

Who provides ESDM?

An ESDM therapist may be a psychologist, behaviorist, occupational therapist, speech and language pathologist, early intervention specialist or developmental pediatrician. What's important is that the therapist has ESDM training and certification.

Parents can also be taught to use ESDM strategies. Parental involvement is a crucial part of the ESDM program. If your child is receiving ESDM therapy, the instructor will explain and model the strategies for you to use at home.

What is the intensity of most ESDM programs?

ESDM programs usually involve 20 to 25 or more hours per week of scheduled therapy. Families are encouraged to use ESDM strategies in their daily lives.

What is a typical ESDM session like?

ESDM is designed to be highly engaging and enjoyable for the child, while skills are systematically taught within a naturalistic, play-based interaction. Some skills are taught on the floor during interactive play while others are taught at the table, focusing on more structured activities. As the child develops social skills, peers or siblings are included in the therapy session to promote peer relationships. ESDM can be delivered in the home, the clinic or a birth-to-three or developmental preschool setting.

To find more information on ESDM, check out *Play and Engagement in Early Autism: The Early Start Denver Model* by Rogers, S.J., & Dawson, G. (2009) or the *ESDM Curriculum Checklist*, also from Rogers and Dawson. Information about training in the ESDM model can be found at ucdmc.ucdavis.edu/mindinstitute/research/esdm.

What is Floortime (DIR)?

Floortime is a specific therapeutic technique based on the **Developmental Individual Difference Relationship Model (DIR)** developed in the 1980s by Dr. Stanley Greenspan. The premise of Floortime is that an adult can help a child expand his or her circles of communication by meeting the child at his or her developmental level and building on his or her strengths. Therapy is often incorporated into play activities – on the floor. The goal of Floortime is to help the child reach six developmental milestones that contribute to emotional and intellectual growth:

Self regulation and interest in the world

Intimacy or a special love for the world of human relations

Two-way communication

Complex communication

Emotional ideas

Emotional thinking

In Floortime, the therapist or parent engages the child at a level the child currently enjoys, enters the child's activities and follows the child's lead. From a mutually shared engagement, the parent is instructed on how to move the child toward increasingly complex interactions, a process known as "opening and closing circles of communication."

Floortime does not separate and focus on speech, motor or cognitive skills but rather addresses these areas through a synthesized emphasis on emotional development. The intervention is called Floortime because the parent gets down on the floor with the child to engage the child at his or her level. Floortime is considered an alternative to and is sometimes delivered in combination with ABA therapies.