

# INFORMATION SHEET



## World Health Organization Parent Skills Training for Caregivers of Children with Developmental Delays and Disorders

**A new package for capacity building - developed in  
collaboration with Autism Speaks®**



### OVERVIEW

Several evidence reviews suggest that parents can learn the skills needed to help their children improve behavior, social skills and communication, and that parent training programs lead to improved child development and family well-being (*McConachie, 2007; Odom, 2010*). Evidence further shows that non-specialists in community settings can effectively deliver parent training programs (*Reichow et al, 2013*).

The **WHO Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP)** aims to expand services for mental, neurological and substance use disorders in low- and middle-income countries. The programme recommends parent training for management of developmental disorders including autism, in the context of primary-health care and community-based services. For this reason, WHO, in collaboration with Autism Speaks®, undertook a rigorous process to develop a parent skills training program with the following key features:

***It is informed by evidence in high-, middle- and low- income countries.***

***It can be delivered by non-specialist providers.***

***It is acceptable and scalable in low-resource settings.***



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### PARENT SKILLS TRAINING (PST) PROGRAMME

The programme targets parents of 2- to 9-year-old children with a developmental delay or disorder, including autism spectrum disorder.

- It consists of a combination of group and individual sessions and is designed as a modular package that can be adapted to the needs of different families.
- Eight “core” caregivers group sessions are proposed to introduce strategies to promote children’s engagement, communication and adaptive behaviors through play and home routines.
- Three home visits are integrated into the program to help families set specific targets and provide on-site coaching during parent-child interactions.
- Optional group sessions on parent coping skills and other relevant topics can be added to the program according to caregivers’ needs and demands.
- The group sessions last from two to three hours and can be organized on a weekly or biweekly basis.
- The PST programme can be delivered by a range of non-specialist providers, including social workers, community volunteers, community-based rehabilitation workers, nurses, primary care doctors, teachers, caregivers and parents, in community-based facilities or schools.
- The non-specialist providers who deliver the PST program receive 30 hours of training and continuous supervision by specialists (defined according to local setting).
- The PST package includes an adaptation guide, facilitator guide and participant booklets.



### IS THE PROGRAM AVAILABLE FOR USE IN MY COUNTRY?

A few countries across regions, including high-, low- and middle-income countries, have started the process of pilot testing the PST program in their regions, in collaboration with WHO and Autism Speaks. If you are interested in using the materials and joining the effort, please email:

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