

## What is Pivotal Response Treatment?

**Pivotal Response Treatment**, or PRT, was developed by Dr. Robert L. Koegel, Dr. Lynn Kern Koegel and Dr. Laura Shreibman at the University of California at Santa Barbara. PRT was previously called the Natural Language Paradigm (NLP), which has been in development since the 1970s. It is a behavioral intervention model based on the principles of ABA.

PRT is one of the best studied and validated behavioral treatments for autism. Derived from ABA, it is play-based and child-initiated. Its goals include the development of communication, language and positive social behaviors and relief from disruptive self-stimulatory behaviors.

Rather than target individual behaviors, the PRT therapist targets “pivotal” areas of a child’s development. These include motivation, response to multiple cues, self-management and the initiation of social interactions. The philosophy is that by targeting these critical areas, PRT will produce broad improvements across other areas of sociability, communication, behavior and academic skill building.

Motivation strategies are an important part of the PRT approach. These emphasize “natural” reinforcement. For example, if a child makes a meaningful attempt to request, say, a stuffed animal, the reward is the stuffed animal – not a candy or other unrelated reward.



### *Who provides PRT?*

Some psychologists, special education teachers, speech therapists and other providers specifically are trained in PRT. The Koegel Autism Center offers a PRT Certification program.