



Autism CoP Newsletter

For Practitioners

ISSUE 2

SEPTEMBER 2010

Topic of the Month: Getting the best from schools.

The second Community of Practice for Practitioners & Therapists was held on 6th September and focused on how to successfully engage schools to improve outcomes for students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

Karen McKinnon (Psychologist; Autism Partnership) presented an encouraging and positive case study of a young boy who had been experiencing significant difficulties at his mainstream school. In this instance Autism Partnership in collaboration with Centre for Inclusive Schools for Children with Autism (CISCA) and the primary school were able to build the attendance level and reduce behaviours of concern (BOC) which were occurring at school. The program was intense, but managed within the resources available at the school, and was dependant on a number of key elements;

- Principal, staff and family understanding, patience and commitment to the program
- Involvement of **all parties**; student, family, principal, teacher and integration aid
- Regular communication between all parties
- Integration aide with experience and training in ASD
- Clearly defined systematic goals; which may be socially and behaviourally focused more than academically, particularly early on in program
- Flexibility in attendance
- Lavish reinforcement program
- Options for student i.e. Plan A = more social demands, Plan B = less social demands
- Greater reinforcements should given at Plan A, however the child is given the option regarding which 'plan' he or she will follow at the time

- Solid data collection of participation levels, incidents, intensity, duration etc
- Regular review of goals and effectiveness of strategies with adjustments to the program where needed

Thanks to Karen from Autism Partnerships for a very positive presentation and CISCA for their valuable contributions.

Participants then discussed possible strategies for overcoming issues which can make schooling difficult. Some ideas for improving outcomes at schools;

- Building trust between school and family by supporting open honest discussion about the issues faced by the child, including BOC's.
- Acknowledging the training level of school staff in relation to ASD and acknowledging what they are doing well. As many will feel 'out of their depth'
- Create an advice line and practitioner support for teachers
- Encourage/support data collection both around the individual and BOC's, as well as statewide data regarding attendance rates and outcomes for students with ASD
- Use of expert consultants to assist teachers to implement strategies in the classroom
- Encourage/support teachers and integration aides to complete training such as ATI courses

Participants at this forum also discussed the possibility of the CoP for Practitioners, with support from Autism Victoria in developing recommendations that could then be presented to relevant government departments. This issue will be discussed further at future CoP forums.



Community of Practice for Autism

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The Department of Human Services from the Eastern and North-West Regions have chosen Autism Victoria, and within the Southern Region, Windermere Child and Family Services, to train and skill case workers on the awareness of autism through the Secondary Case Consultative Initiative. A component of this initiative is the development of a Community of Practice (CoP) to strengthen the services that support individuals with an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), their families and supports.

NEXT MEETING

- Date:** Thursday 4th November
- Time:** 2pm—4pm
- Venue:** Autism Victoria
- RSVP:** Email or call Tracey or Luke on the contacts above by 29th October
- Parking:** There is 1hr metered parking on Drummond Street & secured parking in close proximity to the venue
- Public Transport:** The closest train station is Parliament Station, click on the following link for a map

http://maps.google.com.au/maps?f=d&source=s_d&saddr=parliament+station&daddr=24+Drummond+Street,+Carlton+North,+Victoria&hl=en&geocode=&mra=ls&ll=-25.562265,135.703125&sspn=44.387936,92.724609&ie=UTF8&ll=-37.808682,144.969771&spn=0.00968,0.022638&z=16

OUTLINE FOR NEXT MEETING

Inclusive and Active Participation: Influencing policy change to meet individual needs in Adult Training Support Services (ATSS).

Participants will discuss policy issues and the solutions which will foster more appropriate individual supports within ATSS's.

Therapists and other professionals are invited to

- Share experiences
- Identify useful strategies
- Suggest policy improvements
- Develop resources

We encourage professionals attending the forum to present information at the CoP including case studies which;

- highlight strategies for improved inclusion & participation **and/or**
- generate discussion around solutions to identified barriers to inclusion & participation.

Contact Tracey or Luke if you would like to present at the next CoP.