

Neurodiversity-affirming Autism Interventions

For Families

DNEA Resource Guide for Families

Why are neurodiversity-affirming interventions important?

Families of autistic children are often given many recommendations for intervention or therapies. Therapies should be focused on teaching useful skills for your child and improving their quality of life. Autistic people and their families should feel empowered to pick and choose specific therapies that will help them meet their goals.



Common Types of Therapies and Interventions

Applied behavior analysis (ABA) or behavior therapy	Teaches complex skills by breaking them into simpler, more manageable steps that can be systematically taught over time. ABA or behavioral interventions should be naturalistic, child-centered, and take the child's development into account.
Feeding therapy	Supports ways of trying unfamiliar foods. This therapy focuses on increasing nutrition and the variety of foods a child eats.
Mental health counseling	Helps to identify feelings, build emotional regulation skills, develop mental wellness, and build or improve relationships.
Occupational therapy (OT)	Promotes strategies to support fine motor skills, sensory needs, and activities of daily living.
Physical therapy (PT)	Helps develop new skills by supporting movement and motor development, such as walking, running, jumping, and more.
Speech-language therapy	Builds skills that focus on supporting social communication and language development through multiple modes of communication, such as spoken language, sign language, augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), and more.

Additional resource guides and a full list of references at <https://www.delawareautismnetwork.org/>.

Slavin, L., Bernabe, E., Freedman, B., Mallory, S., Fletcher, A., & DNEA CDS Team. (2024). *DNEA resource guide for families: Neurodiversity-affirming autism interventions*. Delaware Network for Excellence in Autism.



DNEA

Delaware Network for
Excellence in Autism



NEMOURS
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Neurodiversity-Affirming Autism Interventions

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A neurodiversity-affirming provider is someone who:

- Encourages people to be themselves and appreciates differences in how people think and communicate.
- Helps autistic people feel comfortable expressing who they truly are without needing to act like everyone else. Instead of trying to make autistic people fit in, they help them feel good about themselves and celebrate what makes them unique.
- Supports and understands how autistic children like to play, including lining up toys or repeating activities.
- Doesn't use food as a reward.
- Allows an autistic person to use stimming, or body movements to express themselves and regulate.
- Doesn't rely on hand-over-hand prompting or forced compliance, especially when the person is very upset or sad.
- Understands that it's important for autistic people to connect with others.
- Encourages autistic people to share information in a comfortable way without making them feel bad or criticizing them.


Questions families can ask providers:




Is this therapy child-directed and focused on my child's preferences?



Can I, as a parent get training or support so I can learn more ways to help my child?




Is the therapy done in my child's natural environment?




How do you create goals?

Resources

Research Article

 Allen, L.L., Mellon, L.S., Syed, N., Johnson, J. F., & Bernal A. J. (2024). Neurodiversity-affirming applied behavior analysis. *Behavior Analysis in Practice*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40617-024-00918-0>

Booklet

 Autistic Self-Advocacy Network. (2021). *Start here: A guide for parents of autistic children*. The Autistic Press. <https://autisticadvocacy.org/book/start-here/>

Webpage

 Autistic Self-Advocacy Network: <https://autisticadvocacy.org>

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