

Introduction

Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) require individually designed interventions that meet the distinct need of the person. It is important that parents, health care, social services and school professionals, working together as a team, select teaching strategies and methods based on peer reviewed, empirically based, valid evidence. We are at a time in history when we have this knowledge and evidence. To say that a methodology is grounded in scientifically based research means there is reliable, independent evidence and current knowledge that a given program or practice works for an individual with autism. Each individual with autism deserves no less.

This document was developed through the efforts of the Caring for Washington Individuals with Autism Task Force (ATF), a Governor appointed group comprised of parents and professionals, established in 2005 by the Washington State Legislature. The ATF gathered information and consulted with experts and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) to inform the state and public on:

- ◆ Autism services needed
- ◆ Autism rates
- ◆ Access to care
- ◆ Effectiveness of current services
- ◆ Other issues or concerns needed to provide sound policy recommendations

Thirty-one specific recommendations emerged from the work calling for improvement of care and outcomes for individuals with ASD.

Broad in nature, these endorsements encompass needed change in systems of infrastructure, treatment, training, and funding in Washington State. Additional individuals provided assistance to develop some of the recommendations by joining subcommittees. The subcommittees focused specifically on plans for Regional Networks, Family-Centered Care, Identification and Tracking, and Education. The combined effort resulted in implementation plans for priority recommendations, one of which was the development of an autism guidebook for individuals with autism—birth through lifespan, for Washington State.

This guidebook is one of the thirty-one recommendations made by the task force in their 2006 report. An additional mandate of the 2007 Legislature directed the ATF and DOH to produce the manual. Funds to print the guidebook were provided by the Autism Awareness: Partnership for Change federal grant.

The Autism Guidebook for Washington State: A Resource for Individuals, Families, and Professionals, is based on the model of the *Service Guidelines for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder/Pervasive Developmental Disorder (ASD/PDD) Birth through Twenty-One* (2004) and some additional content from the 2007 *Ohio's Parent Guide to Autism Spectrum Disorders*. Ohio graciously gave us permission to use their guidebooks as a starting point for this Washington State book.

We would like to acknowledge Ohio's willingness to share their resources with a statement from Kay Treanor of the Ohio Developmental Disabilities Council:

The Service Guidelines originated as the result of the dedication of many knowledgeable people in Ohio who met as a task force and volunteered countless hours over several years to bring this information together. Its purpose is to provide information that will help families, educators, medical professionals, and service providers make informed decisions about children and young adults with autism or other pervasive developmental disorders. It provides recommendations as to best practices for both assessment and the provision of treatment and care for this rapidly growing population, without endorsing any one treatment methodology. It is our hope that you too will find this information beneficial

Kay Treanor, ODDC, 2008

The ATF experts spent considerable time reviewing sections on various topics and then blending new evidence based information and rewriting to produce a guidebook double the size of the original Ohio book. The task force made it state specific, brought the information up to date, filled in gaps in essential information, and added references to all. It is important for families and professionals who struggle to understand the complexities of ASD to know exactly where the information originated. The ATF created a focus that provides familiarity with best practices in assessment, the provision of treatment and care, and some understanding of the arrangement and interrelationships of agency systems, laws, and services that apply.

At the back of the Guidebook is the Autism Lifespan Resource Tree and Directory, a five-page document designed as a quick reference to autism services and supports in Washington State. Another location with internet addresses and phone numbers can be found in Appendix 16: Getting Connected. Please be advised that the names, numbers, and addresses in both of these resources are as complete and accurate as possible at this point in time of publication.

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