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**EXAMINATION OF PARENT SUPPORT GROUPS FOR NEWLY
DIAGNOSED HEARING-IMPAIRED CHILDREN, BIRTH-5 YEARS**

by

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**An independent study submitted in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of:**

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Emphasis in Education of the Hearing Impaired**

**Washington University
Department of Speech and Hearing**

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**Approved by:
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Introduction

Support groups have long been utilized as a resource for individuals coping with disabilities, addictions, grief, and loss. These groups serve to help their members face the problems they have encountered and discover ways to cope with the challenges they are facing. Support groups for parents of hearing impaired and deaf children are no different. Faced with the realization that their child has a hearing loss, parents grieve the loss of their "perfect baby." They often believe the hopes and dreams they have for this child may no longer come true. There is often a period of intense grief following the diagnosis. Parents feel a great loss and need a way to work through and cope with the grief and find the "silver lining."

David M. Luterman is a recognized authority on parent support groups of newly diagnosed hearing-impaired children. In his practice as an audiologist, he realized that parents were not getting the support they needed after receiving a diagnosis that their child was hearing-impaired. Luterman realized that parents were being talked at and not talked to. They were not being seen as equals and partners in dealing with their child's impairment:

It occurred to me quite early in my career that parents of deaf children were not being treated well - least of all by me. I followed the prescribed procedure, which I had learned in my training program, for testing the hearing of young children: this involved first taking a detailed case history and then trying to separate the child from the parent. As graduate students, we were always advised to do this because we were told the parents might interfere with the test procedures and might bias the results. In actuality, I think it was because we were afraid of parents: afraid that they might detect our mistakes and our often rather fumbling attempts to obtain a reliable audiogram on a young child. When I did test a child successfully and found a hearing loss present, I would then go into the

waiting room and in my best Marcus Welby manner tell the anxious parents that their child had a hearing loss. At this point I usually floundered. I knew that parents were very upset and needed to cry, but I did not have any experience in handling grief. In addition to being anxious about delivering the bad news, I think I knew intuitively that people often kill the messenger when they don't like the message. I was fearful of the parents' possible angry reaction. I also think I felt vaguely guilty that I had caused the pain (When Your Child is Deaf, xiv).

After reading Luterman's book, When Your Child is Deaf, I decided to examine support groups for parents of newly diagnosed hearing-impaired children. I wanted to investigate literature written about support groups for parents of children with disabilities, especially with a hearing impairment. I conducted interviews with the coordinators of the parent support groups at Central Institute for the Deaf, St. Joseph Institute for the Deaf and Moog Center for Deaf Education, in St. Louis; as well as parents of children recently diagnosed with a hearing impairment, and parents of older children, about their experiences with the parent support groups. I conducted interviews with parents who had attended support groups, as well as with parents who had not attended such groups.

Through my interviews, I wanted to find out why some parents attended support groups and why others did not. I also hoped to obtain information about what the parents feel are the strengths and weaknesses of support groups. After conducting this research and interviews, I reviewed my findings and developed an outline for an effective parent support group.

Literature Review

In exploring parent support groups, it is important to understand the purpose behind establishing and running parent support groups. Melissa Thompson, a family support specialist, provides in an article a list of the functions performed by parent support groups, as developed by the California State Department of Education:

- Provide on-going support
- Help in time of crisis
- Reinforce positive coping behaviors
- Help focus anger and use its energy in positive ways
- Share information, ideas and resources
- Provide training for parents to increase skills
- Help in dealing with educational, medical and other service agencies
- Give an opportunity to relieve loneliness and form new friendships

Gillian King and Susanne King, from the Neurodevelopmental Clinical Research Unit at McMaster University share Thompson's views, listing three basic common goals of parent support groups:

1. Parent to parent support
2. Information sharing
3. Advocacy for better services.

In the research completed for this Independent Study, I found King and King's goals are often shared by parents and by other authors.

Genetic Counselors Andrea Gainey and Gina Prochazka-Graf, along with Betsy Trombino, a member of a parent-to-parent support organization for children with disabilities, studied families of newly diagnosed hearing-impaired children. In their article, they wrote about what families face and address the initial coping parents of a newly diagnosed child must do:

The birth of a new child opens a new chapter for the family. The hopes and expectations of the parents, sibling(s), and extended family are focused on the new child. When that

child has a disability, the parents must begin to cope with the loss of the “perfect child.”

Family expectations are shaken; they must become acquainted with a different person that they expected. Many families voice a feeling of being alone (1992).

Former Directors of the Regional Research Institute for Human Services, Nancy M.

Koroloff and B. J. Friesen discuss reasons parents might seek out support groups: “Parents may seek support groups to gain emotional support in addition to that available from their family, to reduce their sense of isolation, and to obtain help with coping” (1991; Gartner, 1984). Parents also can gain further information and understanding of their child’s disability, as well as information about available services (Koroloff & Friesen, 1991). As King and King noted, advocacy is often seen as a path to empowerment by getting the parents involved in influencing government agencies for funding or changing environmental barriers. Editor of *The Journal of Social Sciences*, Frank Riessman, Jr., writes, “As people are better enabled to deal with certain aspects of their lives, the skills and positive feelings they acquire may spread, empowering them to deal with other aspects of their lives” (1987).

In investigating the reason parents join parent support groups, the literature reveals one common goal. Parents seek out other parents who have been in their position and have survived. Parents are able to get a good deal of support and hope from parents who have experienced similar issues when dealing with their disabled child. As care for children with disabilities has shifted from institutional care to care in the community and home, the need for parents to have a support system and a way to get the necessary information to give their child the best opportunity they can, has increased.

In researching literature on parent support groups, I encountered a website by fathers, for fathers. This website allows fathers of children with varying disabilities express their thoughts,

feelings and experiences. This website also allows fathers to read what others have written and hopefully find comfort and information to help them cope and give them encouragement.

Ian John, a single father of a young daughter with cerebral palsy, sums up what many fathers feel: "When a tragedy or crisis occurs in our lives, we feel as though we have totally lost control. Men have a hard time feeling out of control; I know I do. We were raised to fix things, make them right. Dads, grief is normal and healthy. It either makes you bitter or better. Grief is a God-given emotion that allows us to empty out the deep feelings that must not be kept inside. Your choosing to endure this period in your life will make you a stronger and more mature man. " (Some thoughts on Grief, www.fathersnetwork.org, retrieved March 1, 2004).

Steve Fischer tells of his experience in "Fathers Are Caregivers Too!." When the physician walked into the room to deliver the diagnosis, he focused solely on the mother, never looking at Steve, despite the fact that Steve was sitting right by her side. He says; "I can surely empathize with the physician, who no doubt recognized the pain in my beautiful wife's eyes. The fact remained however that I, the father, was also in a state of complete emotional collapse. The failure of this particular physician to even make eye contact with me seemed to send the message that either I was not hurting, or I was to simply 'take it like a man.'" ("Fathers are Caregivers Too!," 1994)

Another father of a child with cerebral palsy, John Cox, recounts his journey, from dreaming about his unborn child, to hearing the doctor tell him something was wrong, to sadness, coping on a day-to-day basis, anger, and then being able to start dreaming again. He states: "All children are a gift to their parents, grandparents, teachers-everyone that comes into contact with them. And they teach us all something that we would not have learned without them." John was able to work through his feelings to see the child, not the disability. He readjusted his

perceptions, ideas and dreams. He sums up his feelings: "I am proud of my daughter's accomplishments, and like any father, I am looking forward to many more she will have as she matures. I need not have anguished about the future. Looking back, I see now that few others have been as blessed as I ("Dreams" www.fathersnetwork.org, retrieved March 1, 2004).

While this website is open to fathers of children with varying disorders, disabilities, and handicaps, there is a common bond a parent of a child with a disability, shares with other parents of children with a disability; be it hearing-impairment, cerebral palsy, or other disorders. Gainey et al. address the need for companionship and the need for support from other parents:

Parent support groups empower families by providing knowledge so that they don't feel as alone. They enable families to cope more effectively with a disability in a supportive and sharing environment. Most support groups also seek to raise the consciousness of the community about the nature of a specific condition or disease. They can generate public awareness and social change by establishing an active, visible advocacy role. They offer an arena for mutual support, communication, social action, and opportunities for education. Within a support group, members are peers, leveled by a similar experience. (1992).

Jack Dolcourt, M.D., a Neonatologist, speaks of his view on parent support groups:

Parent support groups have traditionally helped fill the void between the medical system and the "daily grind" of the everyday world. Parent groups generally function to help families cope with the unique demands imposed by an affected child, but clearly support groups do more than make parents "feel good." Like any special interest group, they can serve as educators for new parents and for the community, and they can serve as a clearinghouse for disseminating news of important new advancements or therapies. For

rare conditions, support groups take on the additional roles of “expert” and “advocate” (Dolcort, 1992).

Much of the literature about parent support groups validates and supports the notion that parent support groups are a valuable resource for parents. It allows them to meet and connect with other parents while learning how they can cope with the consequences of their child’s disability. The support groups allow them to feel and express their fears and joys in a safe and supportive environment, surrounded by other parents who have or are experiencing a lot of the same frustrations, joys and victories they are experiencing.

Parent Support Group Models

Parent support groups are structured in different ways and often have varying appearances. Some support groups are designed for mostly mothers, some are exclusively for fathers, and others are open to all family members and friends.

It is helpful to look at how support groups are formed. Tim Weiss, former board president of PARENTS, Inc., an organization for handicapped and gifted children, explores support groups and discusses ways to find and/or start a successful support group. For a model, he suggests exploring what it is one wants to do with a support group, while reviewing the reasons support groups exist:

- Peer support and mentoring
- Training and exchanging of information
- Forming partnerships with schools and agencies
- Changing and/or collaborating with existing systems
- Sponsoring activities geared to a specific age group or disability
- Increasing awareness, networking system to address issues and concerns
- Coordinating volunteer activities
- Increasing parent or target member involvement

He also explores organizational format. There is a continuum from formal to informal; including peer support groups, professionally led support groups and discussion groups where the focus is more on education than support. He suggests finding a format that will work for the particular group. Weiss also discusses considerations for when meetings might take place. He advises rotating times to allow the most diverse participation. He also recommends considering where and how long meetings will last; in this decision, transportation needs and availability should be considered for those attending the meeting.

Literature written about parent support groups, recommends addressing many of the issues parents face when their child is diagnosed with an impairment. Parents seek an outlet to express their emotions and feelings. A parent support group allows the parents to have valuable support, information and guidance given to them, often by parents who have been in similar situations. This level of support is invaluable to parents coping with a child's impairment.

St. Louis's Oral School Support Groups

Parent support groups at the three auditory-oral schools for deaf children in St. Louis utilize similar models. They meet from 1-2 times a month, for 1-2 hours dependent on the topic and the time. In my interviews with the support group coordinators of these schools, I found that their goals and focus are all very similar. All interviewees commented on the fact that they knew their schools were providing help and a great education for the children. However, they knew that the parents' needs were not being met. The parent support groups were designed mainly to focus on serving the parents needs. One interviewee explained that their school solved many of the challenges they faced in developing the support groups by just simply listening to the parents. By listening, they were able to truly hear what the parents needed. The school could then focus on meeting those needs.

St. Joseph Institute has a separate meeting for the mothers and fathers. The mother's group is called "Coffee Talk." The fathers' group, entitled "Tool Time" is a time when fathers can get together and discuss "dad" topics. The "Tool Time" meetings began with a male therapist at the school facilitating the meetings. After the therapist left, the fathers started to facilitate themselves. While this group doesn't meet as regularly as the mothers' "Coffee Talk" meetings, they seem to be just as worthwhile. Fathers have given very positive feedback explaining the support, help and assistance they have found in this group. St. Joseph Institute also has a mandatory individual family meeting with the school therapist. It is not required to attend any of the support meetings; however, it is strongly recommended. Attendance at the meetings seems to fluctuate, again based somewhat on the topic of the meeting. Feedback from parents indicates parents seem to prefer to have preset topics more than open forums. Parents' views on topic selection are addressed in the Parent Interview section.

St. Joseph Institute also incorporates a "buddy system" in which one parent who has experienced coping with the challenges of raising a hearing-impaired child, helps to mentor, support and give advice to a family with a newly diagnosed child. The facilitator will often personally ask a parent to talk to another parent who is in a similar situation as he or she was in a short time ago. The results of this have been positive, but rely on a parent's willingness to be available to another parent. It also requires that the receiving parent be willing to have this help offered to them. The last thing that anyone would want is for a parent to be offended by an offer of help. Often, parents are all too aware that they are struggling in coping with the diagnosis. They do not necessarily need to be reminded of that fact or have it "brought out in the open."

One school, Moog Center for Deaf Education, has regular events, including a fall BBQ, and a spring event that pull together the families of the school. These events seem to foster a closer connection between the parents, and carry that connection to activities outside of the school and school events. Many families from this particular school regularly have dinners, lunches, and even day trips together. The connections between parents do not seem to be as related to the age of the children as much they are linked to the relationships among the mothers, who then seem to involve the rest of the family. A lot of the connections also seem related to geographical location and socioeconomic compatibility. The families find out how much they do have in common, and how much they value each other's company and companionship.

Central Institute for the Deaf offers a support group twice a month and is open to any family member who wishes to attend. Attendance consists mostly of mothers and like the other schools, attendance is dependent upon the parents' schedules and the topic of the particular meeting. Popular topics that have been discussed include mainstreaming, assistive technology (cochlear implants, hearing aids), siblings, and discipline.

Parent Support Group Attendance

Interviews with the support group coordinators revealed that attendance has decreased over time. One of the reasons coordinators gave for the low attendance was that family dynamics have changed significantly through the years. There is an increased prevalence of single parent families and an increased prevalence of families in which both parents work. Also, the coordinators expressed their belief that parents have more family responsibilities and that these responsibilities are more varied than in the past.

Coordinators, responding to decreasing turnout, offered meetings on varying dates and times. Nevertheless, attendance did not improve after the meeting times were changed. The largest increases in attendance seem to result from a meeting planned on a specific topic of great interest. Parents seem to be very interested in the topic of mainstreaming, even if their child is not ready to be mainstreamed. Other topics parents have been interested in include, discipline, assistive technology, and closed captioning.

One school has a special group for fathers only. In this group, typical "dad topics" such as sports are discussed, as well as other topics dads related to their children. The attendance of the father's support group is varied depending on the fathers' needs. The father's group does not have set meeting times, but usually meets every few months, often dependent on the time of year and the activities of the fathers.

The irony of the parent support group is that often it is the parents who have their resources stretched thin, and who are not able to attend support group sessions, who seem to need support the most. The question remains, how do we get the parents who would benefit from the groups to attend the meetings? Also, if they cannot attend the meetings, how do we give them the help and support they would benefit from?

Parent Interviews

In my attempt to answer these questions, I interviewed parents of hearing impaired children. With the access I was allowed through the three Oral schools, I interviewed eight parents, all mothers with children ranging from two years of age to eight years of age. In my interviews with parents of hearing-impaired children, many different explanations were given as to why parents attend support groups. Some parents attended for a short time, and others still attend support groups, years after the diagnosis. One of the most frequent reasons was that the parents did not know what to do, or where to find support and information. This agrees with the King and King study and their first two common goals for Parent Support Groups: "parent to parent support and information sharing."

The parents I interviewed acknowledged that they were devastated by the diagnosis of a hearing impairment. Most felt helpless and did not know where or how to seek help, advice, or information. This seems to be an especially large hurdle for the parents that have no knowledge of hearing impairment. In some families, hearing loss is genetic and there are other members in the family or extended family with a hearing loss. With many families, though, there is no genetic predisposition and it comes as a total and complete shock to the family. The parent support groups are an opportunity for parents to get information and support from professionals and other parents experiencing similar challenges, frustrations and joys.

Parents commented on the way in which topics are handled in the support groups. In the past, meetings focused on predetermined topics. Recently, however, meetings have included more open forums, in which coordinators allow parents to bring in topics of their own choosing. In my interviews, parents recommended that predetermined topics not be abandoned completely. Instead, these parents suggested that meetings be organized around predetermined topics while

still allowing a set amount of time for open forums. They feel that productivity of the meetings might increase if more set topics were planned for the meetings, thereby allowing more “publication” of the meetings and topics.

One particular parent I interviewed attends a parent support group, not for her hearing impaired daughter, but for single parents of adopted children. This mother’s support group experience provides her with the same benefits as the parent support groups for hearing impaired children. She enjoys the group because she feels it provides her with the support and knowledge that she is not alone, that there are other people in the community who have been in her position and can provide the “been there, done that” perspective. She feels that it is difficult for her friends to relate to her experiences, as they all have a different frame of reference, and do not relate to what her life is like or the challenges she faces. The mother sought out other people like her, so she wouldn’t feel “isolated, alone, crazy and a burden” to her friends.

One parent hypothesized parents might have misconceptions and negative connotations associated with the title “Support Group.” Parents might feel that attending a support group of any kind would be an admission of weakness, and would be an open statement that they are not able to cope with the challenges they are facing. She added, due to this misconception, parents might be resistant to attending the support group meetings.

Another parent I interviewed had wanted to attend a support group, but one was not available through the school she was working with. She would have gladly attended the meetings regularly and feels she would have greatly benefited from a support group and the information it could have provided to her. There were days she felt “not OK” and believes that a support group could have alleviated some of her pain and insecurity. She has no one she could have gone to for advice, support or a feeling of “I’ve been through this, you’ll get through this

too.” This parent had the time and the desire to attend a support group, and one was not available to her.

Parents’ Suggestions for Support Groups

In interviews, parents who attended support groups said they would like to have more parents attend. They feel that right now, everyone knows each other’s stories. Now, they feel that they could even help others. They once sought out support groups for their own needs, but now feel that they have a lot they can offer to other parents who are currently struggling. They feel that one way to help bring in parents would be to have predetermined topics and then have a call list to help circulate the information and get more personal contacts going.

One parent I spoke with made personal phone calls for one meeting and felt that it helped to get parents on the phone and remind them of the meeting and topic. All the parents with whom I spoke would recommend parent support groups to others without hesitation. They all feel that they have benefited and continue to benefit from the meetings. There were a few parents I talked to that benefited from the groups at very important times in their lives. Some families uproot and move in order to be closer to a school that they believe will benefit their child the most. As a result, a few parents felt alone in a new place. Not only did they feel isolated due to their child’s hearing impairment, they felt isolated because they did not know anyone in their new city. They were away from their families and their friends. The members of the parent support group became their friends and support system. While some of the parents had other issues to work through besides their child’s impairment, they thrived with the help of the support group.

I also chose to interview people who either never have or no longer attend parent support groups. I was curious as to what it was that kept them away and what would entice them to

come to the meetings. Many indicated that time and other responsibilities were more pressing for them. Often there are siblings that need to have their needs attended to and responsibilities met. All parents I spoke to showed some level of interest in knowing how to best balance the time needed for the hearing impaired child with the other "normal-hearing" sibling. They certainly do not intend to ignore the hearing child, but know that dealing with a special needs child takes extra time, energy, and patience.

Parent Support Group Model

The research and informal interviews suggest that there is not one perfect model to follow in establishing a support group. Tim Weiss' suggestions serve as good guidelines for establishing a support group and making adaptations as necessary:

- to provide peer support and mentoring
- to provide training and allow for the exchanging of information
- to form partnerships with schools and agencies
- to change and/or collaborate with existing systems
- to sponsor activities geared to a specific age group or disability
- to increase awareness, networking system to address issues and concerns
- to coordinate volunteer activities
- to increase parent or target member involvement

Consolidating and evaluating the information I obtained, I propose the following suggestions for establishing and maintaining a support group for parents of hearing-impaired children. I would encourage monthly or bimonthly meetings, dependent on the needs of the parents. Scheduling meetings at various times of the day and evening and on various days of the week will allow more parents to take advantage of the group. I feel it would be beneficial to plan topics for the majority of the meetings; yet be flexible to provide open forums if the participants prefer. Planning several events, in addition to regular meetings, may encourage some families to attend. All three St. Louis oral schools have found success with these special events being popular with their parents.

I agree with the suggestion that more personal contact might help increase attendance. Perhaps parents who attend a support group regularly can be mentors to parents of newly diagnosed children, making personal phone calls to address any questions or concerns the family might want answered. St. Joseph Institute does offer an informal version of this. Regular, friendly contacts and open invitations to meetings might encourage parents to attend and feel

welcome. Parent mentors could also provide reminder phone calls for upcoming meetings. It seems to be very meaningful for parents to be able to talk to another parent who has successfully persevered through the same challenges they are facing. New parents would be able to get information, advice and guidance from the parents who have been through many of the issues. Having parents contact new families individually will allow each set of parents to find convenient times for both parties. These relationships can be mutually supportive as families give and receive advice, support, friendship and a listening ear.

Increasing parent involvement in support groups is a critical issue. It is a struggle to overcome very real situations that prevent parents from attending, such as financial need that merits two working parents, chronic health issues, or difficult living situations. Many support groups have tried changing meeting times to include afternoons, evenings and weekends. However, these changes have not significantly increased the attendance at support group meetings. Perhaps instead of striving to increase the meeting attendance, we should focus more on making sure we are reaching as many parents as possible, no matter the method, be it meetings, or "buddies" or other avenues that may afford a greater "audience."

In the planning of the meetings, I believe it would be wise to consider asking parents to help prepare some of the meetings. I think that the more "ownership" people have in this or any situation, the more involvement there will likely be. Instead of the larger groups, perhaps, the individual "mentoring" type program can help to fill the void that the support groups seem to be unable to fill right now. I also think that support groups need to be periodically reviewed for their successes and shortfalls. By reviewing strengths and weaknesses and responding to these assessments, the support group can evolve and continue to be effective.

“Tool Time” for fathers, a group established at St. Joseph’s Institute, is an excellent example of providing a support group, with other like-minded individuals, without the label and connotations associated with “support groups.” The men are able to talk about their concerns and get feedback from other fathers. They are free to be themselves, around other fathers. I also believe that meeting periodically with the school therapist is a good idea. It is vitally important to have the ability for parents to be able to learn, guide and express their concerns in an environment in which they feel safe.

Having meetings with other family members, especially siblings and grandparents is a valuable idea. The schools currently allow their meetings to be open to anyone who wants to attend. However, I think that an actual invitation to the grandparents would encourage more interest and hopefully more attendance.

Support groups may never achieve the attendance they once had, but society has changed. People are more mobile, and the children that once attended private schools for years are now being mainstreamed at much earlier ages and grade levels. Parents no longer use the support groups as their sole social circle as they might have in the past. One of the parents I spoke with attended a different kind of support group for something not related to hearing impairment or deafness. Perhaps some parents are getting the needed support from other groups or through different avenues than the traditional support group.

Conclusion

From the literature I reviewed and the interviews I conducted, I believe parent support groups are worthwhile, regardless of the turnout. If one parent can benefit, I would consider the meeting a success. While parents may not be open and forthcoming in their need for support, the need still exists. Some parents are more comfortable admitting their need for support. Those

are the easiest parents to serve. I feel that the support groups provide parents access to support from people in the same situation. It also provides an opportunity for parents to help others. This can add to a person's esteem and sense of worth, knowing that they are able to contribute to another person's well being. Parent support groups offer many options to give and receive help to a variety of parents and family members. Parent support groups are a worthwhile and valuable service to provide parents.

Appendix 1

Parent Support Group Coordinator Questions

(These questions served as a guide for the interviews. I attempted to keep a conversational tone to interviews, so as to try and get accurate and honest answers and reactions.)

How often does the group meet?

How long do meetings last?

When during the day are meetings?

Have you tried other times? What other times have you tried? What was the outcome of changing the times?

What is the typical turnout?

What is the make-up of a typical meeting?

Are the topics pre-set or are there open forums?

Is the group for newly diagnosed families or are other families welcome too?

What is the turnout now compared to previous years?

If there is poor turnout, what do you believe might be the cause?

Is the group open to parents only?

Is there support offered to other family members: fathers, siblings, grandparents?

Do the families get together outside of the meetings?

What are the top 3-5 topics you see as parents biggest concerns?

Do you seek feedback from parents?

What has the feedback been from the parents?

Can you share a little about some of the families (no specific names, more emphasis on stories)?

Are there any specific success stories you'd like to share?

How long have you been doing these meetings?

What do you feel to be your biggest challenge?

What do you see to be the biggest asset to the group?

What would you change about the group?

If you had no restrictions of any kind, how would you design the group or one meeting?

Could you walk me through a typical meeting?

Do graduates and/or their families ever come back to talk to the support group?

Have you ever had a difficult time with the group that sticks out in your mind?

Appendix 2

Parent Interview Questions

(These questions served as a guide for the interviews. I attempted to keep a conversational tone to interviews, so as to try and get accurate and honest answers and reactions.)

Have you gone to parent support groups in the past?

Do you attend now?

What have you liked about the support groups?

What has made you come to the parent support groups?

Do you feel you have benefited from the support groups?

What are some topics that are important to you that be covered in the groups?

What do you feel would be an improvement to the support groups?

Are there any topics you would like to see addressed?

Would you recommend support groups to other parents?

What, if any recommendations would you be willing to share to improve the support group?

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