

## pediatric pointers



# Marketing a Pediatric Practice

**S**urviving in private practice is difficult during an economic downswing that has created dwindling disposable income. Owning a private practice that serves a pediatric population in an industry that caters to seniors can make things even tougher. Customary marketing methods that target an older population don't particularly work for infants and children. How does a private-practice pediatric audiologist survive in this stormy environment?

The first and foremost premise to serving the pediatric population is the underlying passion that drives you. Serving children and families is not something you learn to love or can pretend you're good at. If you are truly passionate about serving infants and children, people will seek you out. You will stay afloat longer if you love what you do.

Second, you must understand the financial dynamics and ethics of a practice catering to pediatrics. You must be willing to invest in and use equipment designed for children. High frequency tympanometers, real ear verification, visually reinforced audiometry, and lots of toys are essential. There is a plethora of research documenting the differences between little ears and big ears. If you haven't read it and are not practicing accordingly, you probably shouldn't be seeing little ones. Pediatrics is quickly becoming a subspecialty within the field of audiology, and you already know if you have a passion for it.

Third, pediatric audiologists must market their practices in a vastly different way than the majority of private-practice audiologists who are used to catering to older decision-makers with disposable income. When you serve children, you market

to pediatricians. They are busy! Getting an audience with them is not easy, but the following marketing advice may offer some help.

- Instead of hosting a general open house to explain hearing loss and promote hearing aids to consumers, offer an open house for families of children with hearing loss and invite local resources to speak. You will establish yourself as the center for resources that all families need.
  - Market to pediatricians instead of the consumer. Inexpensive postcards, which can be obtained from a variety of online suppliers, will keep your name in the forefront as a specialist. Use whimsical print and catchy photos to get attention.
  - Send reports quickly to pediatricians and let them know if a patient continues to be a no-show for appointments. They appreciate help with case management.
  - Let doctors know you appreciate their referrals. Send a thank-you note and personalize it.
  - Send a newsletter out as often as you can. Keep pediatricians informed about what services you provide and the types of patients they should be referring. Don't assume they know.
  - Choose 10 pediatricians every month and drop off a package of business cards, pens, magnets, or any other items with your name and contact information. This is a good way to say "Thanks" and "I'm here."
  - Offer to speak at pediatric grand rounds or medical conferences. Don't just ask once; continue to offer your services. They will eventually plug you into a spot and be pleasantly surprised at what you have to say. You will be invited the next time, as well.
  - Don't waste money on newspaper advertising, billboards or similar types of expensive and flashy advertising. Most pediatricians don't care about it. Continue to establish a relationship with the pediatrician's office and keep your name in front of them by sending regular reports, postcards and newsletters.
  - Make friends with the office staff. Candy is always a welcomed treat. Drop a bag off and put your sticker on the bag.
- In the beginning, marketing to a pediatric patient base takes more than just opening your doors. It requires building a public image based on experience and reputation. Once the community finds you and knows the services you provide, you also will reap the benefits of word-of-mouth advertising. Some pediatric audiologists find they begin to build an adult patient base because families talk a lot about the experiences they've had. Be sure to provide a good one! 💰

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