Autism and Hearing Loss: Getting The Most Out of Your Audiology Report

Kalley Ellis, AuD, CCC-A (1, 3); Sandra Gabbard, AuD CCC-A (2, 4)
1. Lend Trainee, JFK Partners, University of Colorado, Denver
2. Lend Faculty, JFK Partners, University of Colorado, Denver
3. Wyoming EHDI Program
4. Marion Downs Center

OBJECTIVE
To ensure parents and caregivers are provided with thorough and clearly written audiology reports. Such reports should provide detailed testing and recommendations, along with necessary resources for further evaluation needs, such as autism.

BACKGROUND
Hearing loss and Autism can appear the same in many ways (lack of eye contact, nonsocial behavior, etc). Additionally, 1 in 59 children with hearing loss are also diagnosed with Autism. Ensuring a child receives an appropriate evaluation for autism is vital and can be more difficult in rural areas where resources are not as accessible, such as Wyoming. Many times, children with whom there are concerns for autism are seen initially by an audiologist to rule out hearing loss. It is within an audiologist’s scope of practice to observe, screen, and provide resources for further evaluation for autism. However, depicting such information is not universally depicted in an audiology report, and, at times, reports can be confusing and lacking information. A report template that can be utilized by audiologists, depicting behavioral observations through the appointment(s), as well as available and reliable referral sources for autism screening and evaluation is important to ensure children receive appropriate and timely diagnoses.

METHODS
1. Researched providers who advertise autism services in Wyoming and surrounding states.
2. Created a list of recommended autism referral sources.
3. The audiology template used at CDC+ Audiology was extended to include a section termed ‘Autism Resources’, as well as areas in the ‘Case History’ and ‘Audiology Test Battery’ sections to indicate “red flags” for autism observed in the child’s appointment(s).
4. The ‘Autism Resource’, a list of reputable facilities and providers, along with the importance of an autism evaluation is included, along with a website for family support of children with autism.

CONCLUSION
Certain resources in Wyoming, specifically reliable and accurate autism evaluations, are extremely scarce. As such, it was necessary to determine within the states surrounding Wyoming. Of the resources obtained the report template was created. This template will allow for easy understanding and access to where a family can go for a full autism evaluation.

REFERENCES

Acknowledgements
This project was supported in part by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) under the Leadership Education in Neurodevelopmental Disabilities (LEND) Grant T73MC11044. This information or content and conclusion are those of the author and should not be construed as the official position or policy of, nor should HRSA, HHS or the U.S. Government infer any endorsements.