A BILINGUAL APPROACH TO PEDIATRIC OT

Approximately 39,000 Latinos live in Washington county & 44,000 Latinos live in Benton county, making up a significant portion of Northwest Arkansas.

78% of Latinos in Arkansas speak a language other than English, which is most often Spanish, at home. 41% speak English “less than very well”.

This information is part of a research study completed by Emily Ann Davidson in fulfillment of her undergraduate Honors Thesis requirement. Emily Ann graduated from the University of Arkansas in 2019 with a Bachelor of Arts in Biology & a Bachelor of Arts in Spanish, with minors in Psychology & Latin American studies. For more details or a complete copy of the research study, contact the author at emilydavids28@gmail.com.

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The Importance of Communication Between Occupational Therapists & Spanish-speaking Families in Northwest Arkansas

This research study conducted an online survey of administrators, clinic managers, and providers of outpatient pediatric occupational therapy services in Northwest Arkansas to assess the following:

- Current practices of occupational therapists in NWA regarding their linguistic abilities, history of working with patients and families that speak a non-English language, and interpreter use
- Perceived need for interpreters and bilingual providers in NWA
- Willingness to provide services with greater language access to Spanish-speaking families and patients with limited English proficiency in NWA

**CURRENT PRACTICES**

- 100% of OTs surveyed have worked with a patient & interacted with a patient’s family that spoke a non-English language
- Of the administrators & clinic managers surveyed, only 44% currently employ a bilingual OT
- 70% of OTs have worked with untrained interpreters in a therapy session, 80% with a patient’s family, & 30% did not have an interpreter at their clinic

**PERCEIVED NEED**

- 70% of OTs have needed an interpreter in a therapy session, most commonly for Spanish & second for Marshallese
- 100% of OTs have needed a Spanish interpreter in interactions with a patient's family
- OTs agree (average 4.1 response on a 5 point scale) that having a trained interpreter regularly available at their clinic would help them better fulfill their goals as an OT when working with bilingual patients & families

**WILLINGNESS TO PROVIDE**

- 88.9% of administrators & clinic managers were willing to employ trained Spanish-English interpreters
- Only 37.5% of administrators & clinic managers currently pay a bilingual OT a higher salary
- However, 75% of administrators & clinic managers indicated they would be willing to pay a bilingual OT a higher salary

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDIATRIC OT**

Outpatient pediatric therapy clinics in NWA need to increase language access for Spanish-speaking patients & families. In working with Spanish-speaking patient & family populations with limited English proficiency, bilingual, culturally competent OTs are ideal. Trained interpreters are necessary when a bilingual OT is not available. While in-person interpreters are preferable, videoconferencing medical interpretation services are an acceptable, cost-effective alternative.