

Valley Region CoPA (Community of Practice in Autism)
Minutes
March 25, 2009

Introductions:

Alisa Fernez, Mary Ellen Chewning, John Spencer, Nancy Spencer, Kelly Peters, Erika Stoddard, Sarah Deavers, Leigh Ann Ross, Laurie Lehman, Sherry Borjan, Cheri Knick, Karen McCormick, Dianne Koontz Lowman, and Mary Worley.

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

Announcements:

Strategies for Supporting Young Children, Birth to Age Three, with Autism Spectrum Disorders will be held on May 4 and May 22 in Charlottesville, Virginia. This two-day workshop will be conducted by Dana Childress and Carol Burke. Registration is \$30 per person. Register online at www.eivac.org.

Review of Past Meeting Notes:

Since this is our first meeting of the year, there were no minutes.

Agenda

1. What is our meeting schedule for the remainder of the year?

The Valley CoPA will be held on the 3rd or 4th Wednesday of every month, from 1:00 to 3:00 pm at the Verona Government Center. A distribution list was obtained from last year's CoPA; announcements and invitations will also be distributed to the Shenandoah Valley Autism Partnership distribution list.

1. Completed March 25th, Applied Behavioral Analysis, Mary Worley of the Matthew's Center
2. Scheduled April 22nd, Sensory Processing Disorder, Dianne Koontz Lowman and Amy Russell Yun, OT
3. Scheduled May 20th, Video Modeling, Sally Chappel, T/TAC

2. What topics would you like to see covered over the next year?

The following topics were suggested for future CoPA meetings:

- 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

3. Do we want time allotted at each meeting to share resources or brainstorm possible solutions to a specific “problem of the month?”

After discussion, it was suggested that “how to deal with the problem of head banging” be addressed at the April meeting. Please bring any resources or suggestions on this to the meeting.

4. Do we want to take turns bringing refreshments?

5. Is there anyone that would like to be on the CoPA Leadership Team?

The following people will serve as the leadership planning team:

- 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

6. What is Applied Behavioral Analysis?

Mary Wolery from the Mathew's Center presented a brief history of the Mathew's Center. She highly recommended the following resources.

Children and Autism: Time is Brain (2004). Aquarius Health Care Videos, Sherborn, MA.

This 28 minute documentary featured two families faced with the challenge of raising a child with autism. Discussion included identifying the signs and symptoms of autism, and Applied Behavior Analysis. This DVD can be purchased at <http://www.disabilitytraining.com/caad.html>.

The VB-MAPP Set: The Verbal Behavior Milestone Assessment & Placement Program.

The VB-MAPP by Mark L. Sundberg, PhD, BCBA is an assessment tool, curriculum guide, and skill tracking system that is also based on established developmental milestones, and research from the field of behavior analysis. The VB-MAPP provides a clear and accurate picture of an individual child's abilities, as well as potential language and learning barriers that may be hindering progress (<http://www.avbpress.com/vbmapp-set.html>).

The overall program includes the following:

The Skills Assessment - The assessment contains 170 measurable learning and language milestones that are sequenced and balanced across 3 developmental levels (0-18 months, 18-30 months, and 30-48 months). The skills assessed include mand, tact, echoic, intraverbal, listener, motor imitation, independent play, social and social play, visual perceptual and matching-to-sample, linguistic structure, group and classroom skills, and early academics.

The Barriers Assessment - provides an assessment of 24 common learning and language acquisition barriers faced by children with autism or other developmental disabilities. The barriers include behavior problems, instructional control, defective mands, defective tacts, defective echoic, defective imitation, defective visual perception and matching-to-sample, defective listener skills, defective intraverbal, defective social skills, prompt dependency, scrolling, defective scanning, defective conditional discriminations, failure to generalize, weak motivators, response requirement weakens the motivators, reinforcer dependency, self-stimulation, defective articulation,

obsessive-compulsive behavior, hyperactive behavior, failure to make eye contact, and sensory defensiveness.

The Skills Task Analysis and Tracking System - provides a further breakdown of the skills, and serves as a more complete and ongoing learning and language skills curriculum guide. There are approximately 900 skills presented covering the 16 areas of the VB-MAPP. Once the Milestones have been assessed and the general skill level has been established, the task analysis can provide further information about a particular child. The skills identified on the task analysis contain a wide range of supporting components of the target area.

7. Activity Evaluation:

An evaluation will be completed at the end of every CoPA meeting.

8. Certificate of Attendance:

All members received a Certificate of Attendance.

The next meeting will be at 1:00 p.m. on April 22, 2009 at the August County Government Center in Verona.