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Empowering Abilities Therapy

Location: Chicago, IL

Title: Putting the Pieces Together: Where the Myofunctional Therapist Fits in Your Interdisciplinary Team

Description: Orofacial myofunctional disorders (OMDs) are atypical movement patterns of the oral and orofacial musculature that result in incorrect tongue positioning at rest and during swallowing, breathing, and speech. Occurring across the lifespan, OMDs may co-occur with a range of speech and swallowing disorders, and diagnosis considers the impact of these patterns on both structure in the mouth and function (Merkel-Walsh, 2020). They arise from a combination of learned behaviors, structural differences, and genetic and environmental factors (Maspero et al., 2014). The primary purpose of orofacial myofunctional therapy (OMT) is to establish and maintain an oral environment that supports typical orofacial and dental growth and development (Hanson & Mason, 2003). In addition, effective treatment involves an interprofessional team for further carryover to benefit the individual.

Outcomes: By the end of the presentation, attendees will better understand the following:

- Where a Myofunctional Therapist Fits within a Patient's Team
- When to Refer a Patient to a Myofunctional Therapist
- Assessing, Evaluating, and Treating Patients With OMD's
- Myofunctional Therapy Treatment Function Areas
- Red Flags for a Possible Orofacial Myofunctional Disorder
- Long-term Impact and Goals of Myofunctional Therapy

Background of Speaker: Victoria Kappel is a Speech-Language Pathologist and Qualified Orofacial Myologist whose clinical work spans orofacial myofunctional therapy, feeding and swallowing, and speech-language disorders across the lifespan. She is the founder and owner of Empowering Abilities Therapy in the greater Chicagoland area, a private practice providing individualized, evidence-based, and family-centered care for children with speech, language, feeding, and myofunctional disorders.

In addition to her clinical practice, Victoria serves as an Assistant Professor and Clinical Supervisor at Lewis University, where she teaches graduate coursework in pediatric feeding and swallowing and clinical diagnostics, and mentors graduate clinicians across school, rehabilitation outpatient clinics, and teletherapy settings. Her background reflects an unusually broad clinical foundation—including work at the Shirley Ryan AbilityLab

across acute inpatient, day rehabilitation, and outpatient care, as well as school, hospital, and private-practice roles serving pediatric through geriatric populations.

Victoria earned her M.S. in Speech-Language Pathology from Western Illinois University. She is an active member of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association and the Illinois Speech-Language-Hearing Association. As a former collegiate athlete, she values the team approach for the greater good of others—to enhance and empower an individual's abilities. This collaborative, team-based philosophy is the focus of her presentation, *"Putting the Pieces Together: Where the Myofunctional Therapist Fits In Your Interdisciplinary Team."*

Conflict of Commercial or Promotional Interests: None