

**Virginia Early Intervention Autism Initiative**  
**March 26, 2003**  
**Henrico Mental Health Center**  
**Meeting Notes**

The monthly meeting of the Virginia Early Intervention Autism Initiative was held March 26, 2003 at the Henrico Mental Health Center. Karen Durst, Technical Assistance Consultant for the Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia welcomed the participants. The participants then introduced themselves. They included:

- Pasquale Accardo, M.D., Professor of Pediatrics, Developmental Pediatrician, Children's Hospital (Richmond);
- Jill Donaldson, Speech-Language Pathologist, Infant & Toddler Connection of Rappahannock, (Fredricksburg);
- Donna Rimmel, Educator, Infant & Toddler Connection of Chesterfield (Chesterfield);
- Elizabeth Fletcher, Coordinator, Parent Infant Program; Speech-Language Pathologist (Henrico);
- Sharon Sikes, Coordinator, Infant Program, Children's Hospital (Richmond);
- Guests from Children's Hospital, Therapists;
- John M. Suozzi, Ph.D., Clinical Psychologist, Children's Hospital (Richmond);
- Tracy Miller, Occupational Therapist, Program Manager, Rehabilitation Associates, P.C. (Tidewater);
- Deana Buck, Coordinator, Infant & Toddler Connection of Richmond (Richmond);
- Beth Sarrett, Instructional Specialist, Autism, Early Childhood Special Education, Severe Disabilities (Chesterfield County);
- Janet Lachowsky, Occupational Therapist;
- Sharon Jones, T/Tac, Virginia Commonwealth University;
- Linda Hutton, Council Coordinator, Infant & Toddler Connection of Prince William, Parent;
- Brenda Crockett, Council Coordinator, Infant & Toddler Connection of Chesapeake;
- Rebecca Berlin, Early Intervention Provider;
- Mary Ann Discenza, Acting State Coordinator, Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia;
- Beth Tolley, Part C Technical Assistance Consultant, Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia;
- Karen Durst, Technical Assistance Consultant, Infant & Toddler Connection of Virginia.

Connecting by phone was Beverly Crouse.

Several new members were identified as attending the Autism Initiative for the first time. In order to update all of the participants, a brief discussion was held regarding the purpose of the initiative. The following were identified:

- Develop guidelines for intervention;
- Determine availability of resources;
- Identify gaps in resources and services;
- Develop recommendations and plans to bridge the gap between what is needed and what is available so children birth to three with a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder receive consistent, appropriate information, support, and services.

Dr. John Suozzi then provided a follow-up presentation for the group on behalf of Dr. Jane Carlson who was unable to attend. Dr. Carlson had provided a Part I presentation at the February meeting on “What’s New in Autism?” Dr. Suozzi provided information on the following:

- History and Early Treatment related to Autism and ABA;
- Lack of Longitudinal Studies in Treatment Approaches;
- Lovas Study of 1987;
- Why ABA is Used;
- ABA and Imperial Evidence;
- Intensity of Intervention Rather than Hours of Intervention;
- Intensity-Reinforcement, Motivation and Number of Responses;
- Looking at Progression of Development.

Discussion followed the presentation related to natural environments and parent training. The question was presented as to how the system can train individuals to provide ABA and how can that process be ongoing

It was further determined that members would like to look at other treatment approaches and options. Members requested further information in order to better understand options that are available to families. The Part C office staff will make arrangements for further information to be presented related to other approaches.

The group then identified the following as next steps that need to be addressed by the Initiative:

- Explore what other states have used to support children with autism, (Research to be provided through the Part C office);
- Gather research related to intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders from birth to three years of age, (Dr. John Suozzi and Dr. Pat Accardo to check on available research);
- Address question of how to get individuals trained;

- Address the issue of helping the Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) team and parents to access options that are appropriate for them;
- Explore other ways to obtain financial resources for intervention for children with autism spectrum disorder, (The need for data in order to request legislative funding was discussed. It was stated that there is the availability of information from New York as to the future cost savings related to providing intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders.)

The next meeting of the Virginia Early Intervention Autism Initiative will be held, April 23, 2003, from 1:00-4:00 at the Henrico Mental Health Center. [\(Please note that the April meeting has been cancelled and rescheduled for May 28, 2003.\)](#)