

## Patient Screening & Assessment (PSA): Autism Resources

### De-escalation: Reactive Strategies

Sometimes we put forth our best effort to prepare a child with ASD or soothe them during a stressful experience and they still become distressed and sometimes even combative. Don't forget to use communication supports as the distressed child will have a hard time processing language.

#### **Suggestions for caregivers:**

- ✚ Use strategies that work at home- familiarity is comforting
  - This might include taking deep breaths, counting, or any other familiar routine
- ✚ Do not let them escape the situation unless it is a safety risk to keep them in the exam room, once they leave the room it may be difficult to get them back in
- ✚ Stay calm and use a soft voice to model the behavior you would like your child to imitate
- ✚ Incentivize good behavior by offering them a reward for compliance during the visit (e.g. proactive strategy)- remind the child what they are working for to motivate them to calm down
- ✚ Demonstrate trust and respect toward the staff so your child sees that your expectations align

#### **Suggestions for staff:**

- ✚ Do not crowd; give the child space with consideration of safety
- ✚ Use minimal speech (1-3 words is a good rule of thumb)
- ✚ Stay calm, and let this be reflected in your tone of voice and body posturing
- ✚ Provide clear, simple directions using pictures or written words whenever possible
- ✚ Allow the patient to make a choice between 2-3 options
- ✚ Limit bright lights and loud noises to provide a sensory conducive environment
- ✚ Try to redirect with highly preferred activities (i.e. bubbles, music, picture of caregiver or favorite character)
- ✚ Use the "first, then" approach to explain what is expected of the child.
- ✚ Be aware of the child's non-verbal cues and know when to seek help to avoid putting yourself or the child at risk