

## **Successful Potsdam early intensive home-training for parents of autistic children - Comparison of training and control waiting group**

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### *Background:*

Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) benefit from a behavior therapeutical early support in combination with an intensive parental home-training (20h/week for 12 months)

### *Objective:*

Twelve families with children with autism spectrum disorders aged between two to five get the opportunity to take part in a free twelve months early training program. The goal is teaching the parents behavior therapeutical skills to train their children independently.

It is a three year project, which started in October 2008, working with four families each year. The efficiency of the parent-child-training is evaluated in a control waiting group design.

### *Method:*

The parents learn how to support their children using principles of autism specific behavior therapy (AVT)/ Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). Every family works with a team, which consists of an ABA-experienced special-education teacher, a student co-trainer and another student responsible for monitoring and filming.

The teams work with the families 10h/week. The parents work another 10 h/week independently with their children. By taking data and the use of a regular videofeedback, parents shall learn how to design and plan training programs, control learning developments systematically and if necessary modify the interaction with their child.

Every half year all children complete standardized development and intelligence tests (PEP-3, K-ABC) to evaluate the therapeutical process. A video coding program (Interact-FA.Mangold) based on the S-R-C model is used to plot learning curves over the year. The graphs give the possibility to analyze the training progress. Furthermore a questionnaire concerning the experienced parental stress (PSI) is used to assess the parents' strain.

An external supervisor and a mediator support the project.

*Results:*

The results of the first year clearly show improvements in language, motor skills and adaptive behavior in comparison to the control waiting group (n=4, intervention group n=5). These improvements are also linked to a successful transfer of the learning programs into everyday situations and more positive relationships between parents and children.

*Conclusion:*

Intensive parental training according to the principles of observational learning and self-modeling guarantees the intensity of support necessary for autistic children. Further projects are planned.

*Sponsors:*

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