



## ***AUTISM SERVICES FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS***

### **1. How does Eastern Health's Autism Services Program unfold from diagnosis to starting therapy?**

Children with a confirmed diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) are referred to the Autism Services program. A Social Worker will meet with you to discuss the program and answer any questions you may have. The Social Worker will also help you connect with other services and supports that may be beneficial and will continue to provide support as required.

If, after meeting with the Social Worker, you choose to participate in the Autism Services program, a Senior Therapist will be assigned. A Senior Therapist is a Child Management Specialist who has specialized training in autism and Applied Behavioral Analysis. The Senior Therapist will meet with you and complete an Autism Services intake interview, developmental assessment and will consult with other service providers to determine your specific family and child needs and service / treatment recommendations.

### **2. What is applied behavioral analysis (ABA)?**

ABA therapy is designed to improve current skills, teach new skills and decrease problem behaviors.

### **3. What can the Autism Services program offer?**

The Autism Services program has a range of service options available depending on the needs of your child and family including ABA Home Therapy, JASPER or Parent Implemented ABA. Eligibility for a specific autism treatment is based on a comprehensive assessment and regular re-assessment of your child's and family's needs.

*Parent Implemented ABA* : Parents are responsible for completing skill teaching or behavior programs as recommended by the Senior Therapist. The Senior Therapist will visit the home weekly or bi-weekly, model skill-teaching and behavioral programs, observe delivery of the programs and provide constructive feedback to parents.

*ABA Home Therapy* : is an intensive home-based therapy program in which government provides funding for a Home Therapist to work one to one with your child in partnership with you. Assessment, skill teaching and behavioral programming and direction is provided by the Senior Therapist who will visit your home for observation and therapy team meetings on a weekly or bi-weekly basis. A primary goal of ABA home therapy is supporting parental skill development.

*JASPER* : stands for Joint Attention, Symbolic Play, Engagement and Regulation. It is an evidenced based play therapy. 24 sessions are provided either once a week or twice weekly at your home or in clinic or

last up to 60 minutes. The role of the JASPER interventionist is to work directly with the child through play to support the child's learning.

#### **4. Who will be assigned as the Senior Therapist?**

There are 40 Senior Therapists or Senior Therapists in Training in the St. John's area. Their backgrounds are in developmental and applied psychology in addition to specialized training in evidence-based autism interventions.

#### **5. What does ABA home therapy look like?**

All learning is activity and play based focusing on the core deficits of ASD which include social and communication skills and behavior. Your child will learn to transfer "generalize" skills among a variety of environments and develop to their fullest potential.

#### **6. If my child is recommended for ABA Home Therapy, how many hours will he receive?**

The number of home therapy hours will be determined by the Senior Therapist through individualized assessment of needs.

#### **7. How are Home Therapists hired?**

Hiring is done by the parents. The Social Worker will meet with you to provide an information package, answer any questions you may have and discuss the recruitment process through advertising, conducting interviews and checking references.

#### **8. Who is the employer of the Home Therapist?**

Eastern Health provides the funding for the Home Therapist's salary, but parents are the "employer" of the Home Therapist. The province covers the required EI and Canada Pension premiums but does not provide Worker's Compensation coverage. All employers must adhere to the Labour Standards Act of Newfoundland and Labrador. The Social Worker will provide you with contact information for the Labour Standards Department.

#### **9. How are Home Therapists paid?**

You may choose to have an approved Eastern Health bookkeeper manage payroll for you. Eastern Health will cover the cost. The Social Worker will provide a list a of potential payroll service providers.

## **10. What is the Home Therapist rate of pay?**

As of today, Home Therapists may receive \$15.55/hr. or \$17.13/hr. (+ 4% vacation pay) depending upon their qualifications. Autism Services recommends that Home Therapists have two years post-secondary education in Psychology or related field (e.g. Education, Social Work, and Nursing, Early Childhood Education).

## **11. What training will parents and Home Therapists receive?**

Autism Services recommended that parents/caregivers attend a two-day Autism Services orientation which is offered monthly free of charge. Home Therapists are required to attend this orientation prior to beginning work with your child and are paid for their attendance. Some of the topics covered include child development, applied behavioral analysis, discrete trial teaching, program development, transitions, visual supports, behavior modification and fun and exciting therapy. The Senior Therapist will also provide hands on training to you and your Home Therapists during visits.

## **12. What is an ISSP and what does an ISSP meeting look like?**

Children may receive services from many different service providers and agencies. The Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP) process is a provincial model of coordination of service, to ensure that everyone on your child's team is working together to provide the best service possible. The team may include a Senior Therapist, Home Therapist, Social Worker, Occupational Therapist, Speech Therapist, Doctor, Teachers, Early Childhood Educators, family members and any other individuals or service providers you wish to have involved

... and of course, YOU.

At an ISSP meeting, team members discuss and document your child's strengths and needs, service needs and goals. Meetings take about an hour and are held every six months or yearly to review and update goals.

## **13. Should my child stay in a childcare center if he / she is already enrolled when therapy starts?**

The final decision rests with you. Many children need to learn prerequisite skills through home therapy before starting childcare or preschool.

## **14. What happens when my child enters school?**

School transition is done through the ISSP process during kinderstart as your child's service team will now include school personnel.

**15. Will my child make progress?**

Children make progress, however they do it at different rates. Every child with autism is unique. As such, your child's program is also unique and individually tailored to the strengths and needs of your child.

**16. How long will my child be eligible for Autism Services?**

Based on continued assessment of your child's symptoms of autism and with adherence to the Service Agreement, your child could be eligible for Autism Services until August 31st of the year he/ she enters grade 4.

**17. What if I require other services not covered by provincial funding, i.e. day care subsidy, respite?**

There are a wide range of programs and services available to support children with autism and their families. For example, there are programs that can assist with the costs of medical equipment, respite, recreational programs or attendance at a childcare center. Each program has its own specific eligibility criteria and a financial assessment may be required. We encourage you to speak with your Autism Services Social Worker for more information.