communication plan)

Marco's IPP team will meet on a 6-month basis, or more frequently as needed, to monitor his progress and rate of progress. The facilitator suggested that the team reflect on the frequency of future meetings, acknowledging scheduling difficulties. The special education teacher and the SLP resolved to post online Marco's session data on a bi-weekly basis.

Acknowledgement

ASHA extends its gratitude to the subject matter expert(s) who were involved in the development of the original version of this IPP case:

Special Interest Group 18 (SIG 18): Telepractice

Citations

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. (n.d.). Remote Team Sets Up Telepractice Services for Child With Autism.

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