

resources

Empower Me: Family-Centered Practice

Petra Kern, Ph.D., MT-BC, MTA,
DMtG
Music Therapy Consulting
Santa Barbara, California

One of the guiding principles of service delivery for young children with disabilities and their families is family-centered practice. Qualities characterizing family-centered practice encompass strength-based, collaborative, enhancing, and empowering strategies that provide families with a sense of confidence and competence about their child's learning and development. Meaning, families and professionals work together in partnership to achieve goals by utilizing services, resources, and supports mutually agreed upon.

While most early childhood music therapists in the USA are familiar with family-based practice models, colleagues abroad are only starting to consider them. Family-centered music therapy sessions are provided in various music therapy settings including community programs, hospitals, institutes, and the family's home. As the family-centered practice model is gaining momentum in music therapy practice around the world, it is necessary to know about the benefits and be informed about latest developments. The following resources invite reflection on and encourage continued growth and progress in providing family-centered music therapy services to empower families to manage their own lives effectively while supporting their hopes and dreams for their children.

Family-Based Practices DEC Monograph Series No. 5

This classy 2002 collection of articles discusses the values, beliefs, and practices inherent in DEC's recommended practice definition while providing practical

information and examples of how to implement family-centered practice in early intervention/early childhood special education services. The monograph also emphasizes the understanding of family perspectives and the importance of honoring and supporting cultural differences, values, and languages spoken in each home.

Family-Professional Collaboration: Resources FPG Child Development Institute at UNC at Chapel Hill

Looking for a compilation of resources? This webpage offers a list of research articles (currently from 2007-2012) that provide evidence for family-centered practice under *Why Do It?*, selected books, chapters, and articles suggesting strategies for parents and practitioners on how to implement family-centered practice under *Read All About It*, videos for hands-on illustrations under *See for Yourself*, and web resources featuring organizations that support family-based practice under *Find It Online*.

Child Welfare Information Gateway: Family-Centered Practice

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

"To build on families' strengths to achieve optimal outcomes," the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services created a webpage that defines key elements of family-centered practice, provides overarching strategies for implementation across the service continuum, and explains how to engage families and involve them in the decision-making process about the best care for their child. There is also a focus on encouraging communities to support families and how to create a family-centered agency culture that embraces family participation and engagement.

Family-Professional Partnerships CONNECT Module 4

FPG Child Development Institute at UNC at Chapel Hill

Currently seven online modules are offered for professional development; one addresses family-centered practice. Each module goes through a 5-step process starting with 1) a practice dilemma demonstrated in videos, 2) a PICO question to find the evidence behind the practice, 3) key sources (e.g., definitions, research, policies, and experience-based knowledge from practitioner and families) to make an informed decision, 4) the decision-making process to plan for implementation, and 5) the evaluation of the plan. This online module is also available in Spanish and can be easily applied to music therapy practice.

FINE Newsletter Harvard Family Research Project

In 2013 the FINE Newsletter highlighted new and innovative approaches to preparing and training educators for family engagement. Participants observed classrooms and searched online to find out how college/university faculty and professional development trainers are supporting current and future educators to learn and practice family engagement techniques through hands-on activities, simulations, online courses, and case-based discussions. Following this initiative, resources for training community outreach workers on different cultural views and norms in the area of family engagement are in the planning stages.

Parent Engagement Child Care & Early Education Research Connections

This site features *Topics of Interest* highlighting newly released research, policies, and topic-related resources. In 2014, the site spotlighted recent review of research on a) the role of parents' engagement in promoting academic learning of young children, b) parent engagement in the context of Head Start programs, and c) the quality of relationships between families and early care and education providers. The outcomes of this evolving body of research resulted in a recent policy brief describing models, state initiatives, and policy strategies to strengthen parent engagement from preschool to grade 3.

National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice

Located at the University of Iowa School of Social Work, this center promotes *family-centered, community-based, culturally competent practice within organizations and across systems*. The National Resource Center offers training and technical assistance in family-centered practice such as *Family Centered Assessment Training, Strength-Based Case Planning, Family Group Decision Making: A Decision Model that Strengthens Families*, and *Welcoming Fathers into the Circle of Family Centered Practice*. An online curriculum for family-centered practice and a certification program are provided as well. The resources and related links section of the website offers reports, publications, presentations, and project descriptions and outcomes.

Center for Parent Information and Resources

Based on the idea of family-centered practice, this fairly new website quickly has become a hub for parents and professionals alike. Under the presently 14 priority topics listed, practitioners and families can find fact sheets on disabilities transferred from NICHCY, information related to parent-centered practice, and other valuable resources. The intention of this site is to provide products and material that support the work with families, to increase parents' knowledge and capacity in specific domains, and to increase the coordination of parent training efforts.

Music Therapy with Families Network

At the 2013 European Congress of Music Therapy in Oslo, Norway, four music therapists from around the world (i.e., D. Thomas, UK; K. Tuomi, Finland, P. Kern, USA, and G. Thompson, Australia) discussed in a roundtable the benefits of a worldwide Music Therapy with Families Network. Over the past year, a LinkedIn Group served as a platform for the exchange of resources. As of September 2014, the group migrated to a closed Facebook Group with monthly discussion themes. Professional music therapists are invited to join.

ECMT Network

AMTA's Early Childhood Music Therapy Network provides a platform for information exchange, discussion, and support for music therapists working with young children and their families. During the annual meeting and at the ECMT Network Facebook Group, members are exchanging current trends and topics of interest including family-centered practice. As a contribution to the *Music Therapy with Families Network*, *imagine* 5(1) 2014 has been dedicated to family-centered practices, which is reflected in the articles and podcasts of the issue.

About the Author



Petra Kern, Ph.D., MT-BC, MTA, DMtG, business owner of Music Therapy Consulting is online professor at the University

of Louisville, serves as editor-in-chief of *imagine* and on AMTA's Priority on ASD's Steering Committee. Her research and clinical focus is on young children with ASD, inclusion programming, and educator/parent coaching.

Contact: petrakern@musictherapy.biz



Raising Harmony™

Music Therapy For Young Children

www.RaisingHarmony.com

We believe visionary programs will transform the practice of music therapy.

- ♪ Sprouting Melodies Early Childhood Programs
- ♪ Sprouting Melodies Training
- ♪ Sprouting Melodies Business Packages
- ♪ "You and Me Makes... We" Songbook
- ♪ The Raising Harmony Blog
- ♪ Customized presentations for students and professionals on early childhood, development, music therapy, growing a music therapy business, and more.

By Music Therapists; For Music Therapists

Thank you to the editorial team of *imagine* for imagining the possibilities.