



ASHA
American
Speech-Language-Hearing
Association

**Ad Hoc Committee to Provide
Technical Support to the Ministry of
Health, the Inspiration Center, and
Its Partners of Belize**

October 2019

Final Report

*Provide Technical Support and Capacity
Building to the Ministry of Health (MOH), the
Inspiration Center (IC), and Its Partners of
Belize Regarding Communication Disorders*

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ASHA–PAHO Collaboration Belize

Final Report for Duration of the Ad Hoc Committee: 2017–2019

Belize Ad Hoc Committee Members

Lena G. Caesar (Chair)
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Belize Ad Hoc Committee Charge

The charge of this committee was to provide technical support and capacity building to the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Inspiration Center (IC), and its Partners of Belize regarding Communication Disorders.

Background

Belize has the distinction of being the only country in Central America where English is the official language. However, given its borders with Mexico to the north and Guatemala to the south, Spanish and Belize Creole are widely used. ASHA and PAHO conducted an initial needs assessment trip to Belize May 15–19, 2017. The trip’s agenda included meetings with representatives from several Belize-based institutions, including PAHO/Belize Office, the Inspiration Center, the Ministry of Health, the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, the Stella Maris, the National Resource Center for Inclusive Education, the Cayo Deaf Institute, the Patsie Browne Special Education Center, and Belize Health Partners. The ASHA team (ASHA content expert Frances Burns, PhD, CCC-SLP and ASHA Director of International Programs, Lily Waterston): (a) summarized the needs that each stakeholder identified during the visit and (b) developed a document that delineated those needs. Then, the ASHA team forwarded this document to the Belize stakeholders for their review, confirmation, and a concise response of prioritized needs. Needs identified by the Belize stakeholders included (a) training of education and rehabilitation personnel in the areas of typical speech, language, and hearing development; (b) accurate assessment and differential diagnosis; and (c) issues related to hearing impairment and aural rehabilitation. ASHA subsequently formed an ad hoc committee (listed above) for providing technical assistance to the country. See Table 1 for a summary of identified needs.

Table 1: Summary of ASHA Stakeholder Needs

Stakeholder	Stated Training-Related Need
1. Inspiration Center (IC)	Education for providers so as to prevent inappropriate referrals
2. Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital	Information on speech, language, and hearing development

Stakeholder	Stated Training-Related Need
3. Stella Maris	Training for teachers regarding speech, language, and hearing development
4. National Resource Center for Inclusive Education (NARCIE)	Training for special education officers regarding speech, language, and hearing
5. Cayo Deaf Institute	Training in educational audiology and in the identification of hearing loss
6. Ministry of Health	Training for rural health nurses and primary care providers
7. Patsy Browne	Training about children’s speech, language, hearing, and feeding needs

As demonstrated above, the needs identified by the Belize stakeholders included (a) training of education and rehabilitation personnel in the areas of typical and atypical speech, language, and hearing development; (b) accurate assessment and differential diagnosis of communication disorders; (c) issues related to hearing loss; and (d) diagnosis and management of autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

ASHA–PAHO-Sponsored Events

The ASHA–PAHO Ad Hoc Committee sponsored training and capacity-building events between 2017 and 2019.

ASHA–PAHO Event #1 (2018): The first ASHA–PAHO sponsored event, a “train-the-trainer” workshop, was organized by PAHO and the ad hoc committee. It took place in August 2018. This 3-day workshop provided practical information regarding “Evaluating Communication Disorders in Diverse Populations” and was led by ASHA Ad Hoc Committee Chair Lena Caesar EdD, PhD, CCC-SLP, and was supported by ASHA volunteer Sharlene Wilson Ottley, PhD, CCC-SLP. The primary goal of the workshop was to train local education and rehabilitation personnel in the areas of (a) speech, language, and hearing development; (b) accurate assessment and differential diagnosis; and (c) hearing impairment and aural rehabilitation. Participants included staff representatives from the Inspiration Center and the Ministry of Health, as well as country-based rehabilitation officers.

2018 Attendees: There were 34 representatives from the following institutions and entities: PAHO-Belize office, the Inspiration Center, the Ministry of Health (MOH), the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, the Stella Maris, the National Resource Center for Inclusive Education (NARCIE), the Cayo Deaf Institute, the Patsy Browne Special Education Center, Belize Health Partners, and other paraprofessionals who work in rural areas of the country.

Summary of Workshop Presentations

Day 1 (August 13, 2018)

Presenters – Lena G. Caesar and Sharlene Wilson Ottley

- Theme: Background to Assessment in Communication Disorders

- Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology: The Scope of the Professions
- Overview and Classification of Communication Disorders (ASHA and ICF)
- Typical Monolingual and Bilingual Speech and Language Acquisition
- Differential Diagnosis: Difference Versus Disorder

By the end of training on Day 1, participants were provided with sufficient knowledge and skills enabling them to:

- describe normal speech and language developmental milestones;
- identify the characteristics of atypical speech and language development;
- demonstrate the ability to differentiate speech and language *disorders* from speech and language *differences* (differential diagnosis);
- identify characteristics of monolingual versus bilingual speech and language development; and
- classify communication impairments using two classification systems: ICF and ASHA.

Day 2 (August 14, 2018)

Presenters – Lena G. Caesar and Sharlene Wilson Ottley

- Theme: Assessment Methods in Speech-Language Pathology
 - Principles of Assessment in Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology
 - Formal Assessment Methods in Speech-Language Pathology
 - Informal (Alternative Assessment Methods in Speech-Language Pathology)

By the end of training on Day 2, participants were provided with sufficient knowledge and skills enabling them to:

- describe the differing roles of formal versus informal assessment measures;
- list the advantages and disadvantages of formal versus informal assessment measures;
- demonstrate competence in administering, scoring, and interpreting formal and informal measures for specific populations;
- demonstrate familiarity with utilizing informal assessment methods; and
- identify suitable assessment measures for evaluating individuals with differing types of presenting symptoms.

Day 3 (August 15, 2018)

Presenters – Lena G. Caesar, Sharlene Wilson Ottley & Marcella Lutthans

- Theme: Assessment Methods in Speech-Language Pathology
 - Early identification of Children With Autism
 - Assessing Children With Hearing Loss
 - Assessing Adult Communication Disorders

By the end of training on Day 3, participants were provided with sufficient knowledge and skills enabling them to:

- identify and describe the “hallmark” defining characteristics for early identification of ASD in children;
- describe the distinguishing characteristics of specific adult “stroke-induced” impairments (e.g., aphasia vs. dysarthria vs. dysphagia), and share assessment strategies and techniques used to identify and assess these disorders; and
- demonstrate understanding of basic hearing anatomy and physiology as well as be able to identify different types of hearing loss using audiograms.

ASHA–PAHO Event #2 (2019): The second ASHA–PAHO sponsored event was also a “train-the-trainer” workshop conducted in Belize from July 2-4, 2019. The focus of this workshop was on “Therapeutic Strategies for Working With Children With Autism and Hearing Loss.” Presenters were the following ASHA volunteers: Lena G. Caesar, EdD, PhD, CCC-SLP, Donna Pitts, AuD, CCC-A, and Carol Westby, PhD, CCC-SLP. In addition, Juan Carlos Silva, MD, MPH (PAHO/WHO, Regional Advisor on Vision and Hearing) delivered the plenary address. The primary goal of the 2019 train-the-trainer workshop was to provide in-depth instruction and “hands-on” practical training in the areas of (a) audiology/hearing loss and (b) autism. These goals were selected based on feedback from course evaluations obtained following the 2018 workshop.

2019 Attendees: There were 38 representatives from the following institutions and entities: PAHO/Belize office, the Inspiration Center, the Karl Heusner Memorial Hospital, the Stella Maris School, the National Resource Center for Inclusive Education (NARCIE), in addition to other public and private preschool and elementary schools (Teach Me Pre-School, Horizon Academy, Belize Elementary School, Evergreen Elementary School, and Hummingbird Elementary School).

Summary of Workshop Presentations

Day 1 (July 2, 2019)

Presenters – Juan Carlos Silva (PAHO/WHO); Donna Pitts (ASHA)

- **Theme:** Supporting Children With Hearing Loss in Educational Settings
 - Prevention of Deafness and Hearing Loss
 - Overview of Hearing Loss: Definition, Causes, and Types
 - Screening and Diagnosing Hearing Loss
 - Early Identification and Intervention for Hearing Loss

By the end of training on Day 1, participants were provided with sufficient knowledge and skills enabling them to:

- describe specific measures for preventing deafness and hearing loss;
- identify different types and etiologies of hearing loss;
- demonstrate the ability to perform hearing screenings and interpret audiograms; and

- describe the benefits and processes of Early Intervention for children diagnosed with or at risk for hearing loss.

Day 2A (July 3, 2019)

Presenters – Donna Pitts (ASHA) and Lena G. Caesar (ASHA)

- **Theme:** Supporting Children With Hearing Loss in Educational Settings
 - Audiological Management of Hearing Loss: Hearing Aids and More
 - Classroom Strategies for Children With Hearing Loss

Day 2B (July 3, 2019)

Presenter – Lena G. Caesar (ASHA)

- **Theme:** Treatment Strategies for Children With Autism

By the end of training on Day 2, participants were provided with sufficient knowledge and skills enabling them to:

- discuss the advantages and disadvantages of different types of amplification devices;
- demonstrate strategies for working with children with hearing loss in educational settings;
- identify and describe the “hallmark” defining characteristics of autism;
- describe various criteria and tools used in the diagnosis of autism; and
- identify characteristics that differentiate autism from other similar disorders.

Day 3 (July 4, 2019)

Presenter – Carol Westby (ASHA)

- **Theme:** Treatment Strategies for Children With Autism
 - Use Theory of Mind (ToM) as a Basis for Intervention
 - Apply Sensory Integration Techniques for Children With Autism
 - Sing Social Stories for Children With Autism

By the end of training on Day 3, participants were provided with sufficient knowledge and skills enabling them to:

- describe early intervention and treatment approaches across age groups (including ToM and sensory integration techniques) and
- discuss specific strategies for accommodating children with autism in the classroom.

Next Steps: Summary of Debriefing Meeting

Persons Present

1. Jorge Polanco, PAHO
2. Juan Bolastig, PAHO
3. Carol Babb, CEO, Ministry of Education
4. Joyce Lopez, Executive Director, The Inspiration Center
5. Donna Pitts, ASHA Volunteer
6. Lena Caesar, Chair, ASHA–PAHO/Belize Ad Hoc Committee

On July 5, 2019, a debriefing session was held to discuss “next steps” with regard to the ASHA–PAHO collaboration and possible follow-up activities—given that the official ASHA–PAHO Ad Hoc Committee would be dissolving in late August 2019. Issues raised at the meeting included the following: (a) the paucity of services for the increasing prevalence of children with autism in Belize; (b) the need for parent training and orientation in the area of autism; (c) the need to put in place a systematic mechanism for disseminating information in the area of autism; (d) the need for a national initiative for early identification of children with hearing loss; and (e) the need for collecting data that would document the prevalence of (and, thus, the need for services related to) both autism and hearing loss in Belize.

Given these considerations, the group generated the following ideas:

- a. Select five to six individuals (from the training workshops) who can be further trained as “master trainers” for disseminating information about autism.
- b. Train these individuals to perform screenings and assessments for children suspected of having autism.
- c. Develop a system for collecting data on the prevalence of hearing loss and autism in Belize. (This would provide information to document a need and motivate the involvement of, and funding from, government agencies.)
- d. Begin data collection in the area of hearing loss by initiating a program that will screen children’s hearing before entering school or at the time of school entrance. (The committee strongly suggested that hearing screening could be the first initiative to put into place—given that hearing screening techniques were easily trainable and that screenings are efficient, timewise).
- e. In terms of hearing screenings, the group proposed that both NARCIE and The Inspiration Center would oversee the initiative.
- f. The group decided that the ASHA volunteers would await a written proposal from Belize in order to determine specific areas of support.

Although the official work of the ASHA–PAHO Ad Hoc Committee ended on August 31, 2019, members of the ad hoc committee have indicated their willingness to support the Belize initiatives through further technical assistance that will help close the gap between the need and the availability of speech-language pathology and audiology services in Belize.

