Perspectives on Feeding Interventions: Family System Engagement through a Collaborative Outlook

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Interdisciplinary Approaches to Feeding

Three LEND Programs have developed a working partnership to further explore feeding interventions for children with neurodevelopmental conditions.
Literature reviews, professional surveys, site visits, and trainings have been conducted as part of LEND leadership projects.
Our special emphasis has been to better understand and support a variety of diverse family systems with complex feeding concerns.

Team Characteristics

Specialized training required of all members:
- Achieve clinical competencies under guided mentorship to attain advanced level of practice
- Experience with interdisciplinary process and team structure
- Experience with assessment and treatment of the child and family in multiple settings
- Experience with typical feeding and development
- Experience with diverse cultures

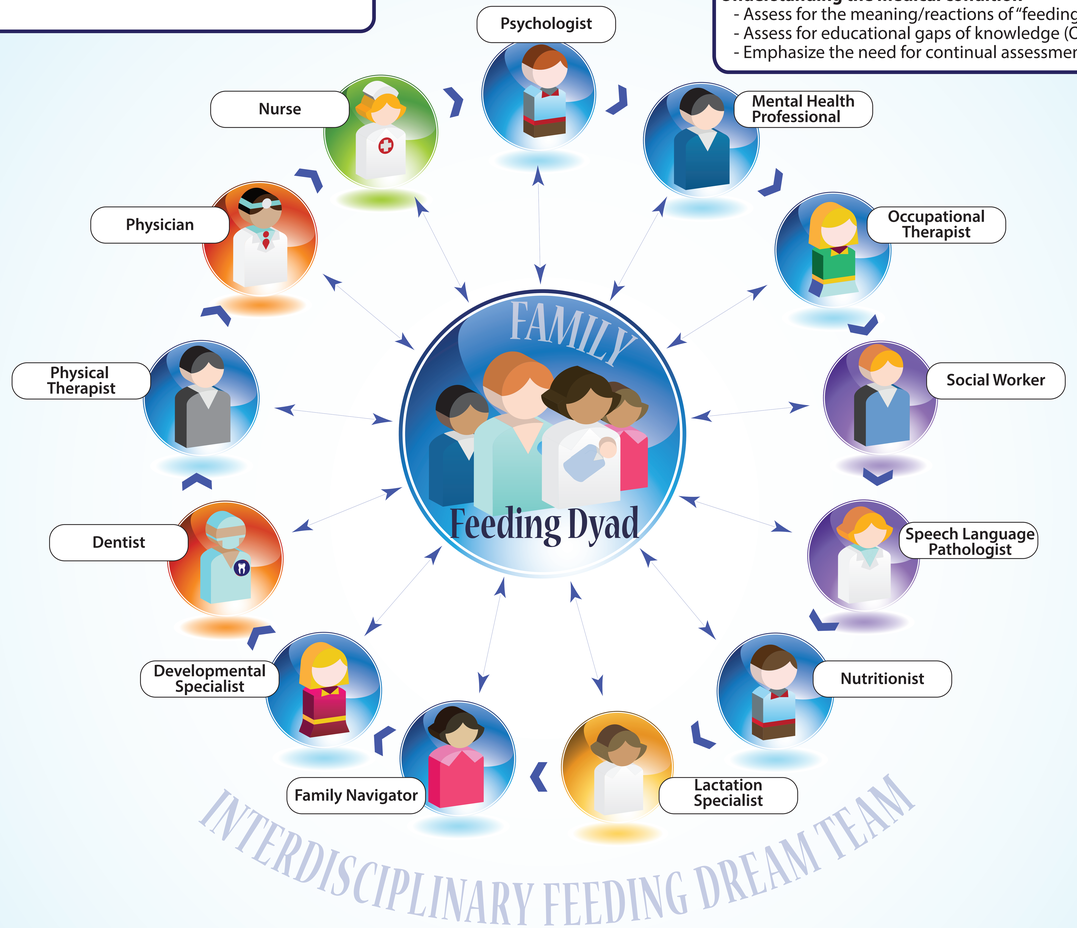
Shared roles within the team:
- Intake and initial triage for services
- Coordination and referral for services
- Communication between team members, family, & providers

Frameworks to Inform Care

Concepts and Constructs
- Family and culturally centered care
- Interdisciplinary assessment and treatment
- Family Systems Theory

Knowledge and Learning
- Impact of sensory process on feeding
- Sensory and oral development
- Impact of feeding experience on nutrition
- Feeding Strategies: breast/bottle feeding, developmental feeding stages, good nutrition
- Impact of dyadic experience on feeding
- Behavioral Change: behavior modification, parent training, counseling

Common Feeding Challenges, Including:
- Physical, structural, metabolic, sensory, behavioral, and psychological concerns



Implications for Family Systems Engagement

Providing a context for the child's developmental stage—physical cognitive, and emotional
- Impact on developmental learning
- Understanding of child's ability to self-regulate (emotions, feeding)

Understanding the medical condition
- Assess for the meaning/reactions of "feeding condition" to family
- Assess for educational gaps of knowledge (Other causes of feeding issues: dehydration, dental pain, medication interactions)
- Emphasize the need for continual assessment, providing support and resources, and normalizing reactions

Family Systems Engagement

Recognizing the child is part of a family system
What impacts client impacts other family members and visa versa (transactional)

Value and Embrace Diverse Family Structure
- Members, generations, acculturation, nontraditional /traditional, organizational style, literacy level
- How can they be positively involved in the care?

Assess family Process & Dynamics
- Meeting families where they are—physically, cognitively & emotionally
- Relationships: child to mother/parents/siblings/extended family; marital relationship, multigenerational
- Family hierarchy: How can you engage decision makers?

Conclusions

Most authors agree that the complexity and inter-related factors involved in feeding disorders demands that these problems be cared for by an interdisciplinary team. However, in practice, few such teams exist and there is limited consensus on how such teams should be structured, or what disciplines should be included

Next Steps

1. Develop and pilot practice guidelines and standards
2. Introduce core curriculum in training programs
3. Problem solve billing challenges
4. Explore Trauma Informed Care as component