

Next Steps Workshop for Parents and Professionals

Nature of the Intervention

This is a workshop designed for parents and professionals who support young children newly diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Our goal is to orient these groups to essential information and resources they should consider after a young child has been diagnosed with an ASD. We cover questions such as what is ASD, what are evidence-based interventions for ASD, and what supports are available for families, including education, behavioral health and physical health systems.

Given the nature of the topic, we cater the presentation towards parents and professionals who work with children from birth to early elementary education. This age range is when we see most first time ASD diagnoses. Past attendees include parents, grandparents, friends of the family, case managers, teachers, BSCs, school psychologists, Head Start teachers, pre-school teachers, etc. It is particularly useful in helping the professionals learn the depth and breadth of how an ASD diagnosis impacts the whole family and not simply the individual child.

In regards to intervention, this workshop is not training on how to perform certain interventions. We provide an overview of evidence-based interventions such as various Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) packages, describe language and communication, and discuss sensory issues so many struggle with. We stress that the selection of an intervention is reliant upon a multitude of factors such as the child's learning style, the accessibility of the intervention, the cost of the intervention, the amount of time a family can commit to an intervention, etc.

Training Details

This workshop occurs four (4) times a year; once in the fall and once in the spring when we address the needs of the family. We host a workshop focused on the professional role once in the fall and once in the spring as well. There is often an overlap in attendance, in that we do not want families to wait for months to experience a workshop that is only slightly different from the one particularly slated for them. (The difference in the workshops is that we shorten some of the presentation in order to include two brief presentations from CAR researchers at the professional edition.) In the first part of the day, the audience receives academic information:

1. What is ASD,
2. How to diagnose and treat symptoms,
3. Supports and Services available to the Family,

4. Family Panel – (parent, sibling, grandparent and an individual with ASD) offers an intimate, open, and frank discussion of how the diagnosis effects and affects the family. (The audience contains only 50 -60 attendees and a family panel of about 6 members.)

The conference runs from 8:30am to 3:30pm. The training is located either in the B or D room at 3535 Market Street, 16th Floor, Philadelphia, PA 19104.

Materials for the workshop include:

1. a projector,
2. computer,
3. resource CDs distributed to all attendees,
4. assorted food and beverages,
5. handouts of the PowerPoint presentation so that attendees may easily take notes throughout the day,
6. Agenda and contact information for the presenters. The workshop can accommodate between 40 and 60 attendees.

The main contributors for this workshop all work at the Center for Autism Research and the Regional Autism Center at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (an ATN site). There is some variability in who is available to present at the workshops, but generally the staff includes:

Moderator/Facilitator:

Gail Stein, LSW ACSW

Psychologist to discuss what ASD is and how it is diagnosed

Terisa Gabrielsen, PhD

BCBA/Educator to describe positive behavioral interventions and ABA

Megan Carolan-Tomkinson, M.Ed., BCBA

Speech/Language Pathologist to describe communication difficulties and various treatments

Paula L. Barson, MA, CCC/SLP

Occupational Therapist to discuss sensory difficulties and how OTs can help support children with ASD

Kristen Girardi Cunningham, MS, OTR/L

Evidence-base for the interventions

We receive almost 100% parental and/or professional satisfaction from those who attend our workshops. We include information about evidence-based practices including how to access the National Standard’s Project and information from The National Professional Development Center on

Autism Spectrum Disorders. We only present materials that are evidence-based. However, we do not wish to cut off any discussion for any complementary and alternative or other non-evidence based therapies that may come up and caution families to discuss any treatments with their physicians.

Provisions for cultural adaptation

We do our best to either limit or clearly define terminology throughout the workshop. In the past, we have made accommodations for attendees who were deaf and needed sign language interpreters. We have presented a similar workshop for a Spanish speaking audience with other community partners.

Contact information

The workshop coordinator is Gail Stein, who can be reached at 267-426-4910 or steing1@email.chop.edu.

The fees charged do not cover the costs of the program, yet we do make accommodations to the \$25.00 all day fee for those families who cannot afford to attend otherwise.