

National Autism Center Completes Most Comprehensive Review of Autism Interventions

Identifies Established Interventions for Children, Adolescents, and Adults on the Autism Spectrum
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Randolph, Mass. – Researchers at the National Autism Center at May Institute today released the results of the largest systematic review to date of interventions for autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Their findings identify 14 “Established Interventions” for children and adolescents that have the most research support, produce beneficial outcomes, and are known to be effective, and one Established Intervention for adults on the autism spectrum.

“The National Standards Project is an ongoing effort designed to give educators, families, practitioners, and organizations the information and resources they need to make informed choices about effective interventions that will offer individuals with ASD the greatest hope for their futures,” said Hanna C. Rue, Ph.D., BCBA-D. Dr. Rue serves as Executive Director of the National Autism Center, May Institute’s Center for the Promotion of Evidence-based Practice.

Leading the way in the field of adult intervention, this latest iteration of the National Standards Project also included an analysis of intervention outcome studies for adults (ages 22 and older) that have never been systematically evaluated before now.

The one intervention determined to be effective for adults, and nearly all of those classified as effective for children and adolescents, are behaviorally based, meaning they are grounded in the methodologies of applied behavior analysis, behavioral psychology, and positive behavior support.

In spite of the burgeoning population of adults with ASD, there is little empirical research to guide intervention for this population. The overwhelming majority of research studies to date focus on interventions for children and adolescents.

“Because of the dearth of research on adult interventions, only 27 studies focused on adults with ASD met our inclusion criteria,” said Dr. Rue. “Although we are pleased to be able to identify one Established Intervention, these results draw attention to the dire need for further research in this area.

“Children with autism grow up to be adults with autism; they will require effective interventions throughout their lifetimes to ensure they reach and maintain their maximum potential,” Dr. Rue added.

The National Standards Project is the only systematic review of ASD interventions for individuals across the lifespan based on behavioral and educational studies. Through a rigorous process utilizing tools and strategies designed and vetted by a team of national experts, the Project’s goal was to analyze the research that was conducted and the impact on participants, and to determine the strength and scientific rigor of that research. The results will help to inform decisions about interventions, or treatments, for ASD.

The report released today, Findings and Conclusions: National Standards Project, Phase 2, updated the Center’s first summary of the ASD intervention literature for children and youth under age 22. Phase 1 of