

Autism Spectrum Disorders in Very Young Children: Providing Screening and Support

Applying the Information

Use the questions below to consider your work with young children and families. Individuals can respond to these questions on their own, to consider how they can use what you heard on this audioconference. Staff can also work with partners or as teams to discuss your program and how you might identify early red flags of autism and autism spectrum disorders (ASDs) and offer families appropriate referrals and support.

1. Many staff working in early childhood have had personal and/or professional experience in working with a child with an ASD. What has your experience been?
2. It is important to recognize that every child is an individual. However, those experiences can be very helpful! What do staff in your program already know about ASDs? How is that information shared? What more do you want to learn?
3. Once a child is diagnosed with an ASD, many parents and staff members recognize that they did see early signs. If you have worked with children with ASDs, did you recognize the signs and symptoms described in this audioconference? If so, what did you do next? If not, did you notice unusual behaviors? How did you understand them?
4. Consider your program's process for screening and ongoing assessment. How would the early signs and symptoms of ASDs be identified in that process?
5. Who in your community has expertise on ASDs or resources to offer families who are just learning about their children's ASDs? What are the resources for developmental evaluation and service delivery? What are the resources for family support? What else can you learn about community resources related to ASDs? Where do you/would you go if you needed help in supporting a child or family?
6. Consider the signs and symptoms of ASDs described in this audioconference. How do you think the behaviors associated with these red flags might impact important early relationships with young children? How can staff build relationships with these young children? How can they support families in doing so?
7. Consider the value of early intervention for children with ASDs. Now, consider a family's experience in learning about the ASD impacting their child. How do you feel when families are reluctant to have their child evaluated? How do you respond? How do you honor the role of the family? As you consider your experiences, what has been useful in helping families take the next step? What has not?

Selected Resource List

For more information, see the following resources:

Articles, Books, and Brochures

- Bruey, C. T. *Demystifying Autism Spectrum Disorders: A guide to diagnosis for parents and professionals*. Bethesda, MD: Woodbine House, 2004.
- Filipek, P.A. et al. "Practice Parameter: Screening and Diagnosis of Autism." *Neurology*, no. 55 (2000): 468-79
- Greenspan, S.I., and S. Wieder. *The Child with Special Needs*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1998.
- Greenspan, S.I. *Building Healthy Minds*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books, 1999.
- Lytel, J. *Act Early Against Autism: Give Your Child a Fighting Chance from the Start*. New York: Penguin, 2008.
- Mahoney, G., and F. Perales. "Relationship-focused Early Intervention with Children with Pervasive Developmental Disorders and Other Disabilities: A Comparative Study." *Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics* (2005): 26, 77-85.
- Peacock, G., & A. Perez. "Autism Spectrum Disorders in Very Young Children: What You Need to Know and How You Can Help." *Children and Families* (forthcoming).
- Powers, S. (Ed.). "Autism Spectrum Disorders." *ZERO TO THREE*, no. 4 (March 2008)

Web Resources

The Autism Information Center at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
(including simple overview of treatment and therapy options)

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/

Autism Speaks

www.autismspeaks.org

Early Intervention Network: Enabling Families to Act Early Against Autism
(including Autism in Plain English: The DSM-IV-TR Explained)

www.actearly.org

Family Voices

www.familyvoices.org

First Signs

(including video glossary of early signs of autism)

www.firstsigns.org

Learn the Signs, Act Early, a campaign of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/autism/actearly/

Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers (M-CHAT) Form

www.dbpeds.org/articles/detail.cfm?TextID=466

National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities

www.nichcy.org

Organization for Autism Research

(including A Parent's Guide to Research)

www.researchautism.org