

Foundations of Sensory Differences: Developing a Staff Training Module for a Pediatric Health System

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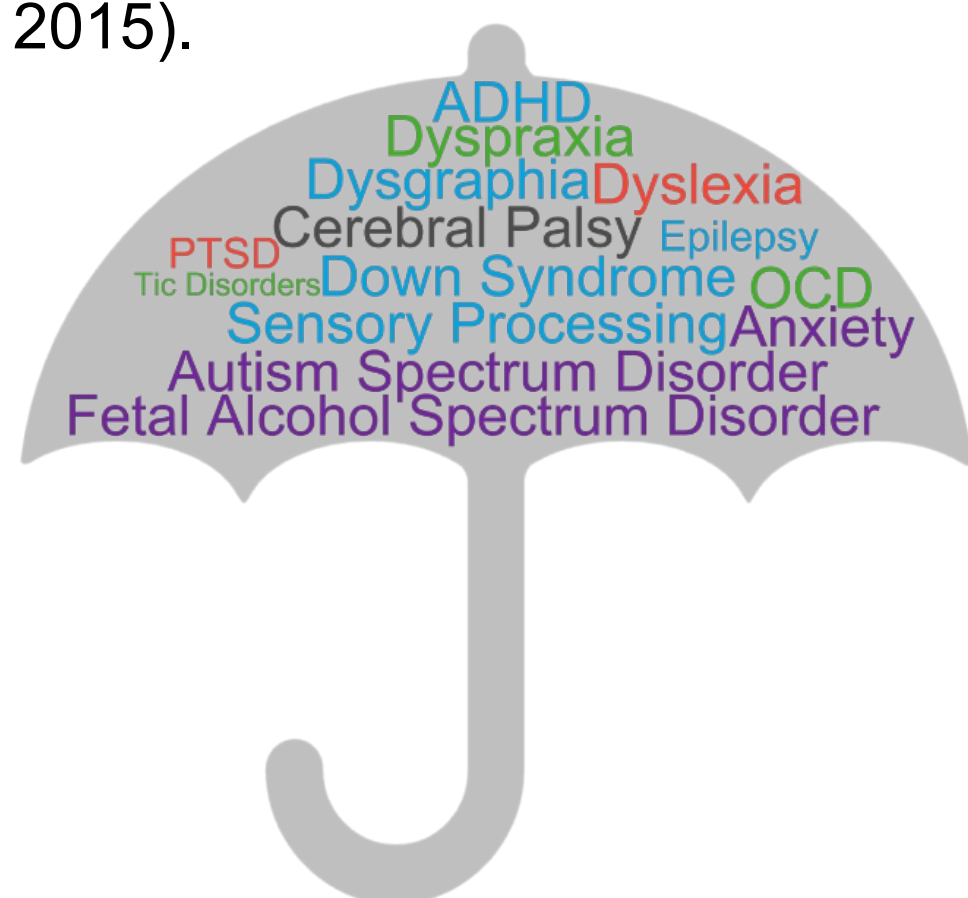
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Background

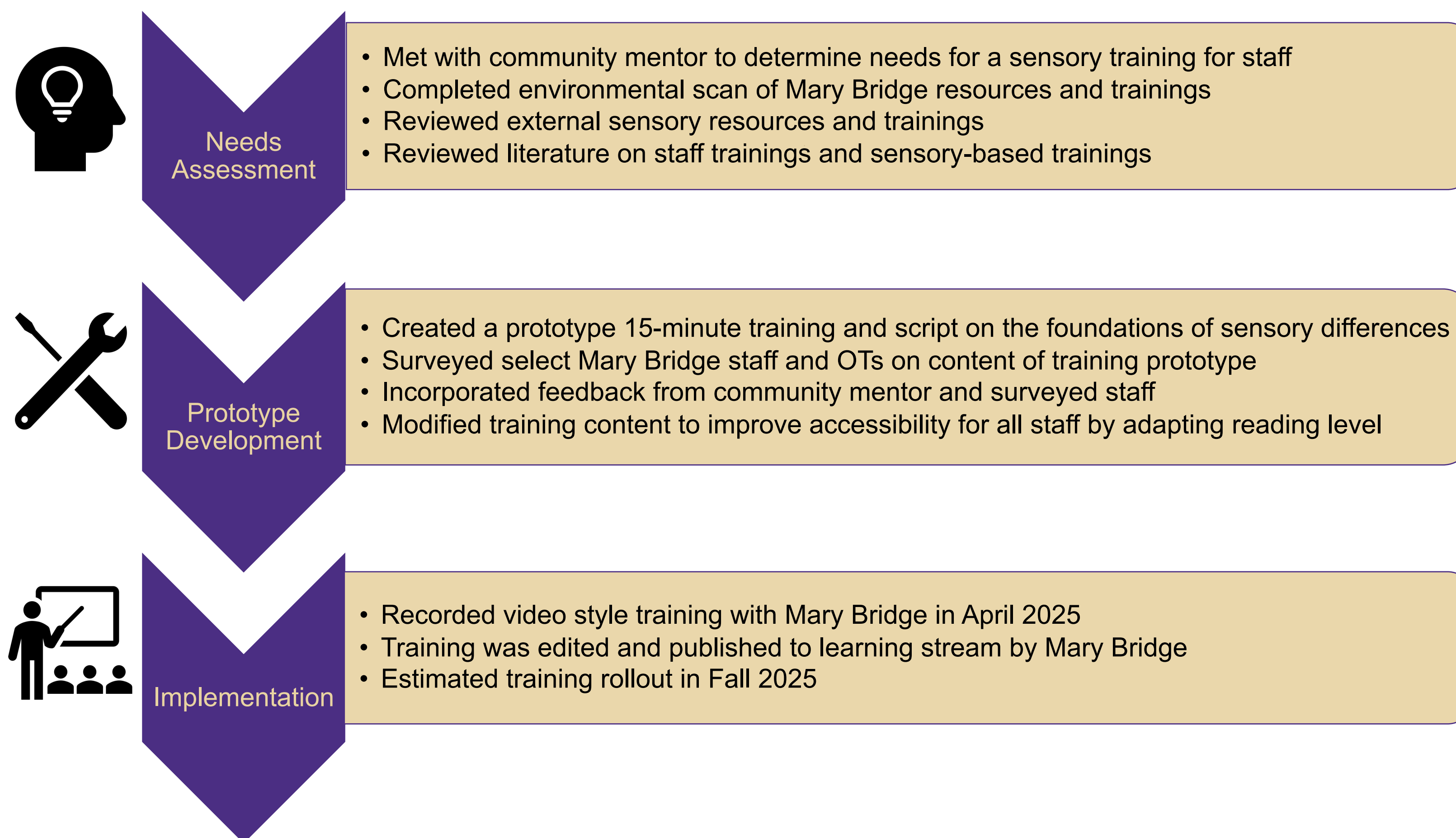
- Sensory processing is how the brain interprets inputs through the eight senses to respond to different environments.
- Sensory differences describe variation in how individuals experience their sensory environment and are common in neurodiverse populations
- Neurodivergent is an umbrella term that includes a variety of diagnoses, such as ADHD and Autism Spectrum Disorder.
- Disrupted sensory processing can lead to maladaptive behaviors and motor responses, affecting a child's development and interactions (Galiana-Simal et al., 2017) and ultimately hindering occupational and social participation (Miller, 2017).
- Hospital environments can overstimulate young patients, leading to negative experiences, poor communication, and unmet sensory needs (Muskat, 2015).



Purpose

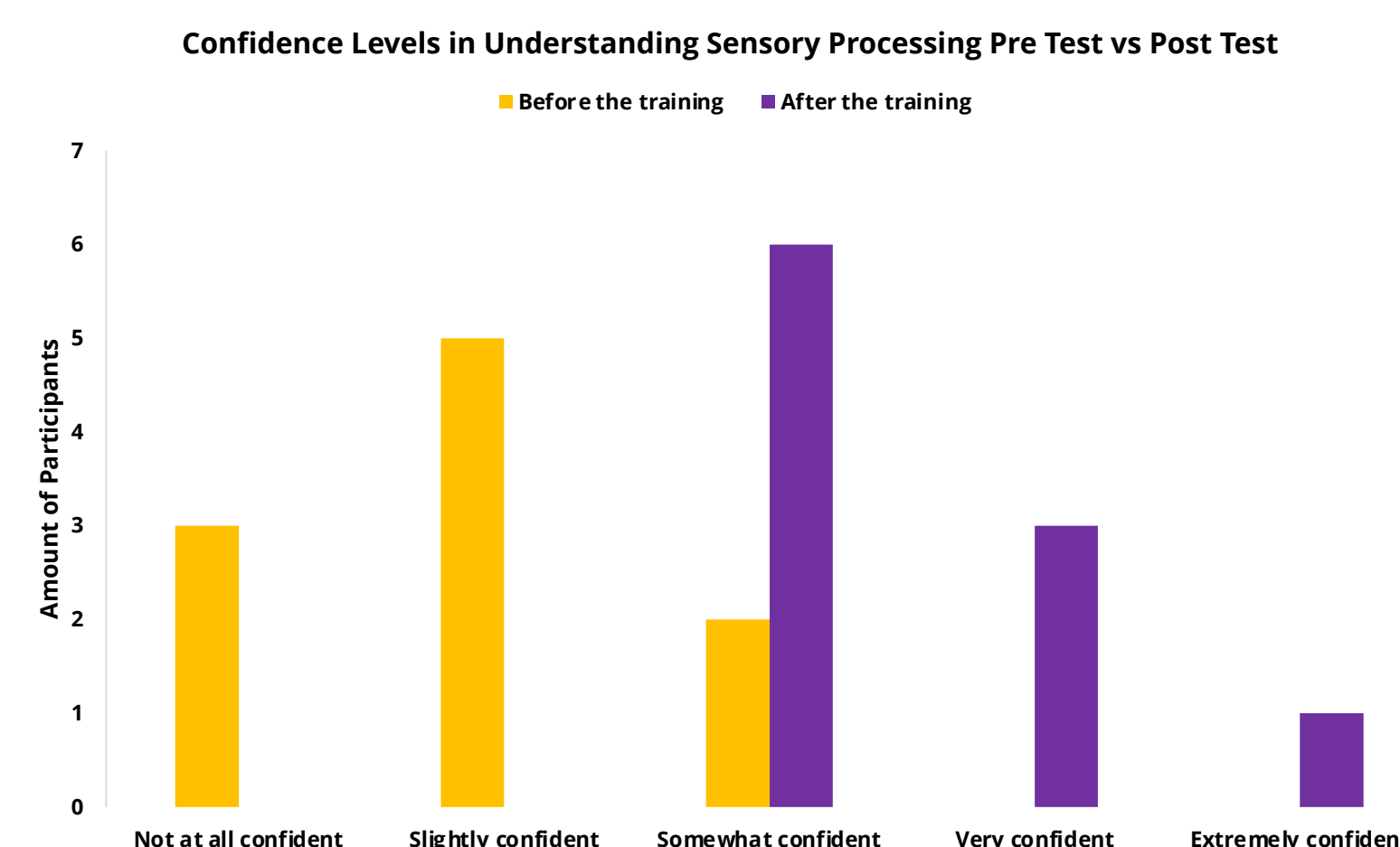
To support Mary Bridge Children's Health Network in creating a sensory-friendly healthcare system by training all employees on the basics of sensory processing differences.

Training Development



Evaluation & Results

- A sample of 10 volunteers without prior knowledge of or experience with sensory differences was obtained.
- All participants completed the online 15-minute training and answered brief pre- and post-test surveys.
- In the survey, all participants stated feeling more confident in their understanding of sensory processing after completing the training than before the training started.



Recommendations

- Evaluate training effectiveness
 - Assess staff knowledge of sensory differences using a post-training questionnaire
- Assess staff confidence
 - Measure employee confidence in using sensory regulation tools through self-assessment scales
- Offer enhanced instructional methods of training for select staff teams
 - Intensive didactic in-person training on neurodiversity and sensory differences
 - Hands-on training with modeling and error correction of tools and skills to regulate the sensory system
 - Discussions about sensory differences with people who have personal experience
 - Multimedia content e.g. patient case studies and practice scenarios via videos or in person
- Provide department-specific support
 - Offer tailored consultations, support and toolkits based on department needs
- Pursue formal recognition for sensory-friendly hospital practices
 - Research options for sensory-friendly designation or certification for health systems

References

- Galiana-Simal, A., Vela-Romero, M., Romero-Vela, V. M., Oliver-Tercero, N., García-Olmo, V., Benito-Castellanos, P. J., Muñoz-Martínez, V., & Beato-Fernández, L. (2020). Sensory processing disorder: Key points of a frequent alteration in neurodevelopmental disorders. *Cogent Medicine*, 7(1), Article 1736829. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331205X.2020.1736829>
- Miller, L. J., Schoen, S. A., Mulligan, S., & Sullivan, J. (2017). Identification of sensory processing and integration symptom clusters: A preliminary study. *Occupational Therapy International*, 2017, Article 2876080. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2017/2876080>
- Muskat, B., Burnham Riosa, P., Nicholas, D. B., Roberts, W., Stoddart, K. P., & Zwaigenbaum, L. (2015). Autism comes to the hospital: The experiences of patients with autism spectrum disorder, their parents and health-care providers at two Canadian paediatric hospitals. *Autism*, 19(4), 482–490. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362361314531341>