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CARD Receives a \$15,000 Grant to Provide a Specialized Program for Individuals with Autism

The grant, provided by FEAT-FMC, a parent support group in California's central valley, will help fund Social Skills groups using the Center for Autism and Related Disorders curriculum, based on the principals of Applied Behavior Analysis.

Los Angeles, CA – September 19, 2009 The Center for Autism and Related Disorders, Inc. (CARD) is awarded a \$15-thousand dollar grant by the Families for Effective Autism Treatment, Fresno-Madera County (FEAT-FMC). The grant will fund a Social Skills program for individuals with autism ages six to 21 who reside in California's central valley.

"The CARD Fresno office is honored to accept this gracious grant from FEAT, "says Sarah Cho, MSW, BCABA. "We are excited to bring an advanced level Social Skills curriculum to as many children and adolescents in the central valley. Our thanks and gratitude goes out to FEAT for making this opportunity possible for individuals who need this intervention and their families."

The Social Skills program will begin in January 2010 at the CARD office located at 4928 E. Clinton Way, in Fresno. 12 week sessions will run during the fall, winter and summer from 4:00-5:30 pm. A maximum of ten students will be placed in each group, based on age and skills. Program tuition will be determined with grant assistance. "Individuals must meet specific inclusion criterion to be part of the social skills group," says Larsen.

Eligibility requirements:

- Between the age of 6 – 21 years old
- Diagnosis of Autism, PDD-NOS, Asperger's and/or other developmental disorder with the following skill set:
 - Vocal Speech
 - Ability to answer questions, make reciprocal statements and questions
 - Request and comment with eye contact
 - Compliance with Adults
 - Ability to play simple games such as tag, hide 'n seek

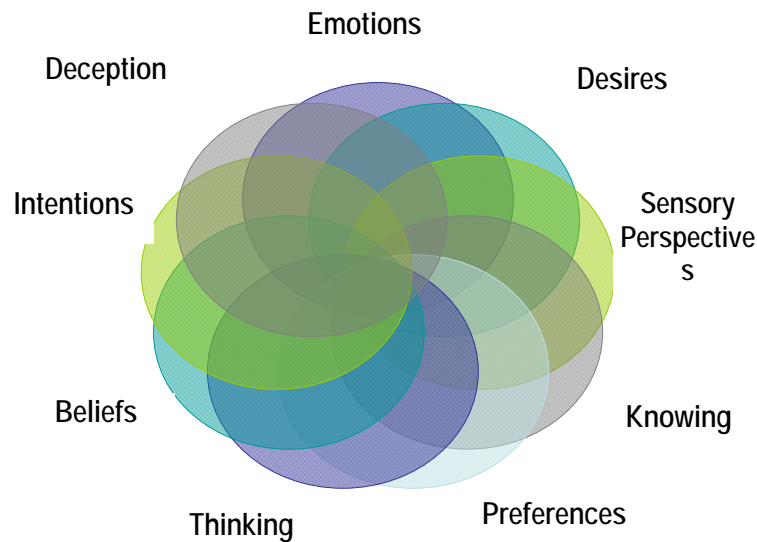
Focus Areas:

Cognition (Meta and Social)

Children with autism are frequently described as having a “theory of mind” deficit, or as having “mindblindness” (Baron-Cohen 1995). “Social-cognition,” or “theory of mind,” refers to our seemingly innate human ability to “mindread,” or to make inferences about what we and others might feel, want, know, like or prefer, think, believe, and intend. Further, we use these inferred mental states as a means for determining appropriate responses to others. For example, we tell people about things they do not already know, and we respond to others according to their intentions, not their actual behavior, as in not yelling at or hitting someone who has accidentally bumped into you in a crowded hallway. Numerous studies have indicated that children with autism have deficits in using “mentalistic” language, and inferring the mental states of others.

Based on developmental norms of social-cognitive skills in typically developing children, the CARD Social-Cognitive Curriculum seeks to break down each “skill” into its own systematic and comprehensive program. As such, Supervisors seeking to improve the social-cognitive skills of their clients have a sequential format, beginning with the earliest skills to emerge, such as Emotions and Desires, shifting to more complex skills based on differing informational and belief states, such as Knowing, Thinking, and Beliefs, then progressing to more advanced skills based on pretense, such as False-Beliefs, Deception, and Intentions.

The teaching of each skill follows a general procedure across programs, beginning with the child identifying his own perspective, moving to the identification of others’ perspectives, then finally, rehearsal and application of appropriate social responses depending on others’ perspectives.



Language Pragmatics

Until this point, the child should have learned many essential components of communicative competence including requesting, commenting, reciprocating social statements, talking about past and future events, etc. Language pragmatics brings together all previously learned conversational skills to teach the child to engage in age-appropriate conversations. Specifically, language pragmatics is the practical ability to use language to communicate with others in a social context. Pragmatic language involves not only what is said, but also why and for what purpose something is said.

The following are important skill sets that will be taught in the language pragmatic component of the Social Skills Group. Language pragmatics is a central feature of the child's overall CARD program and is crucial to the child's success in the social environment.

Message

Topic Selection

Topic Maintenance

Topic Content

Topic Shifting

Topic Clarification (explaining what you mean when someone is confused)

Topic Termination (ending a conversation)

Function of Communication

Requesting

Asking Questions

Commenting

Pleasantries

Nonverbal Language

Facial Expression

Gestures

Body Language

Eye Contact

Prosody

Question Inflection

Emotional Prosody

Non-Literal Language

Sarcasm

Figures of Speech

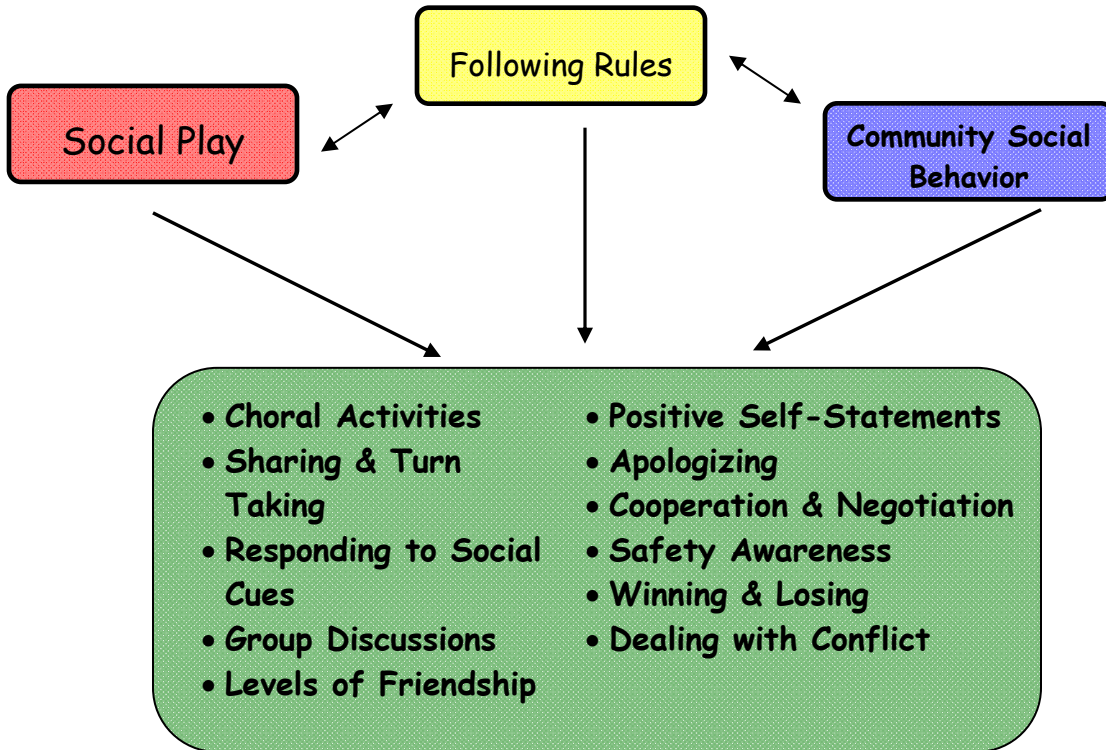
Social Skills

The *CARD Socialization / Social Behavior Curriculum* is a collection of programs, procedures, activities, and ideas which may be used to address one of our clients' most pervasive areas of deficit: social skills. The Socialization / Social Behavior Curriculum are specifically designed to be implemented in the social environment, such as the CARD Social Group. Further, it is this portion of the Curriculum that more closely resembles more "traditional" social-skills curricula, teaching specific social targets such as "Apologizing" or "Initiating Play."

The *CARD Socialization / Social Behavior Curriculum* is divided into 2 subsections: 1) Fundamental Procedures, and 2) Specific Skills. The fundamental procedures are those programs which may be considered "pivotal" for teaching the specific skills, and include Social Play (procedures for play-dates), Community Social Behavior (procedures for parent-training and generalization), and Following Rules (procedures for developing rule-governed behavior) and Social Stories (adapted from Carol Gray). It is these

fundamental procedures (rules, play-dates, etc.) that are then used to teach the specific skills, such as Sharing and Turn-Taking or Levels of Friendship.

The CARD Socialization / Social Behavior Program



Baseline Measures:

Standardized Social Skills Assessment
Clinical observation with peer for skill check-off list

Post-Treatment Measures:

Standardized Social Skills Assessment
Clinical observation with peer for skill check-off list

Data Collection:

Weekly data collection on targeted skills
Average of 90-100% on targeted skill needed across two social groups for mastery criterion
Summary of skills introduced, emerging and mastered will be provided at end of session with graduation recommendations

Skill Levels:

Social Group Levels One through Five
Level 1 – Beginning Social Skills
Level 2 – Beginning/Intermediate Social Skills
Level 3 – Intermediate Social Skills

Level 4 – Intermediate/Advanced Social Skills

Level 5 – Advanced Social Skills

Example of Skill Targets:

Greeting
Turn Taking
Eye Gaze to Regulate Interaction
Intonation
Initiate Play
Gaining Attention
Sharing
Polite Markers/Manners

Offers Assistance
Compliments
Apologizes
Gives Gifts
Secrets
Safety Awareness
Telephone
Restaurant
Social Referencing
Joining Play

Questions regarding the Social Skills program should be directed to Angie Mitchell at a.mitchell@centerforautism.com or (559) 255-5900.

About the Center for Autism and Related Disorders, Inc. (CARD):

CARD is a worldwide leader in providing effective autism treatments to thousands of clients with autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, PDD-NOS, and related disorders. CARD provides both regional and remote services around the globe through its 19 satellite sites in California (11 sites), New York (2 sites), Virginia, Illinois, Texas, Arizona, Australia, and New Zealand as well as its franchise clinics in the United Arab Emirates and South Africa. With a mission to increase access to the most effective treatments, CARD has developed strong working relationships with parent organizations, schools and government agencies all over the world, including the Middle East, Europe, and Hawaii.

For more information about CARD, visit www.centerforautism.com , by telephone at 818.345.2345, or by email at info@centerforautism.com.

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