

2003 Progress Report - May 30, 2003

Executive Summary

A Summary of the Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project (IATTAP)

1998 to the Present

This report represents information gathered from evaluation and survey data from Illinois Autism/Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) Training and Technical Assistance Project activities, as well as data from Illinois State Board of Education and United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services.

The following summarizes the most notable findings.

Project development of a training curriculum and statewide replication training implementation

The initial three year project contract was a trainer-of-trainers model, the primary focus of which was to develop the training curriculum and provide training to Regional Resource Teams. The Regional Teams would in turn offer replication of the training curriculum in their geographic area. The Project training began during the 1998-1999 school year with the development of a series of core training modules, training 22 regional and 3 statewide teams. Between 1999 and 2003, 21 of the Regional Teams originally trained have provided at least one replication cycle in their region. The three statewide teams (two from Project CHOICES and one from STARnet) have continued to utilize the information from the training and their own expertise to provide technical assistance to teams and schools throughout Illinois.

Schools and districts continue to participate in autism team training

From 1998 to the present, 407 school or district-based teams have participated in team training, representing approximately ten percent of schools in Illinois.

Over the five years of the Project, approximately 380 parents of children with autism and 1800 professionals in the field of education including special education teachers, general education teachers, administrators and related service personnel have participated in team training.

Supplemental regional training adds depth to basic training

The Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project provides regionally-based training throughout the year on a variety of topics. The workshops and conferences are designed to be supplemental to the 9-day basic level team training but are open to other participants as well. Supplemental training has covered a variety of topics that have been identified by training participants and Regional Resource Teams. Nearly 4000 individuals have attended at least one of the supplemental trainings sponsored by the Project.

Project training has resulted in increased knowledge and strategies used for students with autism

An important goal of the Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project is to increase a school's ability to effectively educate students on the autism spectrum in their home schools and in general education classrooms. Respondents to the 2003 Outcomes Survey indicate that training not only increased their knowledge about effective strategies in educating students with autism but also their implementation of those strategies.

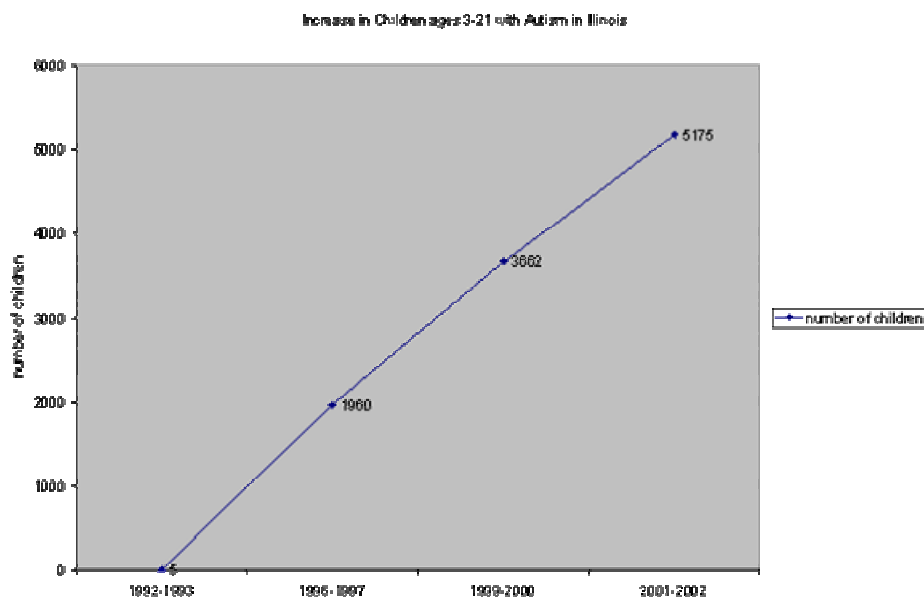
Parents and family members are more involved and satisfied with their child's education

Active parent involvement and participation in all levels of planning, implementation, and participation in training have been an integral part of the Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project. Parents were members of the original core training, are represented on the Project's Advisory Committee and are required team members in team training. Project staff currently includes two parents of children with autism, and many Project consultants and trainers are parents or family members of children on the autism spectrum. Parents who have participated in Project team and supplemental training report that they are more involved in their child's education and satisfied with their child's team. In addition, the Project provides education activities specifically designed for parents and other family members. The Project has begun to develop specialized visual systems for museums, park districts and zoos that have assisted families to have more successful family community experiences. Parents respond that parent education activities and community resources have enabled them to better assist their child in the home and participate in family and community activities.

Schools that have attended Project training report more inclusive classroom environments for students with autism

According to the United States Department of Education Child Count Placement Data, the State of Illinois continues to educate students with disabilities in more restrictive classroom environments than in the United States overall. With the disability of autism, 53% are educated in a separate class and 19% are educated in a separate school (including a residential school). Although it is beyond the resources of the Project to track specific placements for students whose teams have participated in this Project's training, the 2003 Outcomes Survey indicates that those teams whose staff has attended training are educating students with autism in their home schools and in the general education classroom more than prior to training.

Continued Increase of Students with Autism



Illinois State Board of Education Child Count Data

There has been significant progress in all of the Project goals during the past five years. Almost 7000 parents and professionals have participated in Project training thus far. While the number of children identified with the disability of the autism is increasing at an average of 23% per year nationwide and 27% per year in Illinois (US Department of Education OSEP Data Analysis Systems), many teachers still have had no training or experience. There continues to be a pressing need for further training.

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