

# Parent-oriented features in early childhood stuttering: A pilot study

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**ABSTRACT:** Of the many evidence-based treatment approaches for early stuttering available to speech-language pathologists, nearly all include parent (or other caregiver) training and implementation as major components. These therapy approaches require parents, with clinicians' support, to be dynamic and mindful participants in communication. Moreover, such stuttering therapies engage with related skills like self-monitoring during speaking and modeling different speaking styles. At present, however, **there is relatively little understanding about the impact of individual differences among parents** with respect to the implementation of these therapy skills, or other parent-specific features that may interact with therapeutic intervention. Without this knowledge, therapy approaches cannot be optimally individualized to accommodate the diverse priorities and skills among parents of young children who stutter.

**With this proposed pilot study, we aim to develop a mixed-methods approach to better understand parent-specific factors that are relevant to holistic therapy outcomes.** This proposal is timely, as there is an emerging body of research that points to the heterogeneous qualities of parents that may have a bearing on the development and/or treatment of stuttering. For example, parental approval and acceptance of stuttering has been shown to correlate with children's self-esteem and communication attitudes. Considering also that as many as 91% of parents with children who stutter may feel anxious or self-blaming, it is reasonable to presume that unique parent-oriented features may be important to consider in early childhood stuttering research. Such an investigation has the potential to not only illuminate critical aspects of preschool-age stuttering, but to establish a foundation for broader research into parents' roles in the development of stuttering and parent-implemented therapy.

In this proposed pilot study, we seek to establish foundational insights into parent-specific features with respect to childhood stuttering through a cross-sectional examination of  $n = 12$  dyads of primary caregivers and children with developmental stuttering between the ages of 3 and 8. Specifically, this mixed-methods study will:

- 1. Characterize parents of children who stutter** in terms of temperament and responses to their child's stuttering [Aim 1]. This aim will involve direct behavioral coding of parent-child interaction, as well as survey-based data.
- 2. Examine relationships between parent- and child-oriented features of stuttering** [Aim 2]. We will conduct a battery of speech-language-cognitive assessments of children and compare findings with parent-oriented data.
- 3. Contextualize findings** using systematic thematic analyses of parent interviews [Aim 3]. We will describe parents and the cultural contexts that may attenuate their reactions to stuttering, with possible implications for treatment.

Altogether, **this proposal supports the NSA's mission to better understand and empower families of children who stutter** by uniquely exploring caregiver-oriented measures in stuttering and generating pilot data for future investigations. Ultimately, we hope to develop insights toward more individualized therapy approaches to better support young people who stutter and the world that surrounds them.