

Resource: Interventions for Autistic Children and Youth



AutismONTARIO

Reports on Autism Interventions

- [2020](#) - *Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with Autism.* National Clearinghouse on Autism Evidence and Practice Review Team.
- [2021](#) - *Evidence-based practices for children, youth, and young adults with autism: Third generation review.*

Ratings of Effectiveness

Table 1 - Different Terminology Used in Different Sources, ONTABA

EVIDENCE-BASED	EMERGING	NOT EVIDENCE BASED	
Good Evidence Showing Effective	Some (weaker) Positive Evidence	Insufficient Evidence To Inform Decision-Making	Good Evidence Showing Ineffective /Harmful
(Well) Established	Emerging	Unestablished	Ineffective
Empirically validated	Evidence informed		Not recommended
Empirically supported treatment	Probably efficacious		
	Practices with some support		Non-evidence based
Definitely Use	Use Only with Caution	Do Not Use	Definitely Do Not Use

Augmentative and Alternative Communication: AAC

Providers AAC specialists, behaviour analysts, educators, speech-language pathologists

Type of Service Direct 1:1, consultation, caregiver or educator-mediated model

Description The assessment and implementation (direct teaching following a manualized intervention/evidence-based practice approach) of an aided or unaided system which may be low tech, mid tech, or high-tech for clarification of spoken messages or as a replacement for speech to increase expressive language skills and communication. Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), sign language, written language, speech generating devices (SGDs)

Ages All ages

Outcomes PECS – good outcomes; limited for speech generating devices

Rating Good evidence showing effectiveness for specific types; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Acceptance and Commitment Therapy: ACT

Providers	Behaviour analysts, nurses, occupational therapists, psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers
Type of Service	Direct 1:1 typically; not manualized; can be used for - anxiety disorders, depression, obsessive-compulsive disorder, psychosis, eating disorders, substance use disorders, workplace stress, chronic pain
Description	A type of mindfulness behaviour therapy that has six core principles of developing psychological flexibility: defusion, acceptance, contact with the present moment, the observing self, values, and committed action. ACT allows the therapist to create and individualise their own mindfulness techniques, or even to cocreate them with clients.
Ages	All ages
Outcomes	Acceptance of the difficulties so that they are 'harmless' (byproduct is a reduction in symptoms)
Rating	Limited evidence for youth and adults; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Activities of Daily Living: ADLs

Providers	Behaviour analysts, educators, occupational therapists, psychologists
Type of Service	Direct 1:1
Description	Direct teaching of the component and chained skills for daily living routines such as drinking, eating, sleeping, undressing, dressing, washing hands, drying hands, toileting, tooth brushing, hair brushing, bathing/showering, shaving, menstruation care
Ages	All ages
Outcomes	Improvement of self-help skills; increased independence
Rating	Good evidence showing effectiveness for specific skills if using behavioural approaches; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Ayres Sensory Integration

Providers Occupational therapists

Type of Service Direct assessment and treatment, 1:1, consultative

Description Interventions that target a person's ability to integrate sensory information (visual, auditory, tactile, proprioceptive, and vestibular) from their body and environment in order to respond using organized and adaptive behaviour

Ages All ages

Outcomes Increased adaptive behaviour and decreased interfering behaviour

Rating Emerging evidence of effectiveness; 3 studies to date; included in the National Standards report; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy: CBT

Providers	Behaviour analysts, occupational therapists, psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers
Type of Service	Direct 1:1; can be useful for - bipolar disorder, eating disorders, generalized anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder, schizophrenia and psychosis, specific phobias, substance use disorders
Description	Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) explores the links between thoughts, emotions and behaviour. It is a directive, time-limited, structured approach used to treat a variety of mental health disorders. It aims to alleviate distress by helping individuals develop more adaptive thoughts and behaviours.
Ages	All ages
Outcomes	Reduction of areas of distress for anxiety, fears, depression, trauma, PTSD, and negative thoughts.
Rating	Mixed evidence showing effectiveness for specific issues; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Children's Friendship Training

Providers	Behaviour analysts, speech-language pathologists
Type of Service	Group-based
Description	Children's Friendship Training helps elementary school children who have trouble making or keeping friends through skill building group sessions using a behaviour skills training framework. Parent involvement is mandatory. Children learn skills such as making a good first impression, conversing with other children, finding common interests with other children, playing fairly and being gracious when winning or losing, resolving conflicts, handling rejection, teasing, and bullying, joining other children at play, being a good host on a playdate, and showing respect to other children and adults.
Ages	Grade 2 – Grade 5 (7 years – 11 years)
Outcomes	Increased social skills and play skills
Rating	Good evidence showing; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Comprehensive/Intensive ABA

- Comprehensive or Intensive Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) – Early Intensive Behaviour Intervention (EIBI), Intensive Behaviour Intervention

Providers	Behaviour analysts (BCBAs), assistant behaviour analysts (BCaBAs), registered behavior technicians (RBTs), ABA therapists
Type of Service	Intensive and comprehensive application of ABA; target goals must be socially significant for the individual
Description	Broad curriculum (15 or more domains/areas) delivered at greater than 21 – 25 hours per week); 1:1, small group as applicable
Ages	All ages
Outcomes	Significant increase in skill acquisition and/or decrease in interfering behaviours
Rating	Good empirical support; on the National Standards report; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Dialectical Behaviour Therapy: DBT

Providers Behaviour analysts, occupational therapists, psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers

Type of Service Direct 1:1; can be useful for the treatment of self-harm and suicidal behaviours; Intervention consists of group instruction and individual therapy sessions, both conducted weekly for six months to a year.

Description Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) is a structured program of psychotherapy with a strong educational component designed to provide skills for managing intense emotions, negotiating social relationships, treatment of self-harm and for suicidal behaviours. Developed for individuals without intellectual disabilities.

Ages All ages

Outcomes Increase in emotional regulation resulting in a decrease in self-harm and suicidal behaviours

Rating Good evidence showing effectiveness; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

ESI / SCERTS

- Early Social Interaction/Social Communication Emootional Regulation and Transactional Supports

Providers	Speech-language pathologists, speech assistants/communicative disorders assistants (CDA)
Type of Service	Caregiver-mediated program (parent coaching)
Description	Parent coaching model; activity-based learning in a variety of settings
Ages	All ages (throughout the lifespan); all disabilities
Outcomes	Social communication, emotional skills, transactional supports (<u>may</u> lead to increased receptive language/understanding)
Rating	Emerging evidence; eligible under Core Clinical services in the OAP

Essentials for Living: EFL

Providers	Behaviour analysts
Type of Service	1:1
Description	Focused behaviour intervention curriculum for individuals with high needs
Ages	8 years and older (throughout the lifespan); all disabilities
Outcomes	Focus on the essential 8 skills; an increase in independent functioning in all areas targeted
Rating	Good evidence for focused ABA curriculums; eligible under Core Clinical services in the OAP

Focused ABA

- Focused Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA) – Activities of Daily Living Skills (ADLs), Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), Functional Communication Training (FCT), challenging behaviour

Providers	Behaviour analysts (BCBAs), assistant behaviour analysts (BCaBAs), registered behavior technicians (RBTs), ABA therapists
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Type of Service	Short term, infrequent, or less intense application of ABA; target goals must be socially significant for the individual
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Description	Assessment and application of ABA principles for specific purposes (e.g., challenging behaviour, ADLs treatment, AAC, and FCT); 1:1, small and/or large group
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Ages	All ages
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Outcomes	Significant change to the specific goal/target
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Rating	Good empirical support; on the National Standards report; within Urgent Response Services and Core Clinical Services in the OAP
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JASPER

- Joint Attention, Symbolic Play, Emotional Regulation

Providers	Psychologists, behaviour analysts (BCBAs), speech-language pathologists, early intervention specialists, paraprofessionals, parents
Type of Service	Caregiver-mediated program
Description	Blend of developmental and ABA principles; 2-3 sessions per week for 12 – 24 weeks; 1-1.5 hours/session; requires parent involvement
Ages	12 months to 8 years
Outcomes	Increase in types of play; increase in spontaneous play; interaction duration; initiation of communication (gesture based)
Rating	Good evidence showing effective for children; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Mindfulness

- Mindfulness Therapy

Providers	Occupational therapists, psychologists, psychotherapists, social workers
Type of Service	Direct 1:1
Description	A variant of cognitive therapy and includes interventions such as Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) and Mindfulness-Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT).
Ages	All ages
Outcomes	Leads to a reduction in anxiety and thought problems in children; increased social responsiveness, well-being, and reduced aggression in adolescents
Rating	Emerging evidence; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Occupational Therapy Services

- Treatment of motor skills, coordination of movements, sensory input, and the application to daily life

Providers	Occupational therapists (OT), occupational therapy assistants (under the supervision of an OT)
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Type of Service	Direct and/or consultative assessment and treatment of motor and movements required for daily life tasks and/or a job/occupation
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Description	1:1
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Ages	All ages
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Outcomes	An increase in the skills required to perform daily life tasks
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Rating	Mixed evidence - depending on the specific goal and area of assessment/treatment
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PEAK Relational Training System

Providers	Behaviour analysts, psychologists
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Type of Service	I: I, individualized ABA curriculum
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Description	Comprehensive ABA curriculum that is appropriate for older children. Based on Relational Frame Theory in ABA.
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Ages	3 years – 21 years
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Outcomes	Increase in acquisition of required skills
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Rating	Good evidence showing effectiveness; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP (ABA)
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PEERS - Adolescents

- Program for the Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®)

Providers	Behaviour analysts, speech-language pathologists, psychologists
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Type of Service	Group-based, 16 weeks for 90 minutes per week; parent attendance is mandatory
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Description	Using a group-based behaviour skills training framework, the teens are taught how to develop and maintain friendships, conversational skills, entering and exiting conversations, electronic communication, using humour appropriately, organizing get-togethers, being a good sport, handling disagreements, changing a bad reputation, and handling teasing and bullying
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Ages	Middle and high school
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Outcomes	Increased social skills, social relationships, and social communication skills
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Rating	Good evidence showing effectiveness; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP
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Pivotal Response Treatment: PRT

Providers	Behaviour analysts (BCBA); ABA therapists (under supervision of a BCBA); speech-language pathologists, communicative disorders assistants (CDAs - under supervision of an SLP)
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Type of Service	Caregiver-mediated program
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Description	A naturalistic behavioural intervention which uses your child's motivation to teach communication and social engagement
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Ages	2 years to 16 years
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Outcomes	Joint attention, eye contact, requesting, social engagement, communication, turn-taking, play skills
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Rating	Good evidence showing effectiveness for specific skills; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP
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Project ImPACT

- Project ImPACT (**Improving Parents as Communication Teachers**)

Providers	Behaviour analysts, speech-language pathologists, early interventionists, early educators
Type of Service	Caregiver-mediated intervention
Description	A caregiver-mediated intervention which combines small group sessions and individual coaching over a 12 – 14-week program; schedule can be tailored to your family needs
Ages	Infant to 6 years; may be used with older children with developmental delays
Outcomes	Social communication, imitation skills, play skills
Rating	Good evidence showing effectiveness; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

PROMPT Therapy

- PPROMPTs for Restructuring Oral Muscular Phonetic Targets

Providers	Speech-language pathologists
Type of Service	Direct I:I treatment for increasing articulation and intelligibility of speech
Description	A tactile-kinesthetic approach that uses touch cues to a patient's articulators (jaw, tongue, lips) to manually guide them through a targeted word, phrase or sentence
Ages	All ages
Outcomes	Intends to increase accuracy in speech sound production
Rating	Unestablished evidence (1 study to date for individuals with autism); not named in the national standards report; may be eligible und Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Secret Agent Society: SAS

Providers Behaviour analysts

Type of Service Small group-based, individual, and virtual applications

Description Secret Agent Society (SAS) is a small group to teach children: Emotion Recognition (in other people and self); Emotion Regulation (particularly anxiety and anger); Diverse Social Skills (including for both friendship and teamwork!); and Problem Solving (as an individual and in a group).

Ages 8 – 12 years

Outcomes Increased social skills; decreased problem behaviour

Rating Good evidence showing effectiveness for specific skills; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP

Sensory Diets

Providers Occupational therapists

Type of Service Direct 1:1, consultative

Description A group of activities that are specifically scheduled into a child's day to assist with attention, arousal and adaptive responses – based on sensory integration theory

Ages All ages

Outcomes Increased adaptive behaviours

Rating Mixed evidence with some emerging evidence & some studies which showed negative effects

SLP Services

- Articulation/intelligibility, expressive/receptive language skills, social skills, communication, swallowing, fluency

Providers	Speech-language pathologists, speech assistants or communicative disorders assistants (CDAs) under supervision of an SLP
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Type of Service	Direct and/or consultative assessment and treatment of speech, language, communication and related skill development
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Description	1:1, small and/or large group
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Ages	All ages
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Outcomes	An increase in speech, language, and related skills
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Rating	Mixed evidence - depending on the specific goal and area of assessment/treatment
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Social Stories/Narratives

Providers	Behaviour analysts, educators, psychologists, speech-language pathologists
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Type of Service	Individualized
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Description	Written stories with or without accompanying pictures for explanation of social skills, acceptable behaviour, or environmental preparation. Must follow a specific protocol to be called a Social Story [®] . Often requires additional components (e.g., pre-reading, direct teaching of the skill(s), reminders/prompts, behavioural techniques) for effectiveness. Receptive language skills (comprehension) must be a relative strength.
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Ages	All ages
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Outcomes	Intended to increase prosocial behaviours and decrease interfering behaviours
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Rating	Mixed evidence showing effectiveness; on the National Standards list; eligible under Core Clinical Services in the OAP
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Social Thinking

Providers	Behaviour analysts, educators, speech-language pathologists
Type of Service	1:1, individualized
Description	<p>A collection of materials (not a manualized intervention) that is often used to teach social skills to individuals with autism.</p> <p>Could have positive effects if implemented using behavioural principles and strategies.</p>
Ages	All ages
Outcomes	Increased prosocial skills and a decrease in interfering behaviours
Rating	Not yet any empirical support for this curriculum

Contact Us

Phone: 416-246-9592

Toll Free: 1-800-472-7789

www.autismontario.com



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