

Filling the Gap: Development of Best Practice Guidelines to Support Speech-Language Pathologists Working with Autistic Clients

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Introduction

- Speech-language pathologists (SLPs) are among the most important clinicians involved in providing assessment and therapy services for autistic children.¹
- SLPs receive limited training and resources related to provision of care for children with autism before they are expected to practice.²
- **Project Aim:** to integrate policy, research and clinical expertise to create a best-practice guidelines document to support clinical decision making for speech-language pathologists working with autistic children and youth.

Methods

Figure 1: Collaborative-Action Research Approach



Phase 1: Policy-Based Framework

- Policy documents were reviewed and main themes were extracted to create a best-practice framework.

Phase 2: Review of the Literature

- A targeted literature review was conducted to yield information for themes extracted and explore the implications of research on SLP practice.

Phase 3: Clinician Opinion & Expertise

- Interviews were conducted with community SLPs to gather expert opinion and feedback.
- Qualitative thematic analysis was used to identify key themes across all interviews.

Speech-language pathologists' autism assessment and intervention practices should be:

Inclusive



Individualized



Collaborative



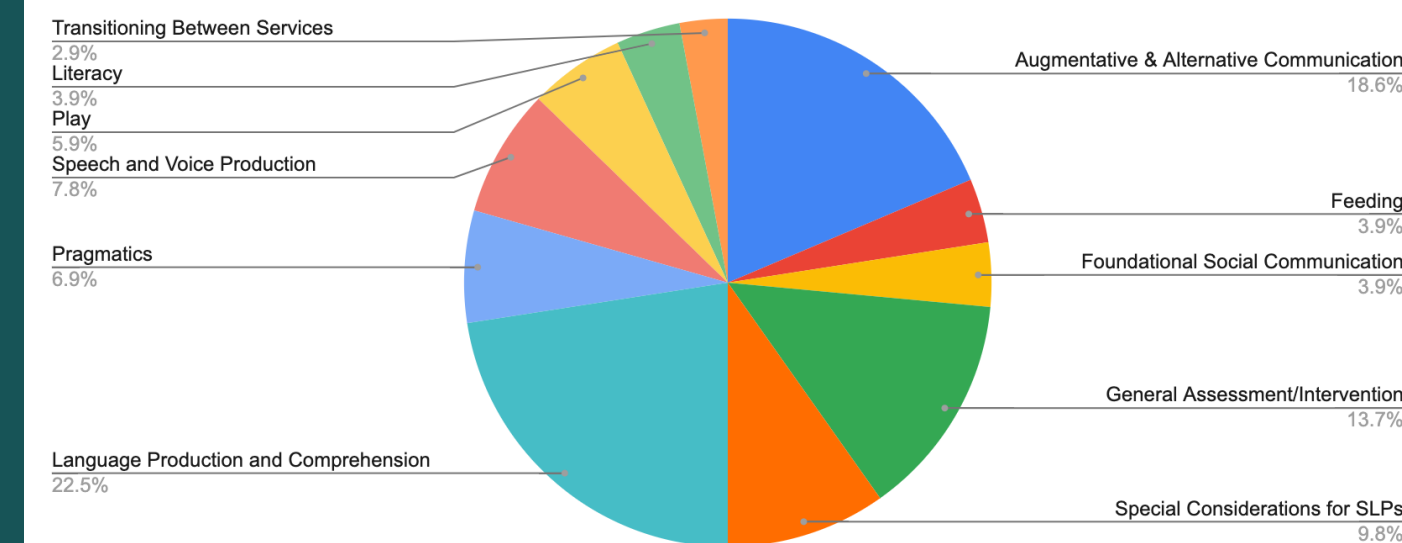
Diversified



Results

- **Phase 1:** 48 documents reviewed
- **Phase 2:** 134 documents reviewed
- **Phase 3:** 5 interviews conducted; an additional 53 documents reviewed based on feedback

Figure 2: Area-Specific Documents Submitted by Community SLPs During Phase 2



- Four major themes emerged from the multi-phase review.
 - Assessment and intervention must be: inclusive, diversified, collaborative and individualized.

Discussion

- Specific recommendations aligned with each theme are provided to support best-practices.
- Next steps:
 - Development of a knowledge hub and tools to support dissemination and implementation of guidelines³
 - Examination of impact on client outcomes

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References

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3. Flodgren, G., Hall, A. M., Goulding, L., Eccles, M. P., Grimshaw, J. M., Leng, G. C., & Shepperd, S. (2016). Tools developed and disseminated by guideline producers to promote the uptake of their guidelines. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.cd010669.pub2>