

Specific Things to Look for on the Resume:

Past experience with children with autism approximately the same age as your child

Amount of experience the therapist has had

Kinds of experience the therapist has had, for example, whether he or she has worked in a school setting or in a private program

Educational background

Membership in professional autism organizations – if so, then he or she is most likely going to conferences, thus enhancing his or her skills in the profession

Conducting interviews

Conduct a “hands on” interview, during which the potential therapist works with your child to implement a skill acquisition program. It is important to see how the potential therapist takes direction and to see how flexible he or she is about changing approaches in his or her teaching. You will want a therapist to potentially be open to new ideas in terms of teaching approaches. It’s a good idea to have him or her bring video of a therapy session conducted with another child. This offers yet another view of his or her teaching skills. If possible, observe the therapist working with another child.

Check references. Be sure to talk to previous supervisors and other parents for whom the therapist has worked. They are often good sources for finding additional therapists.

Consider a probation period. The therapist should be hired for a probation period, during which sessions are videotaped or observed directly until you and/or the home coordinator feel comfortable with the therapist and confident in his or her abilities.

Check clearances. Anyone working with your child will need to provide background clearances from the state you live in to establish that he or she does not have a criminal record. If you have chosen a home-based intervention program for your child, you will probably be required to submit copies of those clearances to the state, county or local agency providing services.

When to Be Concerned About a Therapist”

from **Overcoming Autism** by Lynn Kern Koegel, PhD and Claire LaZebnik

There’s plenty of evidence showing that children with autism do better when parents are actively involved in the intervention and when programs are coordinated. Find programs that encourage you to be involved – you should be learning all the procedures and coordinating your child’s program across every environment. You can’t do that if you’re being shut out. If a treatment provider tells you that you can’t watch the sessions or that your child does better when you’re not there, this is a RED FLAG. It may be reasonable for a therapist to request a few sessions alone to bond with the child, but more than that just doesn’t make sense and the therapist needs to communicate fully with you so that you know exactly what’s going on at all times. If a clinician tells you that she’s not documenting any type of changes, be concerned – the only way to evaluate whether a treatment program is working is to analyze the changes your child is making. Also be wary of any therapist who says that he’s working on the “parent-child bond,” and that fixing your relationship with your child will improve her behavior. In other words, if your therapist is excluding you, blaming you or using techniques that do not have measurable outcomes, you should consider looking for another therapist or agency.