

Interprofessional Education for Inclusive Practice
May 7, 4pm-6pm
Burk Hall 170

Case Study Discussions

Case Study #1: Young Child with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Charlie is a 6-year old boy who was diagnosed with classic autism at age 24 months who is now getting ready to transition to kindergarten in his local elementary school. He is the youngest of 2 siblings, a sister, age 14 and brother, age 12 and lives with his family in an urban SF Bay Area community. His family placed him in early intervention services shortly after his initial diagnosis at 2 years of age, where he continued up until his 3rd birthday. His family found that the team was very supportive and responsive to their son, where he made developmental gains in the areas of interactive play and early communication development through using sign language and picture-based communication tools, both on paper and through APPs on an iPad.

Based on his parents' concerns that Charlie did not consistently respond to sounds at home, he was assessed by an audiologist who found a moderate unilateral hearing loss in Charlie's right ear. A hearing aid was recommended, yet his family found it difficult for Charlie to consistently wear this as it appeared uncomfortable and he frequently removed it.

Upon recommendation of his team and following his family preferences, Charlie transitioned to an inclusive private preschool setting in their neighborhood. The class size is small with the preschool teacher is also an early childhood special educator. His family and teacher decided to extend Charlie's placement in preschool up until age 6 and then transition him to kindergarten. In the preschool setting, Charlie has shown progress by participating in structured play with other children and following the classroom routines.

His language development has progressed, as he can often find words he wants to say and even spell them using his iPad. His verbal speech remains very limited and his team has not determined how his hearing loss and minimal use of his hearing aid contributes to his speech delay. While he successfully interacts with other children for limited periods, he continues to play alone with Legos, puzzles, books and art materials. He occasionally has meltdowns when his routines are changed. Charlie is a picky eater and often will only eat crunchy foods or foods that are specific colors. The speech-language pathologist has found that some textures are difficult for Charlie to chew and swallow and has consulted with a nutritionist to develop a program to assist him and his family.

In planning for his transition to kindergarten to a larger public elementary school classroom, his parents and preschool team want to maintain an inclusive program.

A recent transition meeting was held with the preschool team, Charlie's parents and public school team. Several concerns were identified in creating a plan for his transition to an inclusive classroom in his public school with appropriate supports.

The preschool teacher is uncomfortable having Charlie in the larger public school classroom because he benefits from carefully structured routines and fears his "meltdowns" will increase. The speech-language pathologist serving the preschool is concerned about services with an audiologist for a functional hearing aid system; his apparent difficulties in swallowing and eating certain foods; and continuing Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) tools with Charlie including sign language, pictures, and a communication APP on his iPad. Charlie's parents raised their concerns not only with Charles's limited communication but with his limited interaction with peers, solitary play, poor eating habits, and "meltdowns" with routine changes. A nutritionist consults to the public school program monthly but his parents are not sure if this is enough to attend to Charlie's diet and feeding at school. It is unclear at the public school who is taking the lead for managing Charlie's educational, social, health care needs in an inclusive classroom.

Discussion Questions

1. What are the key opportunities to improve coordination of Charlie's transition and educational plan in this case?
2. What factors of quality, outcome, or cost are obvious considerations to achieve an inclusive school placement?
3. What professionals need to be involved to achieve coordination and inclusion with his classmates for Charlie?
4. What strategies could improve the situation for Charlie and his family?