

**HOPE** Cochlear®  
Psychological Resources

## Including Fathers in Their Child's Intervention & Habilitation

K. Todd Houston, PhD, CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT  
The University of Akron

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**Introduction**

Cochlear America's Commitment to Educational Outreach

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**Our Presenter**



K. Todd Houston, PhD, CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT

Dr. Houston is an Associate Professor in the School of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology at The University of Akron. His primary areas of research are listening & spoken language development in children with hearing loss, parent engagement, & telepractice.

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## Learning Objectives

- Identify traditional stereotypes of parenting roles between mothers & fathers
- Describe fathers' positive & negative perspectives about various service delivery models
- List specific strategies for including fathers in their child's intervention & habilitation



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## Perceptions

Fathers have been described as the *secondary, peripheral,* and even the *imaginary* parent.



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## Research Bias

- Where as research on mothers have traditionally focused on issues of parenting/nurturing, emotional bonding, language/communication stimulation, reactions to diagnoses, etc., most research on fathers has focused on *paternal pathologies*:
  - Abusive fathers
  - Fatherlessness (absent fathers/single parenting)
  - “Deadbeat Dads”
- We need to explore responsible, involved fathering as well as continue to understand parental problems.

(Dollahite, 2004)



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## Research



- Zero to Three Survey (2010) (n=1600) found positive correlations between high levels of father involvement & subsequent emotional, behavioral, cognitive, & learning outcomes in their children.
- Fathers have been shown to strengthen early development by helping their children:
  - Acquire problem-solving skills;
  - Exhibit persistence skills when faced with challenges;
  - Feel secure enough to explore the world around them;
  - Have greater tolerance for stress; &
  - Develop greater confidence in their own abilities & thoughts.

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## Children with Special Needs



- Like mothers, fathers often experience intense emotions related to their child's diagnosis of a disability.
- Fathers often respond creatively & have a significant impact on their children with special needs.
- Fathers continue to be the "secondary" parent despite:
  - intense emotions related to their child's diagnosis
  - demographic trends that have led to an increase in shared responsibilities.

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## National Deaf Children's Society Study (2006) – United Kingdom



- Aimed to examine fathers' feelings about having a child with hearing loss & the services that support them.
- A total of 33 fathers in face-to-face focus group.
- Found that fathers wanted:
  - more involvement with their child, family, & support services
  - to receive information first-hand
  - their unique roles recognized and supported through networks
  - flexibility of employers to attend appointments, &
  - flexibility of service providers if employers were not flexible.

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## Current Study



A 47-question survey to evaluate fathers' perspectives about their inclusion in & satisfaction with the habilitation services their child has received.

Proposed Research Questions:

- Do fathers feel adequately included in support services & the intervention process?
- How can professionals include & involve fathers in their child's services?
- Do fathers feel that their child's hearing loss has a negative effect on their relationship with their child?

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## Methods: Collection and Analysis



- SurveyMonkey.com was utilized to collect survey responses.
- Survey Monkey automatically reports number and percentage totals for each question & its corresponding answers.
- Surveys received by mail were manually entered into the online collector.
- Results were exported into a Microsoft Excel document for further evaluation.

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## Methods: Participants



- 152 paper surveys that included a link to the online survey were distributed to fathers. (51 returned; 34% response rate)
- The Alexander Graham Bell Association for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (AG Bell) published a link in their weekly electronic newsletter to its members.
- Social Media was utilized to inform prospective fathers of the survey link (Facebook, LinkedIn).
- Hands & Voices published a link on their website.
- Total number of participants: **262 Complete Surveys**

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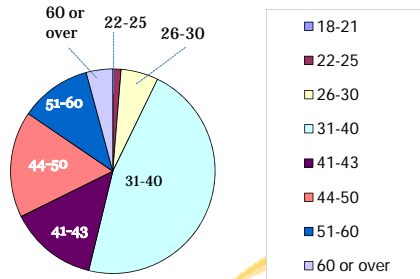
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Demographics of Fathers:  
Age of Fathers



Father's Age at Time of Study



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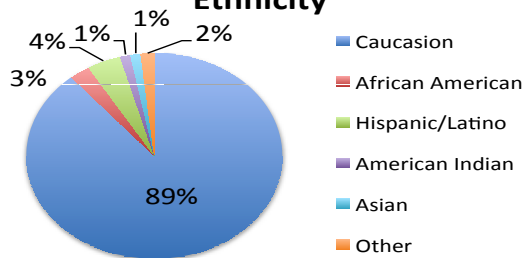
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Demographics of Fathers



Ethnicity



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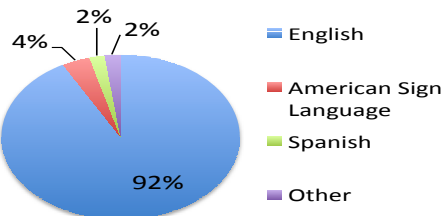
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Demographics of Fathers



Primary Communication in the Home



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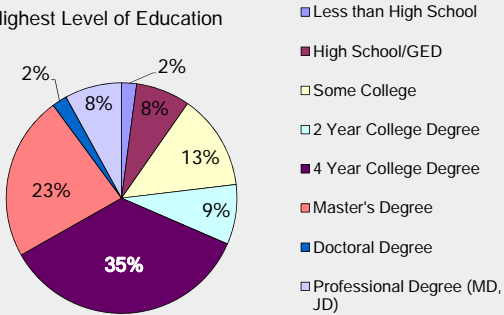
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### Demographics of Fathers: Educational Level



Highest Level of Education




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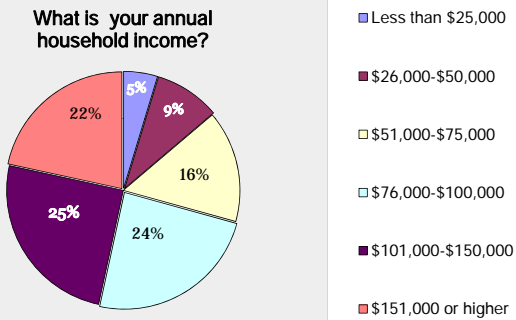
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### Demographics of Fathers: Household Income



What is your annual household income?




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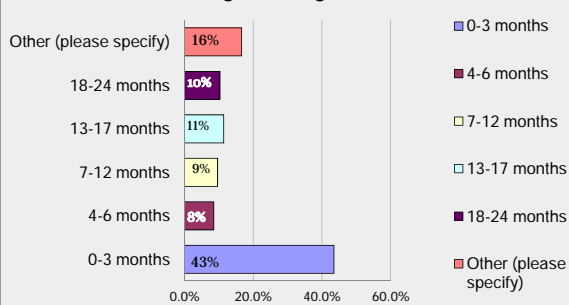
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### Demographics of Children: Time of Diagnosis



Age at Diagnosis




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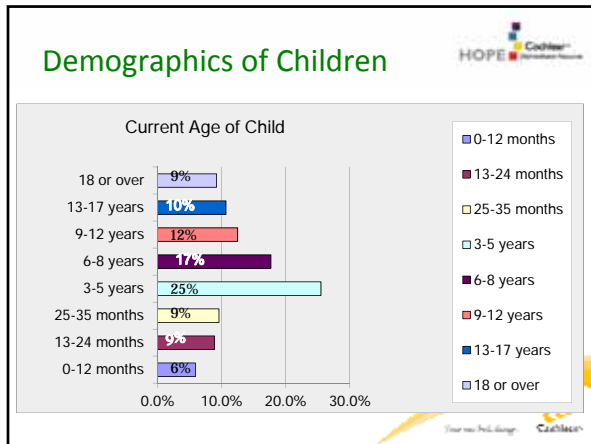
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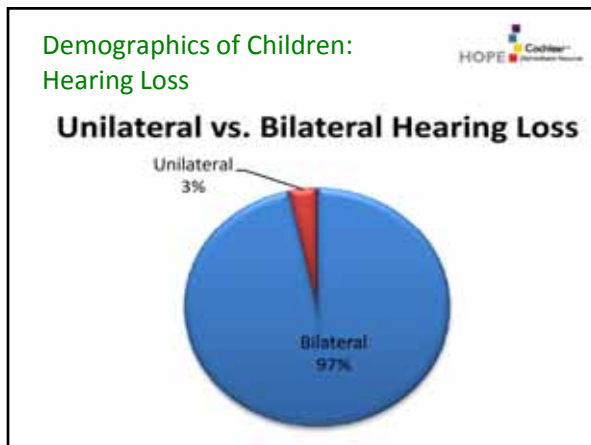
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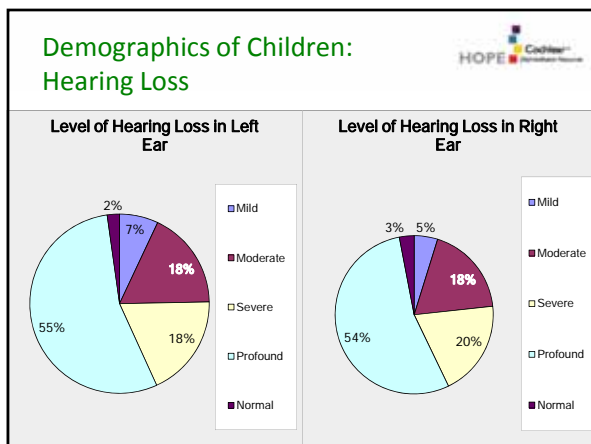
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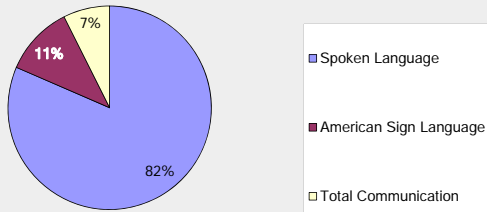
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## Demographics of Children: Main Form of Communication



Children's Main Form of Communication




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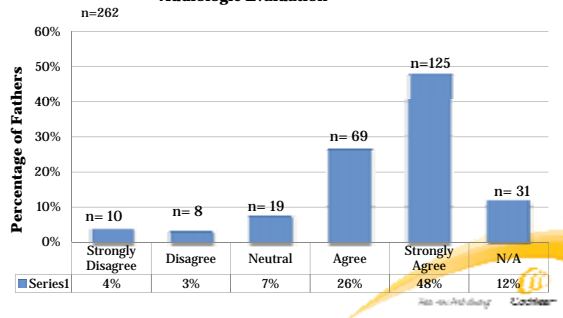
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## Results: Inclusion in Support & Intervention Services by Professionals



Professionals' Inclusion of Fathers at the Initial Audiologic Evaluation




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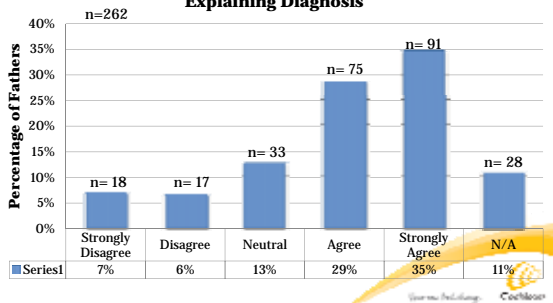
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## Inclusion in Support & Intervention Services by Professionals



Professionals' Sensitivity to Fathers' Feelings When Explaining Diagnosis




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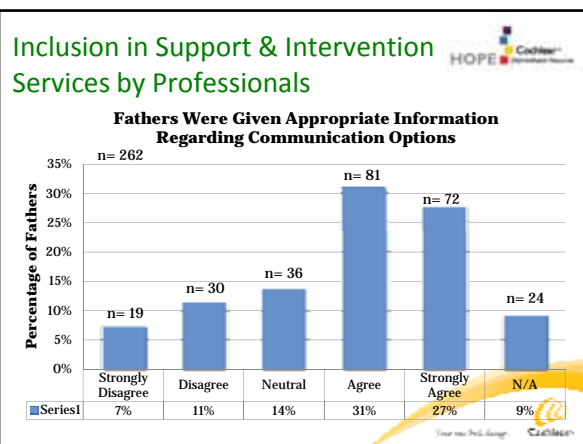
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## Inclusion in Support & Intervention Services by Professionals




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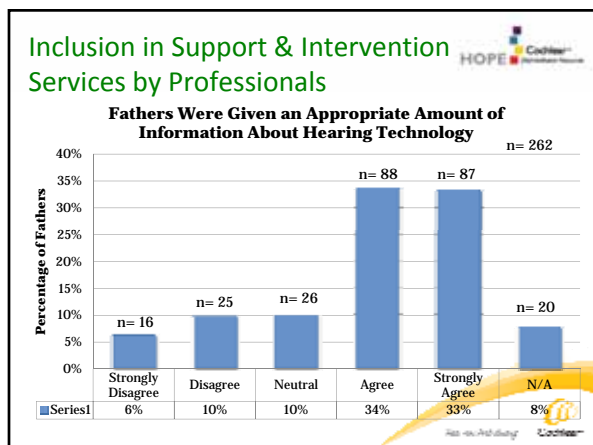
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## Inclusion in Support & Intervention Services by Professionals




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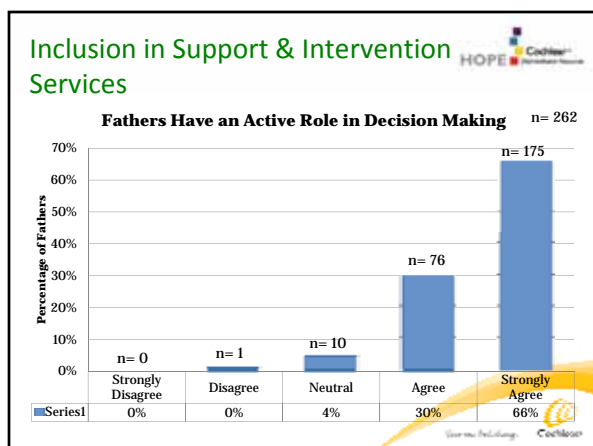
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## Inclusion in Support & Intervention Services




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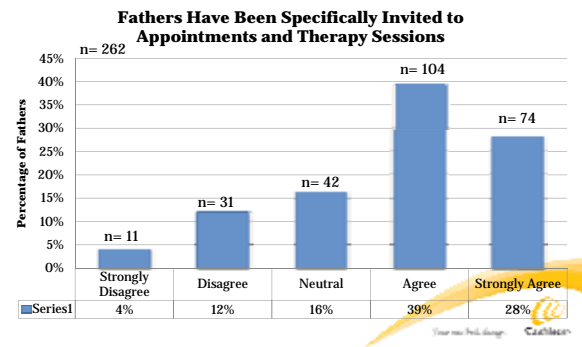
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## Inclusion in Support & Intervention Services by Professionals




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## One Father's Perspective



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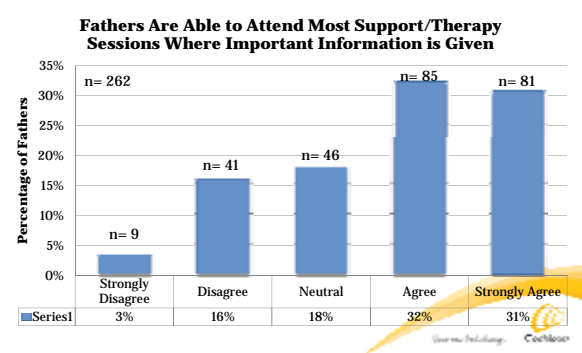
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## Inclusion in Support & Intervention Services




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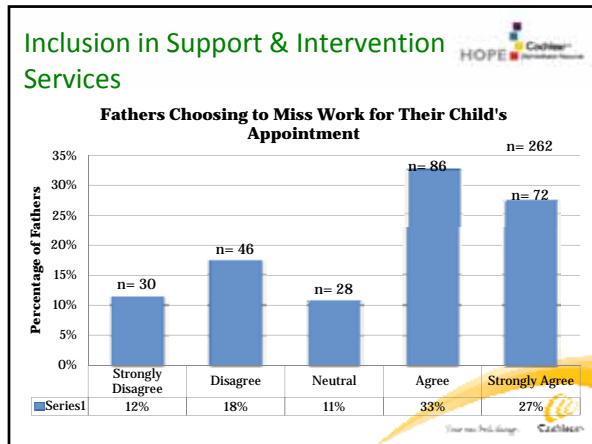
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## Inclusion in Support & Intervention Services




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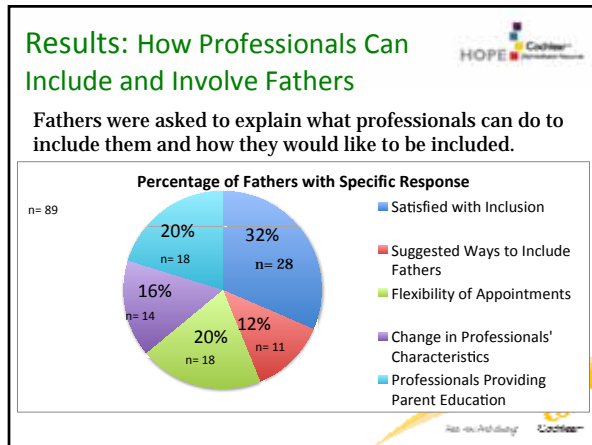
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## Results: How Professionals Can Include and Involve Fathers

Fathers were asked to explain what professionals can do to include them and how they would like to be included.




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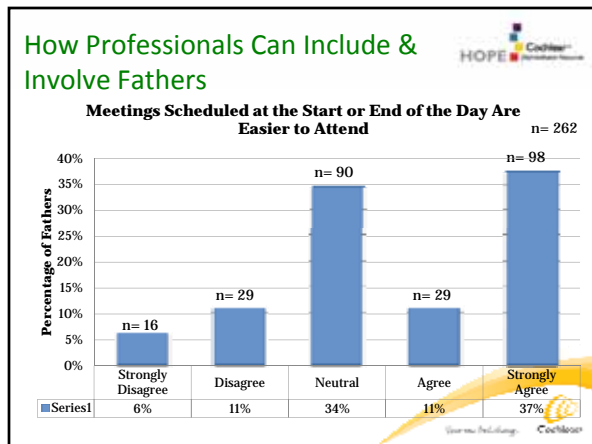
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## How Professionals Can Include & Involve Fathers




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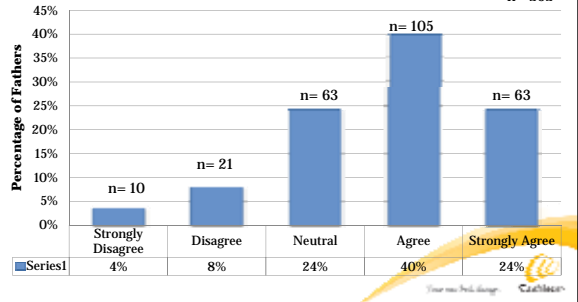
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## How Professionals Can Include & Involve Fathers

### A Guide Showing Important Meetings Would Help Me Prioritize My Schedule




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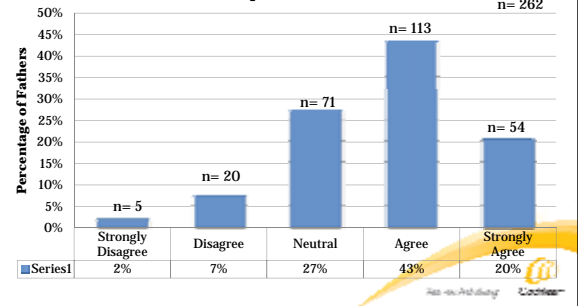
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## How Professionals Can Include & Involve Fathers

### Video Recordings/Write-ups of Meetings I Miss Would Help Me Feel Included




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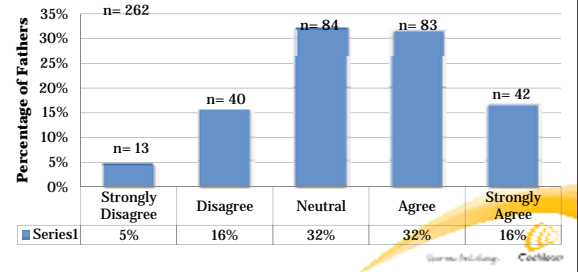
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## Results: Support Services for Fathers

### Fathers Who Would Attend Support Groups Specifically for Fathers of Children with Hearing Loss




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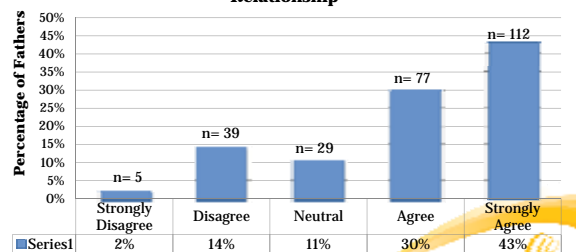
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## Does Hearing Loss Have a Negative Impact on the Father-Child Relationship?

### Communication With the Child is Fairly Easy and the Hearing Loss Does Not Impact the Father/Child Relationship



## Conclusions/Discussion

- Overall, the majority of fathers reported satisfaction with their level of inclusion and involvement.
- They reported and/or perceived:
  - that professionals have invited them to attend meetings and therapy sessions.
  - that they attended most important appointments.
  - that they were included and involved during support services.
  - that they had an active role in decision making.



## Discussion

- Fathers suggested:
  - Phone consultations
  - Email/blogs
  - Father-only appointments
  - Looking at fathers when talking to parents
  - Summaries of appointments
  - Teaching fathers what is to be expected
  - Giving them permission to ask questions, seek further help



## Discussion



- **Fathers suggested, *continued*:**
  - Flexibility of appointments – time of day
  - Would like meetings on weekends
  - Extended hours (early/late)
  - Separate notification of appointments

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## Discussion

- **Father suggested that *professionals* should:**
  - Be knowledgeable, up-to-date with latest information
  - Share advice, information, & options right away
  - Be more **proactive** about including fathers:
    - Don't ignore fathers, eye contact, ask how they are coping, seek ways to support them in the process
  - Be unbiased in your recommendations

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## Discussion

- **Professional Characteristics:**
  - Be sensitive & empathetic to their situation (fathers)
  - Treat the father as *equal partners* in the parenting process
  - Don't make assumptions about the father's role or level of interest
  - Recognize the importance of fathers in the lives of their children with hearing loss
  - Understand that fathers may respond creatively
  - Be sensitive to cultural & religious differences and corresponding role of the father

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## Discussion



- **Professionals providing parent education:**
  - Provide father-specific education
  - Provide information on meetings/conferences
  - Pinpoint sources of information/materials (websites, books, support materials)
  - Discuss/explain the latest technology
  - Connecting to advocates & other parents, especially other fathers
  - Navigating service delivery process (Part C, public schools)
  - Activities, strategies, goals & targets for fathers to do at home to improve communication development
  - Information on *father* support groups

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## Limitations of the Study



- Were fathers who participated in the current study already more involved than some?
- Fathers were contacted not only through public school systems, but also through non-profit organizations that offer information on hearing loss, resources and support networks (AG Bell, Hands & Voices).
- Does choosing to be a part of these groups mean they were more involved and more likely to feel included?

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## Limitations of the Study



- The majority of participants were Caucasian males with high levels of education and high income levels.
- There was a lack of representation from more diverse ethnic groups and fathers with lower socioeconomic statuses.

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## Future Research



- Reach out to fathers who may not be receiving support from non-profit organizations; target more fathers of older, school-age children.
- Evaluate how fathers of lower socioeconomic statuses as well as more diverse ethnic groups feel about services.
  - Were they included by professionals?
  - Did they receive appropriate information on communication options and hearing technology?
  - Did they have an active role in decision making?
  - How do these factors affect fatherhood?




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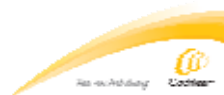
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## Future Research



- Fathers reported being generally satisfied with their involvement and inclusion in services.
  - Would spouses agree on the extent of the father's involvement? Would spouses rate them as highly?
  - Would professionals rate fathers as highly as fathers rate themselves?




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## Advice from a Father




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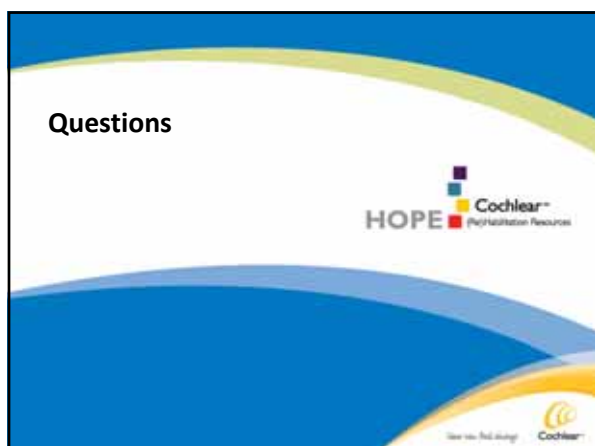
## Thank You for Listening!



**K. Todd Houston, PhD, CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT**  
**School of Speech-Language Pathology & Audiology**  
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 LinkedIn: [www.linkedin.com/in/toddhouston](http://www.linkedin.com/in/toddhouston)  
 LinkedIn Group: 6 Sound-Off






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**Upcoming Online Sessions**

**Next Up:**

**Tuesday, October 16, 2:00 pm ET**  
*Keep it Fresh: Ideas for Auditory Work (Professionals)*  
 Ashley Garber, M.S., CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT, Listening and Language Connections

**Wednesday, November 7, 2:00 pm ET**  
*Keep it Fresh: Ideas for Language Development (Professionals)*  
 Ashley Garber, M.S., CCC-SLP, LSLS Cert. AVT, Listening and Language Connections

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**Children with Cochlear Implants:  
The Words and the Music**

- One day introductory level workshops on reading, vocabulary and music
- Next venue: Urbana (IL) on Tuesday, October 9th
- For more information, go to [www.regonline.com/hopeworkshops](http://www.regonline.com/hopeworkshops)
- Or call Sarah Gard at 303.524.6848, [sgard@cochlear.com](mailto:sgard@cochlear.com)

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## What Children with Cochlear Implants Need at School

- One day workshop offering information and resources to help create an optimum classroom listening environment for a child with a cochlear implant
- Monday, October 22 in Valhalla, NY
- For more information, go to [www.regonline.com/hopeworkshops](http://www.regonline.com/hopeworkshops)
- Or contact Sarah Gard at 303.524.6848  
[sgard@cochlear.com](mailto:sgard@cochlear.com)



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## Contact Cochlear Americas

- For questions about this seminar, contact [houston@uakron.edu](mailto:houston@uakron.edu)
- For inquiries and comments regarding HOPE programming, please contact: [agarber@cochlear.com](mailto:agarber@cochlear.com)
- For a Certificate of Participation, please send your completed Feedback Form to: [hopefeedback@cochlear.com](mailto:hopefeedback@cochlear.com)



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