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## More Than Therapy: Determining How Speech Language Pathologists Can Best Meet the Needs of Early Intervention Families

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## **More Than Therapy: Determining How Speech Language Pathologists Can Best Meet the Needs of Early Intervention Families**

Audiology & Speech-language Sciences

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Faculty Sponsor(s): Fahey, Kathleen

Speech and language disorders are the most common reason for early intervention services in children under the age of five. Early intervention seeks to lessen or eliminate the need for speech and language services later in the child's life by providing therapy to the child and education to the parents during the child's critical period of language development. Previous research has indicated that families of children with speech and language disorders are often dealing with other stressors including a lack of emotional support and the financial burdens of therapy and care. The relationship between the caregiver and the speech language pathologist is based on trust and rapport, and the caregivers need to feel that the therapist shares an interest in the child. This qualitative study uses individual interviews and focus groups from both speech language pathologists and caregivers to better understand the needs of caregivers and examine how effectively early intervention speech language pathologists meet these needs. We anticipate that caregivers of children with speech and language disorders are struggling with a lack of resources, including emotional and financial supports, as well the need for more education regarding their child. The results of this study could serve as a training tool for speech language pathologists in meeting the needs of the families they serve.