

Managing your team

Participate in training. Be part of the team. Your participation in team training is vital so that you can increase your skills to successfully parent your child and understand the goals and techniques of his or her program. Knowing the techniques and objectives of your child's intervention program will allow you to closely monitor his or her progress and guide and evaluate the members of your team. Intensive intervention programs often start with a one or two day training course where individual therapists are trained by the primary intervention leader.

Establishing team communication

There are two important ways your team will communicate. One is through a notebook in which each therapist records information after his or her session with your child. Each therapist reads the information recorded since the previous session before the next session with your child. Parents and supervisors can add information to the notebook as needed. The other way is through team meetings. Team meetings are often held at the home of the child, especially in the case of intervention programs that are home-based. These meetings should include as many members of your team as possible. This will ensure that your therapists are up to date on every aspect of the program and that they are all working with your child in consistent ways. At team meetings, you will discuss what is working, as well as areas in which there have not been progress, so that you can determine whether to make changes and what those changes should be. Teams usually meet once a month, but may meet more or less often as needed. Many team meetings include time for therapists to observe each other in action with your child and receive feedback on their techniques.

Making Therapies Work for the Entire Family”
from **Overcoming Autism** by Lynn Kern Koegel,
PhD and Claire LaZebnik

Always be sure you select interventionists who will view the family as teammates and will include you in the determination of target goals – your child needs to learn skills that will help the family function, fit into your lifestyle and be compatible with your cultural and religious values. For example, a clinician may feel that it's important to work on answering the phone, while the family may feel that toilet training is a much more pressing and immediate goal. Both goals may well be valid, but the family needs to have a say in prioritizing them. Similarly, studies show that families who are required to implement drill type interventions have greater stress than when less rigid interventions are incorporated into daily family routines. How well the family functions as a whole is just as important as how well the child with special needs is doing and it's your responsibility to work toward both kinds of success.

There are also currently apps and other technology resources out there that help parents manage their team and keep everyone informed and connected. One resource is My Autism Team (myautismteam.com), a social network that allows all professionals and family members involved in the care of an individual with autism to communicate and provide updates. Search the Autism Speaks Autism Apps database at autismspeaks.org/autism-apps for similar tools!