

Timeliness and Regularity in Children's Physical Rehabilitation

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When it comes to the well-being of children, especially those needing physical rehabilitation, timely and regular care is crucial. Specifically, as parents, you strive to give your kids the best start in life, and understanding how early intervention, consistent therapy, and the role of available resources can make a big difference. Let's delve into why these aspects matter and how to navigate them.

1. Timeliness of Rehabilitation

Timing is crucial in various aspects of life and initiating physical rehabilitation in your children at the right time is no different. Early intervention can make a significant difference, preventing minor issues from progressing into more complex conditions later on.

Take hip dysplasia, for example, a condition that is present at birth and requires early treatment to correct the position of the hip joint. When addressed within the first six months, specialized harnesses such as the Pavlik harness can effectively correct the issue. However, if treatment is delayed, surgical intervention may become necessary.

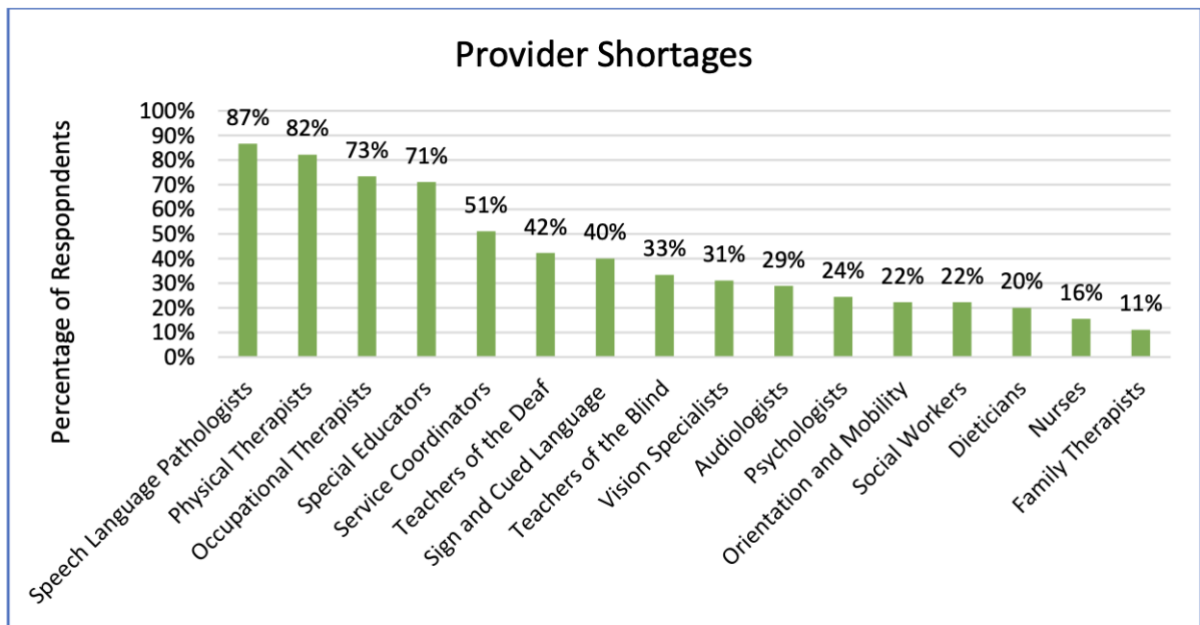
Another prime example of timeliness is the [recent advancements in early-onset scoliosis](#), which can determine if a child demonstrates symptoms before the age of 10. Catching this condition early on allows for maximal potential for rehabilitation and non-surgical treatments to be effective.

Unfortunately, accessing timely rehabilitation can be challenging due to various factors, such as delays in referrals, a shortage of specialized healthcare professionals, and geographic disparities, all of which contribute to prolonged treatment times.

A recent 2022 survey conducted by the [Infant and Toddler Coordinators Association](#) (ITCA) found that 45 states were experiencing shortages. The top 5 shortages that were reported are:

- Speech-language Pathologists (86.6%)
- Physical Therapists (82.2%)
- Occupational Therapists (73.7%)

- Special Educators/Developmental Specialists (71.7%)
- Service Coordinators (51.1%)

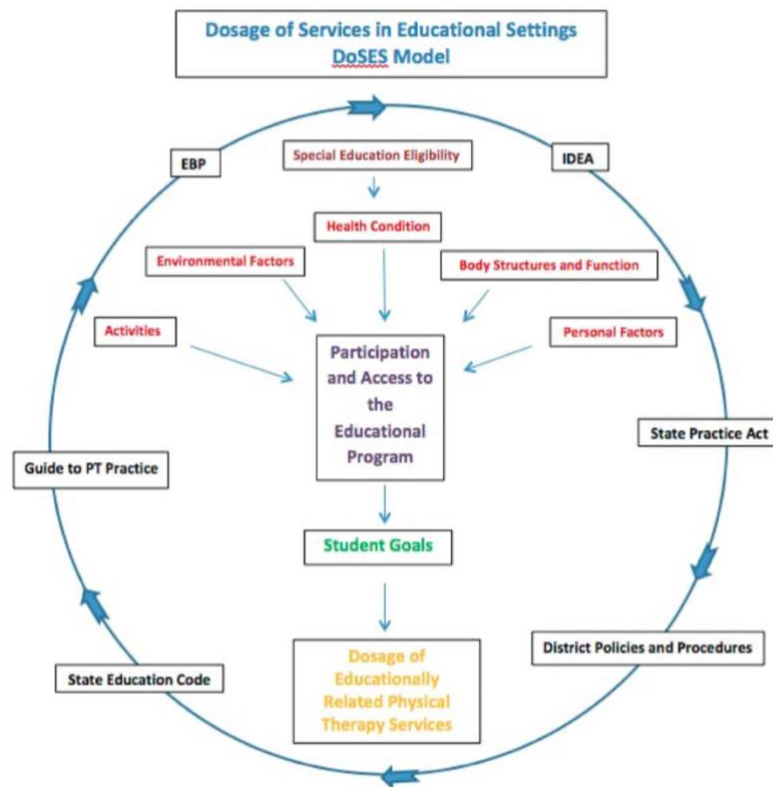


These specialist shortages and long referral processes lead to longer wait times and potentially missed important timelines, as many parents find themselves waiting weeks or even months.

2. Regularity of Therapy Sessions

Consistency plays a crucial role in successful physical rehabilitation, and regular therapy sessions are vital for reinforcing the necessary skills and exercises for improvement.

[According to the American Physical Therapy Association](#) (APTA), tailored therapy approaches often involve regular sessions, as there is no one-size-fits-all frequency for therapy. The determination of an appropriate therapy dosage is customized to each individual and takes into account various contextual and environmental factors, along with the individual's diagnosis, anticipated goals, and outcomes.



For instance, children with scoliosis typically undergo therapy 2 times a week for 45-60 minutes per session. This consistent routine is essential for steady progress and to prevent regression.

Other alternative dosing plans include:

- Front-loading: providing an increased amount of therapy during the initial portion of the episode of care and then tapering off the services once the environmental needs are met.
- Therapeutic blocks: Specific periods of time that may be divided over the episode of care and used as needed.
- Transitional services for students who are changing schools or placements.
- Short, intensive bursts of therapy for unique needs, such as preparing for specific events.

Regardless of the student's diagnosis, having a clear plan in place with consistent therapy sessions helps children maintain and advance their progress, reducing the likelihood of setbacks associated with irregular therapy.

[Appendix A of the APTA Dosing Considerations](#) is an invaluable resource that takes several factors into account. Participation restrictions, current age, previous skilled therapy, school support, health condition, and available assistive technology all significantly influence the best course of action.

3. Conservative Treatment and Surgery Prevention

Conservative treatments often serve as the first line of defense against more invasive options like surgery. Early and consistent physical therapy can prevent conditions from worsening and potentially eliminate the need for surgical intervention.

For instance, in the case of hip dysplasia, early treatment with a Pavlik harness has shown to be highly effective. The [Pavlik harness has demonstrated great therapeutic success](#) with a very low rate of residual dysplasia (2.81%), and clinical outcomes have been highly positive. However, if treatment is delayed until after 18 months, surgery may be necessary. Likewise, the treatment of scoliosis often starts with physical therapy and the use of braces during a child's growth years (ages 10-15). If these conservative methods fail or are delayed, more invasive procedures might become necessary.



Prioritizing these non-surgical options and sticking to prescribed therapies can often help parents avoid or delay the need for surgery, giving their children a better chance at a full recovery.

4. Qualification and Resources of Specialists

High-quality care for children's physical rehabilitation depends on well-trained specialists and access to essential resources. Disparities in training and resource availability can lead to inconsistent care and delayed diagnoses, particularly in rural and underserved areas.

The American Academy of Pediatrics emphasizes the importance of continuing education and specialized training for healthcare providers in pediatric physical therapy. Additionally,

access to diverse rehabilitation tools and equipment is crucial for effective therapy tailored to each child's needs.

Addressing these issues requires increasing the availability of rehabilitation resources and ensuring that healthcare providers have the necessary tools for high-quality care. When seeking care, it's important to choose a provider with the right credentials and access to up-to-date rehabilitation resources. For example, [Hydrotherapy pools](#) can be extremely beneficial in the management of Cerebral Palsy.



This also means keeping an eye out for equipment such as:

- Electro stimulators
- Ultrasound therapy devices
- Dynamic Movement Orthoses
- Virtual Reality Simulators
- Exoskeletons
- Lokomats

And more.

Conclusion

The timeliness and regularity of physical rehabilitation are pivotal in ensuring the best outcomes for children. Early intervention, consistent therapy, conservative treatment approaches, and access to qualified specialists are all integral to successful rehabilitation.

While navigating these aspects can sometimes be challenging, knowing that these steps are crucial can offer reassurance.

Remember, consistent physical therapy can significantly reduce the likelihood of needing surgical interventions, providing a smoother path to recovery for your child.

As parents, being informed and proactive can turn these challenges into manageable steps on the road to your child's well-being. So, while it might feel like you're juggling a lot, know that every step you take is a step closer to helping your child thrive.

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With over five years of experience, he has practiced physical therapy in neurological, outpatient, and pediatric settings. Additionally, he has contributed to numerous health articles, newsletters, and rehabilitation courses.

Dr. Gonzalez excels at simplifying complex medical concepts and health issues, making them easily understandable and engaging for readers. He offers valuable insights for informed decision-making about health, wellness, and patient advocacy.

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