

THE DELAWARE NETWORK FOR EXCELLENCE IN AUTISM



Quarterly Newsletter

WINTER 2020 | ISSUE 2

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WELCOME Sarah!



The DNEA welcomed new Interim Director, Sarah B. Mallory, Ph.D., to the team in August 2019. Sarah is a new special education faculty member at the University with a joint appointment with the Center for Disabilities Studies. Before joining the DNEA, Sarah was an Assistant Clinical Professor of Special Education and the Director of Special Education Teacher Preparation Programs at the University of

Maryland. She received her Ph.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University, where she was an instructor in the Intellectual Disability/Autism Teacher Preparation program and an advanced doctoral fellow at the Center for Opportunities and Outcomes for People with Disabilities. Before entering academia, Sarah was a special education teacher with experience working with youth with ASD and their families in school and home-based settings. Sarah has worked for numerous years developing trainings and educating professionals to support people with autism across multiple clinical, hospital, school, and community-based settings. We are excited to have her on the team and know her expertise and leadership will help to continue to increase DNEA's capacity to support professionals, families, and individuals with autism in Delaware.

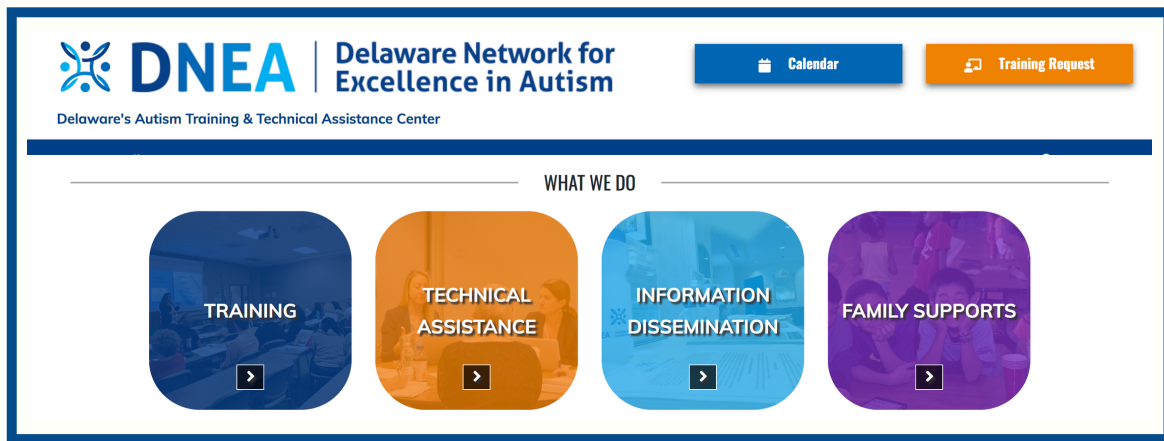


School professionals practicing reinforcement strategies at *Understanding Autism and Classroom Strategies* in October 2019.

Network Highlights

DNEA Launches New Website

WE'RE LIVE! Over the past 6 months, the DNEA worked hard to create a website serve as a hub for the community to learn more about the DNEA and its activities as well as exciting work being done by members of the Interagency Committee on Autism (ICA). This website will help families and professionals get connected to upcoming trainings and events and learn about supports and services offered in Delaware.



You can check us out at: www.delawareautismnetwork.org

DNEA Early Childhood Autism Resource Guides

In collaboration with Delaware's Health Resource and Service Administration (HRSA)-funded "Building Bridges" project, the DNEA is excited to share the newly developed **Early Childhood Autism Resource Guides for Families**.

These resources were developed by a multidisciplinary group of stakeholders, which included parents of children with autism, and are meant to increase families' knowledge and confidence in navigating the early childhood system.

Each of the **seven one-page resource guides** provides information about specific topics, addresses common questions that arise, and offers suggested contacts for next steps. The resources can be accessed online at www.delawareautismnetwork.org.

If you have questions about these resources or would like to request printed copies, please contact Building Bridges Project Coordinator, Brittany Powers, at bblument@udel.edu.

UNDERSTANDING AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER

EARLY CHILDHOOD RESOURCES FOR DELAWARE FAMILIES **1**

WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

Autism Spectrum Disorder, or autism, is a disability that is often present early in life and can affect multiple aspects of a child's development. Individuals with autism do not look different, but they may show differences in the ways they behave, communicate and interact with others. Spectrum refers to the diverse strengths, challenges and needs of each person. There are many services to support individuals with autism throughout their lives.

Quick facts about autism from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- Approximately 1 in 59 children have autism.
- Autism occurs in all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.
- Children who have a sibling with autism are at a higher risk of also having autism.
- There are many possible risk factors for autism, but no single cause. So far genes are the only factor supported by scientific research.

EARLY SIGNS OF AUTISM

There are developmental milestones that most children reach by certain ages. For example, babies usually take their first steps by 18 months of age. Each child develops at their own pace, but sometimes delayed milestones can be an early sign of autism.

According to the CDC, a child with autism may:

- ▶ Not respond to their name by 12 months of age
- ▶ Stop using skills they have already developed
- ▶ Not point at objects to show interest (like pointing at an airplane in the sky) by 14 months
- ▶ Have delayed speech and language skills
- ▶ Repeat words or phrases over and over (echolalia)
- ▶ Give unrelated answers to questions
- ▶ Get upset by minor changes
- ▶ Not play "pretend" games (like pretending to feed a doll) by 18 months
- ▶ Avoid eye contact and want to be alone
- ▶ Have trouble understanding other people's feelings or talking about their own feelings
- ▶ Have highly focused interests
- ▶ Flap their hands, rock their body or spin in circles
- ▶ Have unusual reactions to the way things sound, smell, taste, look or feel

Not all children who show these signs have autism. You know your child best. If you are concerned about your child's development, **don't wait to take action!** Talk to your child's doctor and act early on any concerns to improve development and outcomes.

Additional autism resource guides at:
delawareautismnetwork.org
 Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism

For support and questions, contact Autism Delaware and ask for family support.
(302) 224-6020

Resource Guide #1: Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorder

Outside the Box 2019



Outside the Box Conference

Accessibility, Communication & Partnership

For the second year in a row, the DNEA co-sponsored the Outside the Box Conference, Delaware's only conference dedicated educating both professionals and families on needs related to the Deaf-Blind, Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Blind and Visually Impaired, and Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) communities. This year's conference took place on October 11th and 12th in Dover, Delaware. The DNEA supported 8 presentations this year, including:

232



professionals and families
attended over the two day event!

Celebrating Milestones: Delaware Initiatives for Universal Screening

Communication and Literacy Strategies for Students with Complex Communication Needs

Managing Feeding Difficulties in ASD and Other Developmental Disabilities

"I feel as though I gained a new perspective on what autism looks like in females both as children and adults! This was super insightful and will really help me with future patients."

"I found this conference very valuable... Throughout the day, I met with and talked to professionals in a variety of fields. It was extremely useful to talk to a variety of people and get their perspective."



Featured Work

DNEA Mental Health Initiatives

IT'S OUR PRIORITY The DNEA is committed to ensuring people with autism have access to high quality mental health supports when they need them and where they need them. In fact, it's been one of our priority areas for the past 2 years. We've made important strides in increasing awareness and educating professionals on ASD and Mental Health. You can read about some of our initiatives from the past few months below!

Enhancing Crisis Supports



In Summer 2019, the DNEA partnered with the Division of Prevention and Behavioral Health (PBH), to **build internal capacity within Delaware's youth mobile crisis unit**, Mobile Response and Stabilization Services (MRSS), in supporting individuals with ASD and their families. This **comprehensive training and technical assistance initiative** included training **31 staff** members on Understanding ASD and Mental Health, identifying 7 internal staff as 'agency leads' and providing a **targeted training series with follow-up coaching and case consultation** for leads responding to crisis situations related to ASD. Upon completion, agency leads will be able to **internally train and support their peers** in responding to clients with ASD, ensuring **continued sustainability**.

Training Mental Health Providers



- In July and August, the DNEA trained **45 staff members** from Delaware's largest provider of non-residential mental health services for children and families, Delaware Guidance Services (DGS). The **diverse group of clinicians**, ranging from family-based and outpatient therapists to clinical coordinators and intervention specialists, gained an understanding of ASD and co-occurring mental health concerns, evidence-based practices (EBP) for autism and specific strategies to support autistic individuals in their practice.
- This Fall, the DNEA began a 12-week, small group, **didactic and case consultation series** with staff from DGS and other community and school-based practitioners. The series, developed and facilitated by Network-member Nemours, is designed to support providers on **skill application** and **building clinical expertise** in working with children with ASD and their families. Session topics include: Understanding Potential Antecedents, Function-based Assessments and Supports, and Family Collaboration, among others.
- In November 2019, the DNEA partnered with the Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) to facilitate a training for mental health clinicians titled, **Mental Health in Youth Adults with Autism: Identification, Treatment, and Resources**. Experts from Kennedy Krieger presented on challenges associated with adolescents with ASD, distinguishing symptoms of anxiety and depression from autism, and evidence-based treatment strategies for this population. **129 mental health clinicians and other providers attended this training**.
- The DNEA presented at the **Rockford Center Fall Lectures Series** in November 2019. Network-member Nemours presented on **Understanding Autism and Interventions for Clinical Providers**. This training focused on understanding ASD and comorbid mental health challenges in children with autism and their impact on interventions. Participants learned about tools and resources in the community and discussed strategies to support children with autism and their families within a clinical practice. Over **80 community providers attended** this session of the lecture series.

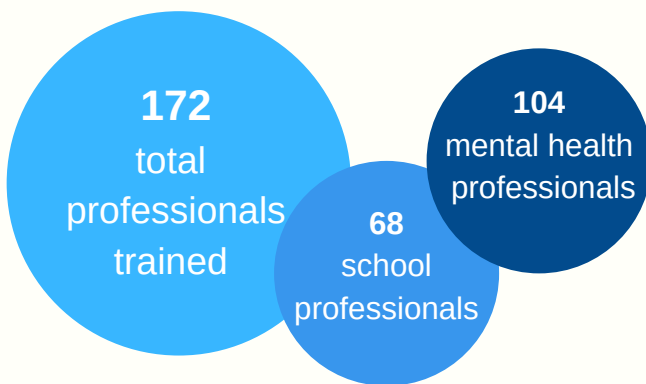
By The Numbers

Educating Delaware Professionals



This quarter the DNEA trained **172 professionals** from a variety of disciplines including school personnel and mental health clinicians. Trainings this quarter included:

- *Classroom Management,*
- *Success with Social Skills,*
- *Understanding Autism and Strategies for Mental Health Professionals, and*
- *PEERS for Young Adults.*



You can check out our upcoming trainings or request a training for your organization by visiting our website at www.delawareautismnetwork.org!

Supporting Delaware Families



With support from the DNEA, Network-member Autism Delaware continues to offer **extensive services to families** through its Family Navigation program. Families can call to seek guidance on issue-specific needs or just speak to a fellow parent who's been through a similar experience.

In the past quarter, Autism Delaware received 1144 total family contacts. The top 3 call topics this quarter were **IEP support, eligibility, and social services**. 111 contacts were Spanish-language callers and 168 were first time contacts!

You can learn more about services and supports from Autism Delaware by visiting their website at www.delautism.org.



Evidence-Based Practice Tip of the Quarter



What is Task Analysis?

What is it? Task Analysis (TA) is used to break down complex, chained (multi-stepped) tasks into manageable steps that can be systematically taught. People use TA to complete many activities! An everyday example of TA would be a recipe to create your favorite dish.

According to research... TA is an evidence-based practice (EBP) for individuals with autism ages 3-14 years to support social, communication, joint attention, academic, motor, and adaptive skills. (Fleury, V.P., 2013)

How do I use it?

Backward Chaining introduces one step at a time beginning with the last step, moving up the chain as mastery is met. The adult (parent, caregiver, teacher, provider, etc.) will complete or passively lead the person through the first steps of the task and then use prompting and reinforcement to teach the target step. This is a good option for most skills because the individual will receive reinforcement immediately after completing the target step on their own and after completing the total task.

Forward Chaining introduces one step at a time beginning with the first step. The adult will use prompting and reinforcement to teach the targeted step then complete or passively lead the person through the remaining steps. This is a good option for skills that must be logically completed from start to finish (e.g. writing your name).

Total Task Chaining introduces all mastered steps at the same time. This is a good option for very long TAs or for individuals who have already mastered a random assortment of steps in the chain.

Instructional Steps

Steps	Example
1. Identify the target skill	Washing Hands
2. Breakdown skill into its steps	a. Turn on Water d. Scrub hands b. Put hands under water e. Rinse hands c. Put soap on hands etc.
3. If needed, create an accompanying visual support	<i>see visual on the right</i>
4. Determine how the skill will be taught	Backward chaining
5. Implement and monitor progress	Individual has mastered the last step in the chain based on data collected. The second to last step in the chain will be introduced.



Want to learn more? Attend the DNEA *Introduction to the Principles of Applied Behavior Analysis for Supporting Students with Autism* on February 5th or February 20th. See the next page for more information!

Upcoming Trainings for School Professionals

Introduction to the Principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) for Supporting Students with Autism

January 7, 2020

9am-12pm

UD Center for Disabilities Studies

February 5, 2020

9am-12pm

UD Carvel Center

February 20, 2020

9am-12pm

DelTech Terry Campus

Data Collection

January 7, 2020

1pm-4pm

UD Center for Disabilities Studies

February 5, 2020

1pm-4pm

UD Carvel Center

February 20, 2020

1pm-4pm

DelTech Terry Campus

Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies for Autism: Least to Most Prompting, Most to Least Prompting, and Graduate Guidance

January 21, 2020

9am-12pm

UD Center for Disabilities Studies

Evidence-Based Instructional Strategies for Autism: Simultaneous Prompting and Time Delay

January 21, 2020

9am-12pm

UD Center for Disabilities Studies

[Click here to register](#)

View our full training calendar here!



ABOUT THE DNEA

The Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism (DNEA) is the state's training and technical assistance center for autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Housed at the University of Delaware Center for Disabilities Studies and conducted in partnership with Autism Delaware and Nemours/Al duPont Children's Hospital- the DNEA provides training and support to professionals and organizations as well as children and adults with autism and their families.

We leverage interdisciplinary expertise and resources among our members and other organizations to ensure that individuals with autism and their families have access to high quality education, services, and evidence-based care.



Connect With Us

 (ph) 302-831-7009

 (e) dnea-info@udel.edu

 www.delawareautismnetwork.org