



Intervention Plan Focus Areas and Team for Toddlers and Preschoolers with Autism in Maryland, DC, and Virginia

Focus Areas for Your Child's Intervention Plan

When creating an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) or an Individualized Education Program (IEP) for a child with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), it is crucial to address the specific challenges your child faces. While every child with ASD is unique, here are common areas that intervention plans often focus on:

1. Practical Communication Skills:

- Developing the ability to use words and gestures to express needs and desires.
- Improving understanding of language and responding to others.

2. Social Interest and Interactions:

- Enhancing the ability to engage with both children and adults.
- Encouraging participation in group activities and social games.

3. Play Skills and Imagination:

- Fostering creative play and use of imagination.
- Encouraging interactive play with peers.

4. Behavior Management:

- Reducing problem behaviors such as tantrums or self-injury.
- Teaching alternative, positive behaviors.

5. Overall Learning and Thinking Skills:

- Enhancing cognitive abilities and problem-solving skills.
- Promoting academic readiness and school participation.

6. Smooth Transitions:

- Developing strategies to help your child manage daily routines and transitions between activities.

Specialists to Include on Your Child's Intervention Team

Depending on your child's developmental needs, a team of specialists may be required. Here are some professionals who might be beneficial:

1. Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs)

SLPs assess and treat communication disorders, focusing on:

- Language understanding and expression.
- Speech articulation and fluency.
- Feeding and swallowing issues for children who have difficulties with eating.

Resource: [American Speech-Language-Hearing Association \(ASHA\)](#)

2. Occupational Therapists (OTs)

OTs help develop:

- Fine motor skills for tasks such as eating, dressing, and writing.
- Sensory processing skills to help children manage sensory input from their environment.
- Daily living skills to promote independence.

Resource: [American Occupational Therapy Association \(AOTA\)](#)

3. Physical Therapists (PTs)

PTs focus on:

- Gross motor skills such as walking, running, and jumping.
- Improving coordination, balance, and posture.
- Enhancing motor planning for physical activities.

Resource: [American Physical Therapy Association \(APTA\)](#)

4. Behavior Practitioners

Behavior practitioners often use Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) principles to:

- Increase positive behaviors and teach new skills.
- Reduce undesired behaviors.
- Help children generalize skills across different settings.

Resources:

- [Behavior Analyst Certification Board \(BACB\)](#)
- Autism Speaks: First 100 Days Kit

Characteristics of Effective Interventions

Effective interventions for young children with ASD, as identified by the National Research Council, include:

- Starting intervention as soon as ASD is suspected.
- Active engagement with the child for at least 25 hours per week.
- One-on-one and small group teaching.
- Incorporating parent training.
- Low student-to-teacher ratio in classroom settings.
- Regular assessment of the child's progress.

Alternative Treatments

While exploring treatments, prioritize those with strong evidence of effectiveness. Be cautious of treatments that promise a cure or seem too good to be true. Consult reputable sources for guidance:

Resource: [American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

Medical Subspecialists

Children with ASD might need to see medical subspecialists if they have associated medical conditions such as gastrointestinal issues, sleep difficulties, or seizures. Consulting a physician with expertise in ASD can help address these issues and improve your child's overall well-being.

Medication

While there is no cure for ASD, medications can help manage symptoms such as anxiety, hyperactivity, or mood swings. Discuss with your physician about the benefits and side effects of any medication.

Risk for Siblings

Having one child with ASD increases the risk for siblings. Families with one child with ASD have about a 15-20% chance of having another child with ASD. Regular developmental and autism-specific screenings for younger siblings are essential.

Support and Future Planning

Develop a support network to help you navigate the challenges of parenting a child with ASD. Connect with other parents, join support groups, and seek professional guidance. Focus on your child's current needs and celebrate their progress. With ongoing research and resources, there is hope for effective treatments that will help your child lead a happy, productive life.