



Stephanie Crawford (Speech Pathologist)

Developing positive relationships

The parent is a really pivotal part of the team and our practice philosophy is to make sure that the parent feels like they are driving the bus, we will often give them the guidance and give them the road map but they really need to feel like they are in charge. They are the ones that know their child best, they are the ones that have the difficult times at home as well as celebrating the positive times and they are the ones that need to be equipped with the skills as their children develop.

One of the things that we have found with the FaHCSIA funding is that it opens up therapy for a lot of different people. To sustain that level of therapy after the FaHCSIA funding runs out is difficult. Our practice philosophy is to make sure that parents are as independent as possible and have much information as they can to continue on once the FaHCSIA funding is finished.

It's important to make sure that the parents are involved in the goal setting and also to have a really clear understanding of how the parent and the family function so we can tailor therapy to what they need. The other thing that we really encourage and a lot of parents find difficult is them asking as many questions as they want and also raising concerns when things are going wrong. Parents will often apologise to us when they are raising something that they are concerned about and what is really important for them to understand is that without them raising those concerns, we can't have an effective therapy relationship so we actually welcome that and we encourage that because we need to be able to problem solve to get the best outcomes for the child.

We can give suggestions and home programs and advice based on what our experience is but without the parents giving us feedback, whether it be positive or negative we can't tailor it clearly to the child. The parents involvement is very important, we also think that it is really important that we listen to the parents about what they're able to do at home, parents read a lot of research about needing 20 hours of therapy a week or they should be doing weekly therapy or they should be practicing every chance that they get, we try and have a realistic approach and the reality is that your whole life can't be about your child's therapy, there are many other components to a family life so we need to make sure that the therapy fits into the family and that we are flexible so that the family can get what they need to get done as well as the therapy. The last thing that we want is for parents not to feel guilty for not being able to do enough homework or not meeting the tasks that we set so we always try and make them as functional as possible. For example; we try and do as many activities as we can do within the car trip or at dinner time when you are doing things that you would normally do. That is another reason that we encourage the communication from the parent so that we can continually tailor the homework to meet the parents and family's needs.

*** This is an approximate transcription only; minor modifications have been made to assist the reader.*