

Rady Children's Hospital

Autism Discovery Institute

www.rchsd.org/autism



The Autism Discovery Institute is a state-of-the-art facility providing comprehensive services and advanced research into autism spectrum disorders. Here, you'll find all of Rady Children's renowned diagnostic and treatment services under one roof, as well as programs to help families have positive experiences and interactions. We are located at 3685 Kearny Villa Road, San Diego, California, 92123, and provide a variety of services at our main center and throughout San Diego County.

Our services include:

Developmental Evaluation

Evaluations are completed by licensed clinical psychologists, and may also include other professionals, such as speech pathologists, physicians, or occupational therapists. Evaluations include a developmental or cognitive assessment, a standardized play based assessment and a parent interview. The results of each evaluation are shared with the family during the visit. Families will also receive a written summary of the results.

Parent-Child Developmental and Behavioral Therapy

Parent-Child Developmental and Behavioral Therapy is designed to help parents facilitate social interaction, play, language and appropriate behavior in their children. Behavioral therapists work directly with the parents and child together in individual sessions, typically one hour a week for 12 weeks. Specific strategies are individualized based on the needs of the child and family. Common intervention strategies that may be implemented include: Pivotal Response Training, DIR/Floortime, Picture Exchange Communication System, positive behavioral support, functional analysis, visual support strategies and other developmentally appropriate strategies.

Behavioral Consultation

Behavioral consultation teaches and empowers parents of children with autism spectrum disorders, ages 0-18, to be able to manage difficult problem behaviors. Parents and child meet with a doctoral- or master's-level behavior support specialist to discuss and apply procedures to improve difficult behaviors and increase appropriate behaviors. Target behaviors may include improving self-help skills, increasing compliance and developing appropriate sleep behaviors. The number of consultation sessions depends on the child's and family's needs.

Intensive Behavioral Therapy

This program is designed for children ages 3-10 with autism and severe behavior challenges (i.e. aggression, property destruction, self-injurious behavior, non-compliance, eloping, etc.) and includes both intervention for the child and coaching for parents and other caregivers. Treatment is individualized based on child and family needs, but typically involves intervention strategies based on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis, specifically involving Positive Behavior Support and Pivotal Response Training techniques to address severe challenging behaviors and skill development. The techniques used work to increase motivation in the children by allowing shared control of task choice, task variation, reinforcing attempts at correct responding and interspersing tasks already mastered by the child. Other techniques used may include shaping, fading, prompting, schedules of reinforcement, etc. These procedures are research-based and effective at reducing challenging behaviors.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy

In cognitive behavioral therapy, children and their parents or caregivers learn a set of skills to help children identify thoughts and feelings that are excessive or not true to a situation, to change those thoughts, and to gradually face the situations that make them feel this way. Each skill builds upon the previous one. Children with

autism spectrum disorders increase their confidence as they master previously learned skills and learn to use new skills. Evidence supports using this therapy to teach children with autism spectrum disorders how to overcome anxiety disorders (such as feelings of fear, worry or nervousness), anger and depression. Evidence also supports its use in helping children with autism spectrum disorders to become more independent in their self-care routines and use of social skills. The therapy works best when it is modified for children with autism spectrum disorders and addresses their unique cognitive and behavioral issues.

Parent Group

Our Group Parent Training Program in Behavior Management will provide eight hours (four 2-hour sessions once a week) of parent education in applied behavior analysis. The program will be experiential and provide caregivers with hands-on experiences using the principles of applied behavior analysis with their own children. Sessions are in a group format that includes didactic instruction, video examples, practice using strategies and worksheets, and feedback on homework designed to help parents implement strategies in the home. Parents will receive specific feedback regarding use of the techniques with their child based on homework and video review. Parents and other care providers (e.g., grandparents, babysitters) are welcome to attend. Parent education groups will serve groups of 4-6 families at a time, and parents will complete the sessions as a group. We have found that this process allows parents to provide support to each other (Stahmer & Gist, 2001).

Jump Start

Jump Start is a brief parent education and training program for parents whose children, ages 0-5, have been referred for an evaluation for or have been recently identified with developmental, behavioral or communication concerns. This program includes four group sessions and is designed to assist parents with beginning intervention quickly while they are waiting for an evaluation or for early intervention programming to begin.

Social Skills Groups

The Autism Discovery Institute offers a variety of social skills groups that promote social interaction skills, language pragmatics and behavioral development. Individual goals are set for each child at the beginning of the group and are tracked throughout the duration of the program.

Curricula are developed in conjunction with our interdisciplinary team, and each group is facilitated by at least one member of the team in consultation with available experts. In addition, most of our groups include a parent-training component and incorporate typical peers into the sessions. We are continually adding new groups, so please contact us for the latest information.

Consultation – Programmatic

The Autism Discovery Institute offers consultation services to area schools, group homes, community agencies and families. Consultation services are typically provided on a short-term basis to meet the specific needs of a program. This may include assistance in learning how to develop behavior plans, setting goals for treatment, determining appropriate environmental/classroom arrangements, integrating children with special needs, or assisting with general program development.

Consultation – Individual

Individual consultation for a specific child is tailored to the needs of the child and the community program the child is attending. Consultation services are typically provided on a short-term basis. This may include developing behavior plans, assistance in implementing and tracking behavior plans, setting goals for treatment, determining appropriate environmental/classroom arrangements to meet a child's needs, or providing training on specific intervention techniques to facilitate development or social interaction for a specific student.

Alexa's PLAYC

Alexa's PLAYC is an educational program designed to integrate early education for typically developing children and children at-risk for autism spectrum disorders (ASD). Alexa's PLAYC curriculum focuses on teaching developmentally appropriate communication, cognitive and social skills, and fosters independence in activities of daily living for all children involved. Children attending are ages 18 months to 5 years. An interdisciplinary team of experts develop goals and curriculum for the program. Teachers are trained in a variety of treatment methodologies currently used to facilitate the development of young children with autism. Alexa's PLAYC meets five days per week and includes a parent-training component. For more information on Alexa's PLAYC, contact Alise at (858) 966-8555.

For more information about any of these services or to schedule an appointment for evaluation or treatment, please contact Bonnie at 858.966.7453.