

# Building Your Child's Intervention Plan

A Guide for Parents/Caregivers Using Individualized Funding  
for Children Diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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# Key Stages of Assessment

**AUTISM SYMPTOMS:** You, or your health care provider, have identified possible symptoms of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in your child. These symptoms include delays in social interaction and social communication, as well as restricted interests and repetitive behaviours. In some cases, loss of speaking skills may occur.

**AUTISM SCREEN:** Your health care provider may recommend that you and your child meet with an ASD consultant. An ASD Consultant will determine whether your child is at risk of ASD or is presenting with other developmental delays. The ASD Consultant or doctor may make a referral to a diagnostic team for an assessment to determine if a diagnosis of ASD can be confirmed.

**DIAGNOSTIC ASSESSMENT:** You and your child will meet with a diagnostic team, which may include a pediatrician, psychologist, psychiatrist, occupational therapist, and speech language pathologist to complete some checklists and formal testing that compares your child's development to same age peers. At this time it is recommended you work closely with your ASD Consultant as they can be a good source of information and support.

**If your child receives a diagnosis of ASD and they are under the age of six, it is recommended you apply for [ASD Individualized Funding](#).**

# Building Your Intervention Plan

## What is an Intervention?

An intervention is the action taken to improve a situation. Interventions are commonly based on behavioural and developmental needs. In some cases, a team of professionals may work with you and your child to assist in making the change that improves the situation.

## The Intervention Team

Your team may include:

- ASD Consultant
- Behaviour Analyst/Consultant
- Occupational Therapist
- Social worker
- Medical personnel
- ASD Support Worker
- Speech-Language Pathologist
- Physical Therapist
- Psychologist

An intervention team works together to create an intervention plan for your child and your family based on the assessed needs.

It is critically important that either you or a member of your child's intervention team be designated as the case manager to plan, monitor and receive regular updates to the intervention plan.

## What is an intervention plan/program?

An intervention plan identifies the goals and skills that will be targeted. Essentially, it is the road map for the therapists and family detailing what you will do, how you will do it and when it should be completed. Intervention plans may be changed as the

Goals will be written specific to your child's needs. One way to write intervention goals that has been helpful for families is the SMART goals format: **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**elevant and **T**ime Bound.

SMART Goals Guide	
<i>Specific</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What exactly needs to be accomplished?</i></li><li>• <i>Who else will be involved?</i></li><li>• <i>Where will this take place?</i></li><li>• <i>Why do I want to accomplish this goal?</i></li></ul>
<i>Measurable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>How will I know I've succeeded?</i></li><li>• <i>How much change needs to occur?</i></li><li>• <i>How many accomplishments or actions will it take?</i></li></ul>
<i>Attainable</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Do I have, or can I get, the resources needed to achieve this goal?</i></li><li>• <i>Is the goal a reasonable stretch for me? (Neither out of reach or not too easy)</i></li><li>• <i>Are the actions I plan to take likely to bring success?</i></li></ul>
<i>Relevant</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>Is this a worthwhile goal for me right now?</i></li><li>• <i>Is it meaningful to me - or just something others think I should do?</i></li><li>• <i>Would it delay or prevent me from achieving a more important goal?</i></li><li>• <i>Am I willing to commit to achieving this goal?</i></li></ul>
<i>Time-bound</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>What is the deadline for reaching the goal?</i></li><li>• <i>When do I need to take action?</i></li><li>• <i>What can I do today?</i></li></ul>

It is recommended you work with your ASD Consultant to identify the interventions that will best match the treatment goals and the needs of your child. This may include working with private professionals listed on the Autism Service Provider Registry maintained by the Ministry of Health.

The finalized version of the intervention plan should be shared with all members of your team.

## Programming Review

At the direction of your team or once every six to 12 months, you should request a meeting with your case manager, a primary (main) service provider (i.e. SLP), or a full team meeting to discuss your child's progress; check their developmental status, and consider if changes need to be made to their intervention plan.

## How many hours of intervention does my child need?

The precise number of intervention hours varies depending on individual and family characteristics. It is not possible to accurately predict the optimal intensity of therapy that will be effective for any given child and family. Many factors such as age, severity of symptoms, rate of progress, health, and ability of the child and family to actively participate during intervention sessions; should all be considered in determining the number of hours of programming per week.

## Can I use technology to access intervention services closer to home?

Experts say the use of telepractice, or online therapy, for assessment and intervention for children with ASD is showing some evidence to support its use, but on-site direct training or consultation is necessary to meet the criteria of evidence-based practice. There are guidelines in Saskatchewan around the use of telepractice:

*The regulating bodies of occupational therapists, speech language pathologists, physical therapists, psychologists, and social workers have guidelines for licensed professionals in Saskatchewan to use telepractice as a method of contact with their clients. Professionals are required to practice with the same standards in telepractice as they would be for face-to-face services.*

# Choosing Interventions that Fit Your Child and Family

## Evidence-Based Interventions

As there is no single best-suited and universally effective method for all children with ASD, you and your child's team should consider a range of evidence-based interventions that would be best suited to address your child's needs as identified in current treatment plans or assessment reports.

Please see the section "Additional Information" for documents reviewing different types of interventions.

Evidence-based interventions have been scientifically proven to deliver results and are most likely to:

- help your child;
- be worth your time, money and energy; and,
- be safe for your child.

Professionals engaged in evidence-based practice:

1. have knowledge and understanding of the best research evidence;
2. make decisions based on clinical judgment and experience; and,
3. consider a client and family values and preferences before recommending an intervention.

Why is it important to use evidence-based interventions?

If you have a child with ASD, you'll come across many different therapies or interventions. The early use of evidence-based interventions with a child with autism greatly influences long-term functional outcomes. When you and your team select interventions that have scientific proof of the positive impacts on language/communication, behaviour and social interaction skills you know that you have made a good investment of your time, energy and money.

A comprehensive intervention program may use evidence-based interventions and include goals to address:

- Five basic skill domains
  - » Attention to elements of the environment that are essential for learning, especially social stimuli;
  - » Imitation;
  - » Comprehension and language use;
  - » Appropriate play with toys; and,
  - » Social interaction.
- Strategies for how to approach problem behaviours
- Strategies for providing a highly structured and supportive teaching environment, with a high degree of predictability and routine
- Strategies for taking skills learned in more structured settings and generalizing them to more complex natural environments
- Strategies for transitions from one activity to another during the day
- Long-term strategies for transition between different places
- Opportunities for family involvement

## Questions to Ask Yourself

Below are some important questions to consider before committing yourself and your child to a specific intervention

1. **What does my child need help with?** The assessment report should help you understand your child's current skills and possible gaps in skills or development. It should include recommendations of skill development or needs that should be addressed by service providers.
2. **What relevant service providers are in your area?** A registry of autism service providers is available at [www.saskatchewan.ca/autism](http://www.saskatchewan.ca/autism). You can search for providers by discipline, names of providers, and/or location; or talk to your ASD consultant.
3. **Can I afford this service?** Is the intervention affordable with my budget?
4. **Do I and/or does my family have time for this intervention?** Some interventions are time consuming and need a lot of parent involvement. Can you commit to this? What would you need to do to make it work?
5. **Is this intervention available close to home?** Is this intervention available in your area? Is there a way you can be trained to use it if needed?
6. **Does the intervention meet your child's current needs?** What are his/her strengths including learning style, temperament, interests and motivators? What has or has not worked in the past at home and at school? What is particularly challenging for your child?
7. **Does the intervention meet your family's goals and needs?** Does the intervention fit with your family beliefs and values? Or can accommodations be made in the delivery of the intervention?

# Selecting Private Service Providers

Following assessment and intervention treatment planning, you should have a good idea of the kinds of interventions that would be most beneficial to the unique needs of your child and your family. Parents or caregivers of children under the age of six who have a diagnosis of ASD are eligible to access to individualized funding. This funding allows parents to purchase eligible services from private service providers who can help meet the goals set out in the intervention plan.

The Ministry of Health maintains a registry of professional private service providers who work with children diagnosed on the autism spectrum. These professionals include:



## **Behaviour Consultants**

Behaviour Consultants assess and evaluate problem behaviours that may be interfering with a child's ability to engage and interact in functional ways at home, and in community, and school settings. Behavioural plans are written using the principles of Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), or the principles that explain how learning takes place, to change the problem behaviour pattern that is interfering with a child's learning and/or socialization.

### ***Board Certified Behaviour Analysts***

A Board Certified Behaviour Analyst (BCBA) has a graduate-level certification in behaviour analysis. Professionals who are certified at the BCBA level are independent practitioners who provide behaviour-analytic services.

### ***Board Certified Assistant Behaviour Analysts***

A Board Certified Assistant Behavioural Analyst (BCaBA) has an undergraduate-level certification in behaviour analysis.

Professionals who are certified at the BCaBA level may not practice independently, but must be supervised by someone at the BCBA/BCBA-Doctorate level.



## **Occupational Therapist (OT)**

OTs help individuals actively participate in their daily life activities or change the environment to support their needs. An OT provides assessment, consultation, and intervention with activities such as getting dressed, playing, feeding, socializing/ social skills, or attending school. OTs assess motor, perceptual, social, and/or sensory challenges that may be interfering and help the individual to be more aware of how their body feels in any given situation (self-regulation).





### **Physical Therapist (PT)**

PTs can assess and develop fitness and wellness programs to promote more active lifestyles. When a child's physical activity is limited due to an acute or chronic condition, a PT can improve quality of life by strengthening muscles and supporting participation in a desired activity.



### **Psychologists**

A psychologist is trained to assess and diagnose problems related to thinking, feeling and behaviour, as well to help people overcome or manage these problems. Psychologists help people by using a variety of treatments and interventions.



### **Social Worker**

Social workers aim to help people develop skills and abilities to use their own resources and those of the community to solve problems. They can provide counseling to individuals or families. A social worker helps to identify needs and propose ways of meeting these needs, as well as assist with parent-child relationships. Social workers may perform activities and provide strategies **to improve social skills/social interaction.**



### **Speech Language Pathologist (SLP)**

An SLP assists people with developing communication skills. They are knowledgeable about speech and language developmental milestones and what to do when a child's communication skills are not developing according to these same milestones. SLPs can help children with autism develop skills to engage and interact with peers. In some cases, nonverbal communication skills such as gestures, signs, picture communication may be taught to bridge the gap until a child is able to speak verbally, reducing potential frustration and behavioural actions related to communication difficulties. Feeding (picky/problem eating) and swallowing is another area SLPs may address in collaboration with an occupational therapist.

The service providers listed on the registry operate as private businesses. Fees may vary and the Ministry of Health does not monitor or control the fee schedules for private providers. Parents/caregivers are encouraged to contact providers for their service rates.

## What to Do if You Have Concerns Regarding a Private Service Provider You Have Hired

The Government of Saskatchewan has laws that require a regulated professional licensing body to protect the interests of the public and provide a place for people to voice their concerns about services and/or professional/ethical practice. Each regulated professional licensing body has an act, bylaws, and processes to ensure patients/clients receive competent and ethical care, and to manage complaints.

The regulated licensing body is accountable to the public, its members and the government and must follow government legislation. If you have concerns about the service you have received, please contact the regulating body associated with your service provider (listed below) or contact the Behaviour Analyst Certification Board for concerns with a behaviour analyst.

- » Saskatchewan Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists - [www.csask.ca](http://www.csask.ca)
- » Saskatchewan Society of Occupational Therapists - [www.ssot.sk.ca](http://www.ssot.sk.ca)
- » Saskatchewan College of Physical Therapists - [www.scpt.org/](http://www.scpt.org/)
- » Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers - [www.sasw.ca/](http://www.sasw.ca/)
- » Saskatchewan College of Psychologists - [www.skcp.ca/](http://www.skcp.ca/)
- » The Behavior Analyst Certification Board - [www.bacb.com](http://www.bacb.com)

## Interview Questions to Ask Service Providers

The following questions can be asked of service providers to help you decide what services would be best for your child and your family:

1. What kinds of intervention, therapy, and services do you provide?
2. What experience do you have in working with children with ASD?
3. Do you have a particular philosophy on working with children with ASD?
4. How many hours per week do these services require, and how much of this is one on-one time with the child? Is there a contract to sign?
5. Please describe a typical day or session.
6. Do you provide a parent training program? Are parents welcome to participate in or observe therapy and/or group sessions?
7. What techniques do you use to manage difficult behaviours? Do you ever use ***aversive methods*** as a way of changing behaviour? If yes, please explain.

***Definition:** The use of *aversive methods* is stopping someone from behaving in a particular way by doing something unpleasant to that person whenever they do something you do not want them to do.*

8. Please describe your program for integration with typical and/or higher functioning children?
9. Are you willing to work with other service providers as part of a larger intervention team?
10. Will I be charged for any meetings/discussions you may need to have with the Saskatchewan Health Authority service providers (e.g. ASD Consultant)?
11. Are parents involved with the planning as part of the intervention plan you build? How do you evaluate the child's progress, and how often? How do you keep parents informed of the child's progress?

## Additional Information

If parents are interested in learning more about evidence-based interventions, below are some websites that may be of interest to learn more about the variety of interventions available:

- Autism Canada provides a national outlook on issues and advocacy within Canada. Autism Canada also has a resource base from which families and individuals can learn more about autism and navigating different systems. <https://www.autismcanada.org/>
- The National Autism Center at May Institute. The National Autism Center at May Institute is dedicated to serving autistic children and adolescents by providing reliable information, promoting best practices, and offering comprehensive resources for families, practitioners, and communities. National Autism Center [www.mayinstitute.org](http://www.mayinstitute.org)
- Wong, C., Odom, S. L., Hume, K. Cox, A. W., Fettig, A., Kucharczyk, S., ... Schultz, T. R. (2014). Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Autism Evidence-Based Practice Review Group <http://fpg.unc.edu/sites/fpg.unc.edu/files/resources/reports-and-policy-briefs/2014-EBP-Report.pdf>

Parents can also access the information that informed this document:

- National Autism Center. (2015). Findings and Conclusions: National Standards Project, phase 2. Randolph, MA: Author
- Wong, C., Odom, S. L., Hume, K. Cox, A. W., Fettig, A., Kucharczyk, S., ... Schultz, T. R. (2014). Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Autism Evidence-Based Practice Review Group
- New York State Department of Health (2002) Chapter IV- Intervention Methods for Young Children with Autism. Retrieved from [www.health.ny.gov/community/infants children/early intervention/disorders/autism/ch4\\_ptl.htm](http://www.health.ny.gov/community/infants_children/early_intervention/disorders/autism/ch4_ptl.htm).
- Summary of the Clinical Practice Guideline, NYS Department of Health, Bureau of Early Intervention ASD Clinical Practice Guideline 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.asha.org/artic1esummary.aspx?id=8589976534>
- Boisvert, M., Lang, R., et al. (2010). Telepractice in the Assessment and Treatment of Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder: A systematic Review. *Developmental Neurorehabilitation*, 13(6), 423-432.