



Caring for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder



Laurel Edington, Elizabeth Ferguson, Lauren Hall, Elizabeth Tkachenko, Emily Lauer, Dr. Robert Baldor

Autism Spectrum Disorder

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is a childhood onset neurodevelopmental disorder characterized by deficits in Social Communication and Social Interaction, restricted interests and the presence of repetitive behaviors. 1 in 68 children has been identified with ASD and ASD occurs 4.5 times more in males compared to females.

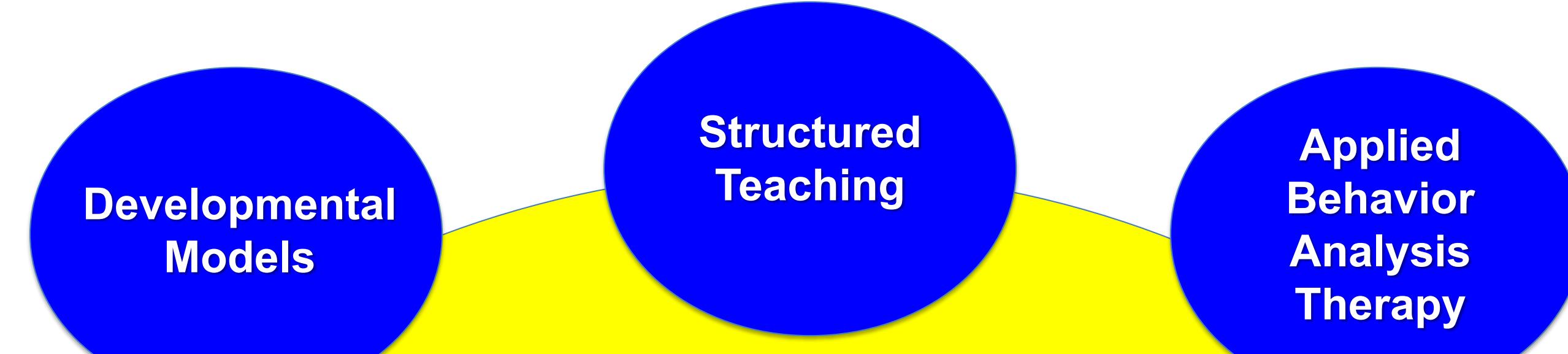
1. Social Communication and Social Interaction -- impairments in aspects of joint attention and social reciprocity and challenges in the use of verbal and nonverbal communication

2. Restricted Interests -- Inflexible adherence to routines
3. Repetitive Behaviors: speech, motor movement, or use of objects
4. Sensory Input may/may not be a factor (hypo or hyper-sensitivity)



Service Projects

1. The Seven Hills Foundation offers support and services to adults and children with disabilities in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. The foundation's goal is to help individuals achieve the highest level of independence and well-being possible. They hosted the second annual AbilityFest, which included a walk, run and other activities such as games, music, and art projects. We helped direct the walkers and cheered them on as they completed the walk. This festival celebrated the abilities and goals of all participants and creates awareness on living with disability.
2. We created a PowerPoint to help guide physicians and families when transitioning patients with autism from pediatrics to adult medicine. We hope that this can be used in a webinar series that raises awareness of the difficulties that can be encountered during this transition and thus help to make it easier for the patients and families, as well as better inform providers about this process.



Common Goals Of ASD Interventions

Early: as soon as ASD diagnosis is seriously considered
Intense: family inclusive active engagement 25 hrs/wk
Personalized: Low student to teacher ratio for 1-on-1 time and small-group instruction
Exposure: interaction with typically developing peers
Goals: measurement and documentation of progress, resulting in adjustments in programming when indicated
Structure: Incorporate structure through routines, visual activity schedules, and clear physical boundaries
Generalization: Strategies to apply learned skills to new environments and situations and maintain functional use of these skills.
Assessment Based curricula measuring: Communication, social skills, functional adaptive skills, reduction of disruptive/maladaptive behavior, cognitive skills, traditional readiness skills and academic skills



Recommendations for Improving Care of this Population

1. Diagnosis and therapy for Autism involves a multi-disciplinary team. It is often overwhelming for parents to manage and integrate these perspectives. A designated care coordinator can be assigned to act as a liaison between the family and multiple providers.

2. When transitioning a child with Autism from pediatric to adult care, it is important for the two physicians to be in direct contact to prepare the adult physician for the special needs of the patient. The adult physician should also be provided with resources regarding the diagnosis.

3. An informational packet specific to each school district should be offered to families with a new diagnosis. This resource should contain definitions of terminology that is used to describe services and explanations of services offered by the school. Educating parents is important to help them advocate for their children.

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