



Illinois Autism/PDD Training and  
Technical Assistance Project

ILLINOIS STATE  
UNIVERSITY



# Focus Family Support for Autism Spectrum Disorders

**ILLINOIS AUTISM/PDD TRAINING AND  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT**

An initiative of the Illinois State Board of Education

## **FAMILY FOCUS SUPPORT FOR AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS SERVICES**

The Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project (IATTAP) is piloting a new model for providing support to families of children with autism spectrum disorders in Illinois. The Focus Family Support for Autism Spectrum Disorders (FFSASD) is adapted from the Family Focus Positive Behavior Support Model developed by West Virginia Autism Training Center through a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. This model combines key elements from the philosophy of Positive Behavior Supports with Family-Centered Planning to achieve positive changes for families and their children with autism spectrum disorders.

The Focus Family Support for Autism Spectrum Disorders model provides intensive training and support for teams of individuals caring for and working with persons with autism spectrum disorders for a period of 3 to 12 months. The model is available to families through an application process.

### Phase I: Orientation and Person-Centered Planning

After a family contacts the Illinois Autism/Training and Technical Assistance Project and signs this agreement, they are selected to participate on a first-come first-serve basis. Once selected, a Community Partner contacts the family to set a time and date to meet. Usually this appointment takes place in a restaurant or in the family home, depending on what is most comfortable and convenient for the family. The Community Partner is an employee of the IATTAP and parent of a child with autism.

The purpose of this first visit is to get to know the family. The FFSASD process is explained in more detail and an application is usually completed. Next, a second meeting takes place in the family home and a Consultant with IATTAP will also attend to better get to know the family. Then, the Community Partner, Consultant and family will complete a series of personal profiles frames (see next page) to get a better understanding of the family's needs and priorities for training and support. This information will be used to develop an initial plan of action with the family. Also, the Consultant will talk to the family about who should be invited to future team meetings. At this time, the Community Partner can help the family learn about community, regional and state resources.

PHASE II: Team Building and Plan Development

During this Phase, the Consultant and Community Partner, along with the family, will contact persons identified by the family who will become part of the larger team (e.g., Educational staff, behavioral health staff, daycare providers, other family members, friends, neighbors, etc.).

Those individuals important in the life of the person with autism and the person with autism (if possible) will meet to develop a structured plan of action for the teams. This plan of action will include goals, activities to be completed, who is responsible for a particular activity and due dates. A sample “action plan” follows:

**FOCUS FAMILY SUPPORT PLAN  
THINGS TO DO/CHANGES**



**Focus Family** \_\_\_\_\_

Topic/Activity	To Do/Changes	Responsible Person	Date to be Completed
1.			
2.			
3.			
4.			
5.			
6.			
7.			

During this process, the team will decide on if members need specific training and what that training will be. This part of the process ensures that all participants agree on a direction and that programs are being implemented. Behaviors of concern and skills to be taught will be targeted and plans developed to address them. Training would be open to all team members and others interested in gaining knowledge about autism spectrum disorders and educational strategies. Lecture training allows everyone to gain similar information and work from the same framework.

### PHASE III -Support Plan Implementation and Expansion

Once a plan of action is determined by the team, training on developed plans will be provided to all team members. The training will be based upon plans developed by the team during Phase II and evaluated, expanded and revised as needed. Data will be collected to assist in determining need for refinement of plan and to document progress.

#### Small Team Meetings, Lecture and Hands-on Training

Four to twelve half-day meetings will be planned (1 per month) for small team meetings. If needed, time will be scheduled for lecture training. Hands-on training will occur in the person with autism's home, school and community.

#### Family Coaching Sessions

Family Coaching Sessions are available for families who would like more in depth information on a variety of topics. At a time and location convenient for the family, the Community Partner is available to provide individual sessions on (but not limited to) the following topics:

- Home and community living
- Accessing resources
- Basic letter writing and how to organize your child's records
- Case management and individualized service plans
- How the special education cycle works: individualized educational plans
- Individualized rights and processes
- Life planning and guardianship
- Independent Living
- Public services and benefits
- Transitioning through life

#### PHASE IV - COMPLETION AND FOLLOW-UP

Continued assistance and support is provided through on-site visits and phone calls. Follow-up continues for 3-6 months following the end of Phase III. Following this phase, team members may call IATTAP to access other resources or to obtain phone consultation.

There is no cost to the family or school system for Focus Family Support for Autism Spectrum Disorders. IATTAP is selecting a small number of families for this year's pilot implementation due to limitations of funding and staff. Expansion of the model will be based on funding availability, interest from families and successful results.

# Focus Family Support for Autism Spectrum Disorders Letter of Intent

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Your Child's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Your Child's Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

Parent(s) Name/ Guardian(s) Name  
\_\_\_\_\_

Address  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

What is your child's home school? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your child's home district? \_\_\_\_\_

What school does your child currently attend? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the district for the school that your child currently attends? \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number (\_\_\_\_) \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

I, \_\_\_\_\_, as a parent/guardian of \_\_\_\_\_,  
would like to participate in the FFSASD process through the Illinois Autism/PDD  
Training and Technical Assistance Project as described above.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent/Guardian Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Any questions, comments or concerns I might have about the Illinois Autism/PDD  
Training and Technical Assistance Project, the FFSASD process or the consent may be  
addressed to:

Kathy Gould, Project Director  
Illinois Autism/PDD Training and Technical Assistance Project  
1590 S. Fairfield Avenue, Lombard, IL 60148  
630.889.7398

Please Print and mail to address above. Once we receive this letter, we will contact you to  
let you know of the availability of FFSASD services.