

Rady Children's Autism Discovery Institute
Teaching Social Communication to Children with Autism

1. Nature of the Intervention

- a. **Name:** Teaching Social Communication to Children with Autism (TSC) by B. Ingersoll and A. Dvortszak
- b. TSC is a manualized parent-implemented program that teaches parents to facilitate their child's development during daily activities. TSC uses developmental strategies as the base of parent-child interactions to increase children's engagement and initiation skills, and intersperses behavioral techniques to teach specific communication, play, and cognitive skills. The intervention is appropriate for children with autism or at risk for autism ages 1-10 years. TSC teaches parents to facilitate interaction and skill building in their at-risk children during daily routines and activities. Training in the intervention can be provided to parents in an individual setting (parent, child and therapist) either in a clinic or home setting. Training can also be provide using a combination of group (didactic) and individual sessions. Training takes approximately 12-24 weeks depending up on frequency and length of visits, which can be flexible based on the needs of the family/agency/funder.
- c. TSC is a parent-implemented program that teaches parents to facilitate development of social-communication skills, play and initiation using a combination of developmental and naturalistic, behavioral strategies. Preschoolers receiving TSC demonstrate significant gains in social-communication skills and significant decreases in autistic symptomatology and parent stress.
- d. Materials include an in-depth manual for therapists describing the strategies as well as methods for teaching parents, a parent manual that describes each strategy with examples to try at home and handouts that highlight important points. The therapist actively collaborates with the parent(s) to identify goals and develop a treatment plan. Training materials include presentation with video examples and fidelity rating forms.
- e. Materials also include methods for measuring fidelity of implementation of the treatment strategies, tools for goal development, tools for assessment of progress toward goals including in-session data collection materials and an observational assessment of child skills across social and communication areas.

2. Training Details

- a. **Trainer:** Our trainers are MA or PhD level therapists with at least 5 years experience working with children with autism and their families. Trainers have reached fidelity of implementation in the model and use the model in current practice. Trainers have experience training parents and providers in the model and work closely with the intervention developer to ensure consistency of practices.
- b. **Trainees:** Trainees include both parents and professionals.
 - i. **Parents:** Parents are trained individual to use TSC with their own children. Behavior specialists at our center work with families, typically for 1 hours per week across 12 weeks. If families are not local to the San Diego area, we offer intensive training that involves training for 2 hours per day for 5 days and video consultation at a distance for 2 hours. Timing and length of training can be varied based on the needs of the child and family.
 - ii. **Professionals:** Training is also offered to professionals wishing to implement TSC with families in their own practice. Professionals are required to have a MA degree in psychology, behavior analysis, education or equivalent and at least 1

year of experience in the area of autism intervention. Individual training for professionals is also available. Up to 10 professionals can be accommodated for each training.

- c. Frequency and location of training: Professional workshops are offered up to once per quarter (based on interest). Workshops are 2 days in length and involve didactic training, the use of video examples and role play as well as practice with feedback. Training can be conducted at our site or at the trainees site. Ongoing supervision (locally or at a distance) can be arranged individual. Parent training takes place at our location and is available on an ongoing basis.
 - d. Train the trainer: Training is available for professionals wishing to train others at their site. Trainers are first asked to complete the professional training (described above), to meet fidelity of implementation in the model with 2 families, and attend an additional one day workshop.
 - e. Manual: The training manual is available through Guilford Press or at Amazon.com. Materials include an in-depth manual for therapists describing the strategies as well as methods for teaching parents, a parent manual that describes each strategy with examples to try at home and handouts that highlight important points.
3. Evidence-base for the intervention: State-of-the-art research in ASD calls for including parent education and a combination of behavioral and developmental intervention strategies to enhance development across domains, improve parent competence and reduce stress. Parent-implemented naturalistic behavioral interventions are based on the principles of applied behavior analysis, and are strongly supported in the scientific literature. Parent-implemented developmental models are derived from research on the role of parental responsivity in typical development and have shown emergent evidence of effectiveness. Systematic blending of these methods has been shown to address core issues of ASD. Preschoolers with ASD receiving TSC demonstrate significant gains in social-communication skills, significant decreases in autistic symptomatology and families show significant reductions in parent stress (Ingersoll, 2011; Ingersoll, et al., 2005). Parents can use the strategies with fidelity. Both parents and providers rate treatment acceptability and usability highly (Ingersoll, 2009; 2011). In a recent study (Ingersoll, 2011), 86% of parents and 100% of providers who began the program completed it with high attendance rates.
 4. Provisions for Cultural Adaptation: Our therapists are trained to adapt training to meet the needs of families from varied backgrounds. This is also incorporated into the professional training materials. TSC was developed to be adaptable to the needs of families from various backgrounds, and the parent manual is highly accessible.
 5. Contact Information: Interested parents and professionals can contact the Autism Discovery Institute at Rady Children's Hospital, San Diego. The cost of individual training at our site is \$150 per hour and can often be covered by insurance. The cost of training workshops at our site is \$500 per person for the initial workshop, \$500 per person for the train-the-trainer workshop (inclusive of reviewing 2 video clips and providing feedback) and \$150 per hour for individual supervision and video review. Cost of training at other sites is \$1500/day for up to 5 trainees plus travel costs.