The Great Plains Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment Program (GPAST) will be very busy in the upcoming months training community members in many areas of Autism Spectrum Disorders.

Sarah Carr, Autism Research specialist, will be around the state training daycares and schools on “Autism: Techniques and Evidence Based Research”. Trainings are set for: 2/22/11 at the Dickinson PATH Office; 3/21/11 at the Wahpeton Support Group and April 19th at Good Shepard Daycare Center in Minot. If you are interested in setting up this training, contact Sarah Carr at 1-800-233-1737 x 4365 or Sarah.Carr@minotstateu.edu.

Lori Kalash, Project Director, and Christy Helwig, Clinic Coordinator, are available to present “Learn the Signs” autism training. Lori will also be doing a poster presentation on March 23-24 at the Dakota Conference in Rural and Public Health in Mandan, ND.

Holly Johnson, Model Demonstrator, will be presenting an iPad/iPad demonstration on the uses of this technology and ASD on April 4-5th in Grand Forks. You can also catch Holly’s presentation on March 14-16 and the Pathfinder Parent Involvement Expo in Mandan. If you are interested in setting up this training, contact Holly at 1-800-233-1737 x 4349 or holly.johnson@minotstateu.edu.

GPAST currently has clinics scheduled in Newtown on March 8th, 2011. If you are interested in taking part in a clinic or would like to see a clinic in your area, contact Christy Helwig at 1-800-233-1737 x 3230 or Chrisy.Helwig@minotstateu.edu.

Also on our website (http://www.ndcpd.org/alinks/) is a link to our lending library. You can now view our library and check out materials that can be delivered via mail for your convenience. The library contains many wonderful resources for parents, educators, medical professionals, care givers, as well as children, teens, and adults with ASD. You may contact Hilory Liccini with any questions regarding the Needs Assessment or the Lending Library at 1-800-233-1737 x 3008 or Hilory.Liccini@minotstateu.edu.

For more information on trainings or suggestions for upcoming trainings please complete our online request form at http://www.ndcpd.org/alinks/ or contact: Angie Richter at 1-800-233-1737 x3506 angela.richter@minotstateu.edu or Lori Kalash at 1-800-233-1737 x 3267 or email Lori.Kalash@minotstateu.edu.

Children with autism often have difficulties sharing their feelings when they are frustrated or overwhelmed, and this buildup of tension is often overlooked until the child has a meltdown.

Affectiva, a company based in Waltham, Massachusetts, has developed a new device, called the Q sensor that will hopefully prevent it. The Q sensor works by detecting the moisture that collects underneath the skin when a person experiences stress, storing or transmitting the changes in the wearer’s stress levels throughout the day.

The Q Sensor, in addition to being a useful tool for teachers and caregivers, is also being used by researchers and therapists for studies such as which relaxation techniques work best for an individual student who is becoming stressed.

The Q Sensor can be worn as a part of a wristband or beneath a sweatband or baseball cap. Although skin conductivity, what the Q Sensor is monitoring, does not always indicate stress levels, the Q Sensor has a thermometer that can correct for mistakes that could be made as result of the user walking into a warm room. At that moment, the Q Sensor can record ranging stress levels for a caretaker or teacher to evaluate and discuss with the child at the end of the day to find out what went wrong and how to better solve problems. However, Affectiva plans to add real-time feedback in a future remodel of the Q Sensor so teachers can attempt to calm the student before the meltdown occurs.
Coping with a Diagnosis

According to Autism Speaks, coming to terms with the fact that your child has autism can follow the stages of grieving from shock to denial to acceptance. The stages of grief are outlined below.

Shock
Immediately after the diagnosis you may feel stunned or confused.

Sadness or Grief
Many parents must mourn some of the hopes and dreams they held for their child before they can move on. There will probably be many times when you feel extremely sad.

Anger
With time, your sadness may give way to anger. Although anger is a natural part of the process, you may find that it’s directed at those closest to you - your child, your spouse, your friend or at the world in general. You may also feel resentment toward parents of typical children. Anger is normal. It is a healthy and expected reaction to feelings of loss and stress that come with this diagnosis. Expressing your anger releases tension.

Denial
You may go through periods of refusing to believe what is happening to your child. Denial is a way of coping. It may be what gets you through a particularly difficult period. You must, however, be aware that you may be experiencing denial so that it doesn’t cause you to lose focus on your child’s treatment. Try not to “shoot the messenger.” Instead, consider that they are trying to help you so that you can address the problem.

Loneliness
You may feel lonely or isolated.

Acceptance
Ultimately you may feel a sense of acceptance be patient with yourself. It will take some time to understand your child’s disorder and the impact it has on you and your family.

Autism Speaks also suggests that to change the course of your child’s life, and to take care of them, you need to take care of yourself. Take a moment to ask yourself; Where does your support and strength come from? How are you really doing? Do you need to cry? Complain? Scream? Would you like some help but don’t know who to ask?

“Remember that if you want to take the best possible care of your child, you must first take the best possible care of yourself.”

Tips for Parents
Here are some tips from parents who have experienced what you are going through:

- Get going
- Ask for help
- Talk to someone
- Consider joining a support group
- Try to take a break
- Consider keeping a journal

Tips for Supporting Individuals

Susan Moreno, in addition to being the founder of MAAP Services for Autism and Asperger Syndrome, is a mother of a woman with autism. In her work and her personal experience, Moreno has developed a list of advice for caring friends, extended family and professionals who do not always know what to say. A few of these suggestions are listed below:

- Do try to include our loved ones affected by autism in your social gatherings or outings whenever appropriate.
- Do offer us a chance for respite whenever you feel you can. Even a break of an hour can be a great help.
- Do not offer unsolicited advice.
- Do say that you care and ask how you may be of help.
- If a parent seems unduly upset or discouraged over a particular problem, remember that the problem you see is not the only one the parent is dealing with.
- When our loved one affected by autism is in an activity outside the home (scouting, church youth group, etc.), do not assume we want to be there with them.

Tips for Parents

- Remember that you are not alone!
- Be proud of your brother or sister.
- While it is OK to be sad that you have a brother or sister affected by autism it doesn’t help to be upset and angry for extended periods of time. These feelings can’t change the situation they only make you unhappier. Remember that your Mom and Dad may have those feelings too. Spend time with your Mom and Dad alone.
- Find an activity you can do with your brother or sister.

Tips for Siblings

- Be proud of your brother or sister.
- Find an activity you can do with your brother or sister.
- Spend time with your Mom and Dad alone.
- Do try to include our loved ones affected by autism in your social gatherings or outings whenever appropriate.
- Do offer us a chance for respite whenever you feel you can. Even a break of an hour can be a great help.
- Do not offer unsolicited advice.
- Do say that you care and ask how you may be of help.
- If a parent seems unduly upset or discouraged over a particular problem, remember that the problem you see is not the only one the parent is dealing with.
- When our loved one affected by autism is in an activity outside the home (scouting, church youth group, etc.), do not assume we want to be there with them.
Health Update: More Proof that Vaccines Don’t Cause Autism

In the late 1990s, some researchers started raising concerns over the amount of thimerosal — a mercury-containing preservative — found in many children’s vaccines. Although thimerosal had been used as an anti-contamination agent for decades, until 1991 the diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis (DTaP) vaccination was the only thimerosal-containing shot recommended for infants and children. The hypothesis: As more thimerosal-containing vaccines like hepatitis B and Hib were added to the recommended schedule, researchers worried that babies were receiving too much of the chemical in too short a timeframe, which could potentially impact brain development.

In a totally separate (but coincidental) issue around this time, another group of researchers theorized that children who received the measles-mumps-rubella (MMR) vaccine (which never did contain thimerosal) were more likely to develop autism than those who did not receive it.

But almost as quickly as these ideas were introduced, many larger, better-designed studies started disproving the link between vaccines and autism. Today, scientists are more confident than ever that vaccines play no role in the onset of this developmental disorder. Find out why here.

“If thimerosal in vaccines were causing autism, we’d expect that diagnoses of autism would decrease dramatically after the chemical was removed from vaccines,” says Eric Fombonne, MD, director of the psychiatry division at Montreal Children’s Hospital and a member of the National Institutes of Health advisory board for autism research programs.

NDCPD: is a University Center of Excellence on Developmental Disabilities, Education, Research, and Services. It is part of a network of similar programs at universities throughout the United States.

Our Mission: To provide leadership and innovation that advances the state-of-the-art and empower people with disabilities to challenge expectations, achieve personal goals and be included in all aspects of community life.

Vision Statement: We believe that people with disabilities have the same rights as all citizens. We believe that people with disabilities who receive publicly funded services have the right to expect that those services appropriately promote their independence, productivity, integration, and inclusion. Furthermore, we believe that the public expects that these services will be provided in an effective manner.

Funding for this project was provided by Congressionally Directed Funding through the US Department of Health and Human Services/Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) # H1TMC19969 and Maternal and Child Health Bureau #H1TMC10804.

Preparation of this newsletter was supported by a grant (#H1TMC19969 and #H1TMC10804) to the North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities by the US Department of Health and Human Services/Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The opinions expressed here are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or opinions of the US Department of Health and Human Services/Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA).

Autism Library

With so many books available with information on ASD, it can be overwhelming to find the one that gives the information in an easy to read format. The following are some Parent Information resources that give information in an easy to read format. Additionally, each selection is available for checkout from our library @ www.ndcpd.org/autism.

A Parent’s Guide to Asperger Syndrome and High-Functioning Autism: How to Meet the Challenges and Help Your Child Thrive
Sally Ozonoff, Ph.D., Geraldine Dawson, Ph.D., James Mcpartland, Ph.D.

Ten Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew
Ellen Notbohm

The Autistic Spectrum: A parent’s Guide to Understanding and Helping Your Child
Lorna Wing, M.D.

Nancy D. Wiseman
If you would like to be on our mailing list or receive the newsletter electronically, please email Hilory.Liccini@Minotstateu.edu

Autism Support Groups in North Dakota

Williston Area Autism Support Group: Fourth Tuesday of the month from 5:30-7:00 at Gloria Dei Lutheran Church, 1821 9th Ave, W, Williston, ND
Renie Chadwell 503-990-9345

Tuesday's Child Asperger Autism Support Group: Second Saturday of each month from 9:00-10:30 AM at St. Ann and Joachim Catholic Church in Fargo (www.rvasperger.org) 701-566-1675

Minot Area Parents Support for autism spectrum disorders (MAPS-4-ASD): Third Tuesday of the month 7:00-9:00 PM @ Magic City Campus 1100 11th Ave. SW, Minot, ND (www.maps-4-asd.org) or call Heather Wittliff 701-720-6430

Wahpeton Area Autism Support Group: Third Monday of the month 7:00 PM at Bethel Lutheran Church, 607 6th Street N, Wapeton, ND. Contact Warren/Anne Retzlaff 701-642-6733.

Moorhead Autism Support Group: Second Friday of the month from 7:00-9:00 at Triumph Lutheran Church, 2901 20th St S, Moorhead, MN. Contact Rachel Stotts 218-287-1184 or Karen Swanson 218-233-1634

Families for Effective Autism Treatment (FEAT): Second Monday of each month at 7:00 Century Elementary School Library. Corner of 17th Ave. South and 34th Street, Grand Forks, ND. Contact Bob: 775-3308/Jillian 772-4172.

PDD-NOS/Autism Support Group: Second Tuesday of the month at 7:00-8:30. BECEP is located at 720 N. 14th Street, Bismarck, ND. Free childcare and info call :Margaret Lo Murray 323-4433.

ND Autism Connection: Third Tuesday of the month 7:00 at the River of Hope Church, 1996 43rd Ave. NE, Bismarck, ND www.ndautismconnection.org

National Autism Association of Central North Dakota: Fourth Thursday at Good Sheppard Lutheran Church in Bismarck, corner of Washington St. and Divide Avenue Room 110. Contact Tricia 202-8194 or Kristie 426-6998 www.naacentralnd.yahoo.com

Talk About Curing Autism: Fourth Monday of the Month from 6:00-8:30 at Anne Carlson Center 2860 10th Ave N, Suite 400, Grand Forks, ND. http://groups.tacanow.org/north-dakota/index.html

If there is a group that is not listed and you would like to see added, please contact Hilory Liccini at 701-858-3008 or email at hilory.liccini@minotstateu.edu

Resources:
www.autismtreatmentcenter.org
www.parents.com
www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/regionalhsc
www.the-childrens-guide.com/autistic-childrens-books
www.Toyrsus.com/Autismspeaks
www.autismspeaks.org