



Department of Mental Health,
Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services

1220 Bank Street, 9th Floor
P.O. Box 1797
Richmond, Virginia, 23218-1797
(804) 786-3710

Interventions for Young Children with Autism

There are many intervention methods designed to help children with autism, and research is underway to help families and providers better understand what is most effective. As families consider what might be best for them, they are encouraged to first consider the key characteristics of effective services for very young children with autism:

- 1) Services are individualized for each child and family and are based on each family's priorities and concerns.
- 2) Families play the central role, with early intervention providers giving support and guidance.
- 3) Early intervention providers who work with the family are trained and have experience working with families who have children with autism.
- 4) Services focus on strategies that keep the child engaged as much as possible in meaningful interactions and activities throughout the daily routine.
- 5) Interventions are guided by information about child development and learning, and the strategies are adapted from the current research about young children with autism.
- 6) Progress is carefully monitored and changes in intervention strategies are considered if progress is not being made.

Together with the family, the team will develop an individualized plan that includes the methods and strategies that are most appropriate to meet the goals the family has for their child. The methods and strategies for an individual child may include aspects of one or more approaches listed below.

Behavioral	Contemporary Behavioral/Naturalistic	Developmental
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ABA (Applied Behavioral Analysis)/ Lovaas' Method • Verbal Behavioral Analysis • PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pivotal Response Training • Incidental Teaching • Visual Strategies • Structured Teaching • Positive Behavioral Support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Floortime • SCERTS (Social Communication Emotional Regulation Transactional Support) • RDI (Relationship Development Intervention) • Sensory Integration Therapy

Families whose children receive Part C early intervention services can receive information on these approaches from their early intervention team.

In addition to the approaches listed above, some families have explored biomedical strategies and alternative therapies including vitamin and mineral supplements and special diets. These approaches should be used under the guidance of the family's physician. Although these are not Part C entitled services, it is helpful for the early intervention team to be aware of all the treatments the child is receiving.