

ASERT Current & Proposed Projects (2011-2012)

Based on the Needs Assessment findings, the ASERT collaboratives will focus on three major areas: Clinical Services, Outreach & Resources, and Education & Training.

CLINICAL SERVICES

Adult Diagnostic & Assessment Clinics

This project involves developing and/or expanding autism diagnosis and assessment clinics specifically targeting the older adolescent/adult population. There will be a focus on more in-depth assessment of mental health co-morbidities (e.g., anxiety, depression, personality) and neuropsychological factors (e.g., executive functioning, memory, learning, attention). An increase in accurate identification of ASD for young adults and adults will lead to better treatment outcomes. *(All regions)*

Autism Life Care Model (ALCM)

Autism Life Care Model (ALCM) emphasizes comprehensive, evidence-based care approached in a systematic manner throughout an individual's lifetime. The goal is to create a comprehensive system of care to support an individual, his/her family, and the community throughout critical phases of development, beginning with the transition to adulthood. An additional goal is to ensure that individual and family needs are thoroughly considered in a coordinated manner and that necessary services and training are in place to meet these needs. *(Central Region)*

Life Coach for Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder

Life Coaches are professionals who guide adults with ASD through the complex social, academic and employment environments in their community. Each Life Coach will develop individualized life plans based on exploratory interviews with the individuals culminating in a life map and action plans to accomplish the person's personal and professional goals. Based on the results of exploratory interviews and other diagnostic testing the Life Coach will help the individual access existing community resources as warranted, i.e., the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Adult Basic Education and/or other academic endeavors, Social Security, Office of Disabilities, Housing Authority, etc. *(Western Region)*

Positive Behavior Intervention Support Service(PBIS) Call Line

This project involves the development of an on-call service that business and employers can utilize if they have questions or need assistance in supporting their employee with ASD. Having clinicians and service providers available to assist in situations where an individual may have difficulty communicating with peers and supervisors can dramatically increase an individual's ability to live life as independently as possible. Ten businesses will complete an employer training and be provided with ongoing support. A data base of commonly reported challenges and solutions will be developed and maintained, with that information guiding future modifications to employer trainings. *(Eastern Region)*

Telemedicine Consultation to Rural Areas

The goal of this project is to use mobile technology and telemedicine to develop an Autism Clinical Consultation Team for statewide-consultations. This project will develop and test technology applications for providing remote, synchronous audio and video consultations on unique and challenging ASD cases. The consultations will bring together key individuals in a person's life with their current treating professionals. This remote access is expected to improve communication and participation by all members of the intervention team. This project will increase the capacity of rural areas to provide treatment and intervention to adults with ASD where they live. *(Western Region)*

OUTREACH & RESOURCES

Pennsylvania Autism Census Update

The Pennsylvania Autism Census Project, released in 2009, documented the growth in and statewide profile of individuals living with ASD. Efforts to identify individuals with ASD throughout Pennsylvania for the Pennsylvania Autism Needs Assessment preliminarily indicate that the prevalence of ASD is higher than the Pennsylvania Autism Census Project initially projected it would be. This project, the Pennsylvania Autism Census Update, will use secondary data to document the existing prevalence of ASD in Pennsylvania and produce a release of results for wide dispersion across the Commonwealth.

Statewide Toll-free Number and Website

Through the toll-free number, Individuals, professionals and families will be able to contact a live person and access resources available by region and statewide. The website will be a premier resource for families, providers, and self-advocates, and will allow them to access a broad array of information to help meet the needs of those living with or serving people with autism, via the Internet. The ASERT Statewide Website will be an integral to ASERT's effort to broaden outreach to individuals with and/or affected by autism. In addition to hosting an online resource database, the website will also offer multiple applications, including online versions of autism screening tools. *(All regions – led by Central)*

EDUCATION & TRAINING

Adult and Adolescent Multimedia Social Skills

This project is developing a social skills intervention aimed at young adults (ages 21-30) with ASD. It has direct skills instruction paired with generalization experiences in community settings. Video modeling will be utilized for skills instructions and self-evaluation. It will be developed in a modular format so that appropriate skills building can be paired with the individual's areas of need and their social goals.

For adolescents (ages 13-17) with ASD, the current project will focus on developing training materials for professionals to deliver this intervention, which has been effective in improving social fluency for individuals with high social anxiety. *(Central region)*

Employment and College Preparation Programs for Adults Living with ASD

Existing employment and college preparation programs across the country will be identified that are models of excellence. These programs will be documented for potential implementation in Pennsylvania. Dissemination strategies will be developed for the programs documented, specifically via training for the employment programs and via consortium building for the college preparatory programs. *(Eastern region)*

Family Education & Skill Building: *parents, caregivers, siblings*

Support services and trainings for parents/caregivers and siblings will be developed. The program emphasizes skills building and education in addition to the traditional functions of a support group. Outcome measures will be designed to measure impact of this programming. *(Central region)*

Hospital Care Training

The goal of this project is to create trainings for hospital service specialty (imaging, phlebotomy, and dental) providers around caring for individuals with autism (*Eastern region*)

Juvenile Justice Deterrent Program for ASD

Due to the unique social and communication challenges, individuals with ASD might also be at risk of committing socially inappropriate actions that reach the level of illegal, offending behaviors. For example, the social deficits associated with autism may impact psychosexual development to a degree where inappropriate pursuits, interests, or touching may result in an act that is unlawful. Communication deficits may also impact expressed anger to a degree where violent and aggressive behaviors rather than more appropriate verbal exchanges result. While the acts themselves may be unlawful, the intent driving the act may not be similar to antisocial attitudes commonly found in offender populations. The goal of this project is to design a training and a manual including best practices for individuals with autism who have interaction with the legal system. The training will target all members of the justice system to include attorneys, judges and probation officers, etc. (*Western region*)

Psychopharmacology Guidelines Group

The goal of this project is to bring together experts in psychopharmacology practices in Pennsylvania to generate a set of guidelines for the care of individuals with autism, focused on adolescents/adults and those in restrictive settings. These guidelines will be developed and disseminated for the use of psychopharmacology in individuals with autism. (*Eastern region*)

Residency Training

There has proven to be a need for psychiatrists to provide consultation and treatment in cases of both children and adults with ASD. Through this project, a continued and expanded residency experience for MD's in training will be developed. This will include both face to face instruction and clinical supervision on an inpatient program. (*Central and Western regions*)

Statewide Emergency Responders Training

The aim of this project is to provide training videos and courses for Statewide EMS first responders and emergency room technicians, in collaboration with Indiana University of Pennsylvania. These trainings will demonstrate how the characteristics and needs of persons with autism influence interactions during emergency situations. (*Western region*)

Training Webinars

Webinars will be provided across the state for training in co-morbid disorders in ASD, adult autism diagnoses, early diagnosis and warning signs, and co-occurring medical conditions, in collaboration with University of Pittsburgh School of Rehabilitation Science and Technology. (*Western region*)