

Chapter 11

A Model for the Interprofessional Preparation of Speech–Language Pathologists and School Counselors: Effectively Serving Children With Disabilities

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ABSTRACT

Project CALIPSO was an interdisciplinary personnel preparation project for speech-language pathology and school counseling graduate students.. A primary focus of the project was preparing scholars to serve children with communication disorders and concomitant challenges in areas such as social-emotional development and behavior. Shared coursework, collaborative clinical experiences, and other activities were used to prepare the scholars to address the needs of children with disabilities as well as design and deliver services to parents and teachers to increase the likelihood for optimal child outcomes. Through this collaborative model, scholars were guided to consider the whole child and were provided specialized opportunities to develop holistic approaches to supporting children with disabilities.

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INTRODUCTION

Effectively serving school-age children who have complex, high-intensity needs requires training of professionals with interdisciplinary expertise and advanced or specialized training in cross-disciplinary design and delivery of evidence-based instruction and intensive individualized intervention. Project **Counseling And Language/Literacy In Public Schools and Other educational settings (CALIPSO)** was designed to address national, state, and district shortages of personnel who are fully qualified to serve children with disabilities who have high intensity needs by providing interdisciplinary, team-based training to graduate-level speech-language pathology (SLP) scholars and school counselor (SC) scholars to support the needs of school-age children with high intensity language, literacy, and social emotional needs in public schools and other educational settings. This interdisciplinary program is a collaborative effort between the Department of Communicative Disorders' speech-language pathology graduate program and the Department of Counseling, Rehabilitation, and Psychometric Services' school counseling graduate program at a minority-serving university in Mississippi.

HIGH QUALITY INTERDISCIPLINARY PREPARATION IN MISSISSIPPI AND SIMILAR STATES

High quality interdisciplinary preparation of healthcare and academic professionals may be an effective strategy for addressing some of the complex issues in the state of Mississippi. Mississippi consistently ranks at the lowest quadrants of many polls on various measures of health and well-being, and academics -- putting many of the state's children at highest risks for disabilities and academic difficulties. For example, using 16 measures across four domains (economic well-being, education, health, family and community), Mississippi's overall ranking is 48 of the 50 states (Children's Foundation of Mississippi, 2020). Considered in this ranking are measures such as percent/rate of children in poverty (27%), young children ages three and four not in school (47%), low birth weight babies (12%), and children living in high poverty areas (24%).

More recent data used to determine America's Health Rankings shows that Mississippi continues to be near last place in the nation for three of five social determinants of children's health (#47 for physical environment, #49 for health outcomes, and #50 for health behaviors; United Health Foundation, 2021). For the remaining two social determinants of child health, Mississippi is ranked in the bottom half (#38 for clinical care and #40 for social and economic factors; United Health Foundation, 2021). These rankings have supported the characterization of Mississippi as the state with the most challenges for women, infants, and children (United Health Foundation, 2018).

Indeed, national data show that a significant proportion of infants born in Mississippi enter the world with health challenges. The 2021 March of Dimes Report Card shows that in Mississippi, a state that received a F rating, 14% of babies are born pre-term (March of Dimes, 2021; CDC, 2022). This means that 14% of the state's children start life at high risk for serious health problems such as breathing and eating difficulties. Pre-term babies are more likely to require early intervention and special education services and experience long term effects including learning problems and socio-emotional difficulties (University of Kentucky, nd). The percentage is even higher (17.4%) for babies born to Black/African American mothers. In fact, the preterm birth rate for Black/African American mothers is 44% higher than the rate of other women who give birth to children in Mississippi.

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