

Feeding Challenges in Infants, Toddlers and Beyond: Learn Critical Thinking Skills to Safely Manage Difficult Feeding & Swallowing Cases – The BRIDGE Approach

Dana Kizer, MS, OTR/L, BCP and

Anais Villaluna, SLPD, CCC-SLP, BCS-S, CLC



Faculty

Dana Kizer is an occupational therapist, Board Certified in Pediatrics, and has a special interest in feeding as well as sensory processing. She has worked in a variety of pediatric settings including a pediatric hospital, specialty clinic, private practice, and home health. Dana has presented on feeding therapy and interventions nationally and across virtual platforms. Dana is a published author on the subject of pediatric feeding disorders. She currently volunteers her time with Feeding Matters by serving on the Pre-Conference Committee and the Family Advisory Council to help families navigate the complex world of pediatric feeding disorders. In addition to her professional experience with feeding disorders, Dana brings a family perspective to her treatments and teaching experiences as her initial experience with feeding therapy occurred when she would accompany her younger brother to his feeding therapy appointments. She has seen firsthand the difference therapy can make in the lives of patients and their families.

Anais Villaluna, SLPD, CCC-SLP, BCS-S, CLC is a trilingual Speech-Language Pathologist and Board Certified Specialist in Swallowing and Swallowing Disorders. She earned her BS and MS from Texas Woman's University her clinical doctorate from Northwestern University and is a PhD student in Health Services Research at Texas A&M University, focusing on improving the implementation of evidence-based care for pediatric dysphagia. Anais practices in a variety of pediatric hospital settings, with gastroenterology and otolaryngology teams. Her clinical work is centered on medically complex infants and children with feeding and swallowing disorders, and she is passionate about translating evidence into practice to improve care quality and outcomes. She has presented nationally and virtually on topics related to pediatric dysphagia, culturally responsive practice, and implementation science, and is a published author in peer-reviewed journals. Anais also holds leadership roles with organizations such as the International Dysphagia Diet Standardisation Initiative (IDDSI) and Feeding Matters. Her work emphasizes interdisciplinary collaboration, clinician education, and ethical, system-level change to advance pediatric dysphagia care.

About this Course

Learn tools and strategies to guide your clinical decision-making process for assessment and treatment of a child with complex feeding issues. Managing pediatric dysphagia can be challenging as practices evolve, new protocols are implemented, and multiple developmental as well as anatomical factors can impact an infant or child's ability to eat or drink safely and efficiently. By identifying, assessing, and treating the multiple factors causing or contributing to pediatric dysphagia, BRIDGE provides a multifaceted assessment and treatment approach that provides therapists the tools to think critically when working through difficult cases. The BRIDGE Approach taught in this course provides attendees with information from embryology through childhood and focuses on how the neurological, anatomical, as well as physiological components of growth and development impact pediatric feeding and swallowing. Evaluation to treatment, is presented through the collaborative lens of a speech-language pathologist and an occupational therapist. Different perspectives will be discussed from the pediatric swallowing mechanism from an anatomical and physiological perspective including both instrumental and clinical assessment methods by the SLP to the postural, sensory, and behavioral components to feeding and swallowing including considerations for adaptive interventions when applicable. Attendees will be given strategies to implement immediately when working with children with dysphagia as well as discuss questions, cases, and concerns with the presenters. By BRIDGEing the gap between the multifaceted components of pediatric dysphagia, attendees will gain effective tools to implement when managing pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders.

Learning Objectives

- Identify the embryological, neurological, anatomical, physiological, and developmental factors as it relates to pediatric feeding and swallowing.
- Apply the foundational skills necessary to assess and treat pediatric dysphagia by applying intervention strategies and implementing appropriate treatment techniques during interactive case studies.
- Choose an appropriate and evidence-based tool to use when working with infants, toddlers, and children with pediatric feeding and swallowing disorders.
- Distinguish between the benefits and limitations in current best practices including positioning, thickening, treatment of dysphagia, and both clinical as well as instrumental assessment.
- Determine when and why to apply strategies when managing pediatric dysphagia based on presenting impairment and response to intervention

Disclosures: **Anais Villaluna** receives a salary from Texas Children's Hospital and Feeding and Swallowing Specialists of The Woodlands. She receives a speaking honorarium from Education Resources, Inc. She has a non-financial relationship with IDDSI (International Dysphagia Diet Standardization Initiative) as a US IRG Pediatric Co-Chair, Communication Committee Member. She has a non-financial relationship with Feeding Matters as a volunteer for Digital Outreach Committee. **Dana Kizer** receives a salary from Texas Children's Hospital and Feeding and Swallowing Specialists of The Woodlands. She receives a speaking honorarium from Education Resources, Inc. She has a non-financial relationship with Feeding Matters as a volunteer for Family Advisory Committee.

Help your patients achieve better outcomes.

Schedule – Day 1

9:40 am to 5:00 pm EST (US) - includes two 15-minute breaks

- 9:40-10:00 Webinar Registration/Zoom Course Opens
- 10:00-1:00 The BRIDGE Process: **BRIDGE**
Begin, Reflect, Initiate, Develop, Gauge, Educate
- Thinking critically to make informed, evidence-based decisions.
 - Neurological underpinnings of swallowing and the corresponding developmental milestones
 - Intervention strategies: positioning, flow rate changes, thickening, considerations for implementation following discharge.
 - The pediatric airway, swallowing mechanism, and the anatomical changes including laryngeal position & hyolaryngeal descent.
 - DISCUSSION: medical concomitants to consider
- 1:00-1:30 LUNCH
- 1:30-3:00 **Begin: initial and ongoing assessment**
 Assessment of infants, babies advancing to transitional solids, toddlers, and school aged children
- Choosing the appropriate assessment
 - Non-nutritive assessment
 - Breastfeeding/Bottle Feeding
 - Strategies: Postural control and seating, Oral motor assess, Liquids, readiness for spoon feeding, Gagging, Typical versus atypical, Sensory and behavioral components to feeding
 - VIDEO: Problem Solving Assessments
- 3:00- 5:00 Application across settings: Problem Solving
- Hospital Inpatient vs. outpatient, private clinic, early intervention and school-based delivery (FAPE-Free Appropriate Public Education, when medical and educational needs overlap)
- Reflect: multifactorial aspects**
- Integrating your findings and determining need for further assessment including Postural stability, State regulation, Sensory regulation and responses to input, Behavioral observations, Oral motor assessment, Cultural considerations.

Schedule – Day 2

9:40 am to 4:30 pm EST (US) - includes two 15 min breaks

- 9:40-10:00 Webinar Registration/Zoom Course Opens
- 10:00-11:30 **Initiate: plan of care – writing patient goals**
- Typical vs atypical swallowing – what are we striving for? Red flags, Documentation
 - Measurable and Functional Goals: Challenges and Pitfalls
- 11:45-12:45 **Develop: recommendations and intervention strategies based on patient goals**
- Current practices: advantages & limitations
 - Treatment recommendations - Clinical decision making: What do I need to consider when making recommendations for infants, toddlers?
 - Transitional foods:
 - Self-Feeding vs “Baby led weaning”,
 - Primary/Supplemental tube feedings
 - Advancing oral volumes safely
 - Cultural considerations
 - What’s in your tool bag?
 - What every feeding clinician should know and have in their toolbox!
- 12:45-1:15 LUNCH
- 1:15-3:00 **Gauge: progress in therapy**
- BRIDGE: Transitioning between approaches based on response to intervention
 - Atypical vs Typical: indications for instrumental evaluation
 - Case analysis/decision making:
 - Videos: Videofluoroscopic Swallow Study (VFSS) & Fiberoptic endoscopic evaluation of swallowing (FEES)
- 3:15-4:30 **Educate: patient, family, medical/therapy team**
- Controversial assessment recommendations: Tethered oral tissues
 - Controversial treatment recommendations: Baby-led weaning, E-stim, Oral motor tools
- CASE ANALYSIS - Pulling it all together
- Clinical decision making: Assessment and treatment considerations for different ages: Infant, Toddler & the School aged child

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WEBINAR DATES AND TIMES

October 11 and 12, 2025

9:40am EST • 8:40am CST • 7:40am MST • 6:40am PST

Registration is for both sessions. Zoom log-in instructions and course materials will be emailed/added to your ERI account 5-7 days prior to the webinar.



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