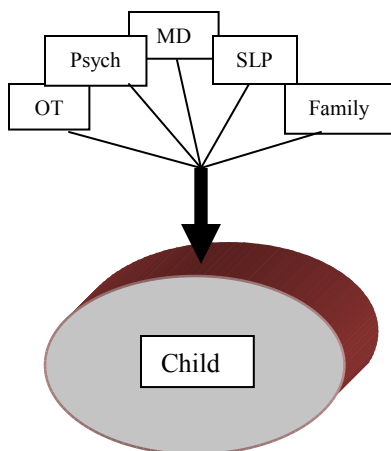


Interdisciplinary Assessments for Autism

Interdisciplinary Assessment Team Model: Components for Effective Diagnostic Use with Autism Spectrum Disorder



Best practices guidelines call for an interdisciplinary assessment of children and youth suspected to have an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Our Great Plains ASD Treatment Program (GPAST) follows an interdisciplinary assessment model as defined in a paper from *Language, Speech, and Hearing Services in Schools* (Prelock, 2003) which is family-centered, culturally competent, and strengths-based. The involvement of the child's local educators, medical providers, and therapists are essential in ensuring continuity of care. The following steps need to occur in order to embody best practice guidelines for ASD screening, assessment, and diagnosis.



Steps in the Interdisciplinary Process:

- ① Assignment of an assessment coordinator
- ② Intake
- ③ Preassessment planning meeting
- ④ Assessment
- ⑤ Post Assessment meeting
- ⑥ Report writing
- ⑦ Community follow-up meeting
- ⑧ Resource notebook development



**An interdisciplinary team approach
to assessment is based on three theoretical frameworks:**

**Family-Centered Care
Cultural Competence
Strengths Perspective**

Family Centered Care

- Incorporates wishes and goals of the family
- Creates links with community resources
- Emphasizes respect and dignity of persons
- Information communicated in ways that are useful and affirming
- Focus on children and family strengths

Cultural Competence

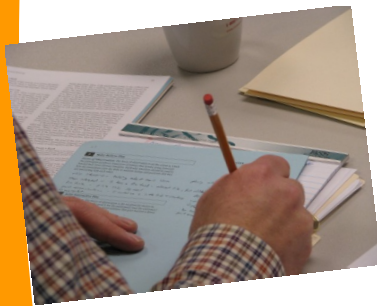
- The family's cultural world view needs to be understood and respected for a successful collaborative relationship
- When all domains of professionals and the family converge there is a meeting of cultures and finding common ground is necessary

Strengths Prospective

- The knowledge that ALL people have strengths
- Need to develop a trusting relationship where helping is family directed
- Emphasize use in natural environment with natural supports as much as possible
- Everyone belongs and NO one is marginalized

Important Qualities of Interdisciplinary Team Model

- A resource notebook is exchanged that provides literature regarding research and practice articles about the child's diagnosis. It also provides strategies and contact information for resources available to the family.
- Home visits from team members help to empower families
- Technical competence of the team helps not only families but also struggling schools in understanding the child's needs



Key Thoughts for Providers

- Recognize family as a constant in child's life
- Establish family-professional collaborations
- Honor cultural diversity
- Recognize families have different coping mechanisms
- Facilitate family-to-family networking
- Systems should be flexible and responsive
- Provider needs to be trustworthy and caring and have technical competence

(Shelton & Stepanek, 1994)

Suggestions for Schools

- Include professionals from disciplines other than the school for a variety of perspectives and source of recommendations
- Identify a contact person with a similar role to the assessment coordinator
- Create a resource notebook that can be shared among professionals and family members
- Identify meeting strategies that maintain the family as the central focus and use time effectively and productively while concentrating on the goals and outcomes