

## Valley Region CoPA (Community of Practice in Autism) Action Plan 2009

**Definition of Community of Practice**- a Community of Practice is a group of people who share a concern or passion for a particular issue. The group interacts regularly to deepen their knowledge and expertise on the issue. The mission of our CoPA is to share knowledge and information about evidence-based strategies in natural environments, focusing on infants, toddlers, and young children diagnosed or suspected of having Autism Spectrum Disorders. We will focus on guidelines for educating parents and professionals about effective strategies and using the strategies to meet IFSP/IEP goals. Our CoPA has been funded by the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services, the Part C Integrated Training Collaborative, and the Virginia Department of Education.

### **Goals for Our CoPA This Year- . . . a continuation of last year's goals**

1. develop our knowledge, skills and abilities related to autism
2. develop a resource list (DVDs, books, articles, websites, etc.) for families and providers
3. develop handouts of strategies and information about autism to give to families and other caregivers
4. develop an overall strategy/list of things to consider when working with a family who has a young child with autism
5. have our members who attend our CoPA be a resource to others in our communities who are unable to attend
6. develop strategies to balance research recommendations with the current practices in Part C and Part B, recognizing that placing the responsibility for intervention on the family can increase their stress to sometimes an unmanageable level
7. develop a network of support and information sharing among CoPA members that will exist between and beyond our CoPA meetings

### **CoPA Leaders-Core Group**

- Karen McCormick-Parent and President of Shenandoah Valley Autism Partnership
- Dianne Koontz Lowman-James Madison University, Region 5T/TAC, Early Childhood Coordinator
- Alisa Fernez- Parent
- Kelly Peters- Valley Service Coordinator
- Cheri Knick- Speech Language Pathologist, Infant and Toddler Connection of the Rockbridge Area

### **Topics for the Year**

1. Completed March 25<sup>th</sup>, *Applied Behavioral Analysis*, *Mary Worley of the Matthew's Center-minutes and references pending*
2. Scheduled April 22<sup>nd</sup>, *Sensory Processing Disorder*, *Dianne Koontz Lowman and Dee Taylor, OT*
3. Scheduled May 20<sup>th</sup>, *Video Modeling*, *Sally Chappel, T/TAC*

*Ideas for future CoPA sessions from 1<sup>st</sup> meeting:*

- *Developmental Pediatrician*
- *Biomedical Intervention*
- *Alternative Therapy-Music therapy, Art therapy, RDI, therapeutic horseback riding, etc . . .*
- *Who is eligible for Medicaid Waiver? You may be surprised ☺*
- *How to support the family that is first diagnosed?*
- *How to support other siblings in the family*
- *Social Skills*

*CoPA will be held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of every month, from 1-3 at the Verona Government Center. A distribution list was obtained from last year's CoPA, and is also distributed to the Shenandoah Valley Autism Partnership distribution list.*