

Inclusion and Related Best Practices

In the education of students on the autism spectrum

TRAINING SUMMARY:

Education law intends that “Special education is a service, not a place.” It requires that students receive the “supplementary aids and services” they need to attend their neighborhood school, and that they have access to and make meaningful progress in the general education curriculum. This is good news for students with autism, who learn social and communication skills best in natural settings with typical peer models, and who thrive cognitively and academically when their curiosity is engaged with interesting, age-appropriate subjects and materials. Knowledge barriers and attitudinal barriers to the inclusion of students with autism in the general education classroom can be overcome through better awareness and use of classroom accommodations and supports, differentiated instruction, curriculum modification, and the infusion of “specialist” knowledge (such as speech/language and occupational therapy) into the classroom rather than confining them to “pull out” rooms. A large and growing research base attests to the benefits of inclusion for students with and without disabilities, and to better adult outcomes for students who were educated in inclusive environments.

TRAINING GOAL:

The goal of this training is for parents, teaching staff, and wraparound staff/TSS to be better prepared to advocate for and support the inclusion of students with autism, for parents to understand the questions or objections that schools might raise and how to respond to them, and for parents and their allies to work together and plan effectively for productive IEP-based discussions of a child’s “least restrictive environment.”

TRAINING OBJECTIVES:

The objectives of the training are for the participants to:

1. Become familiar with the research-based methods and supports that foster academic and social growth for students on the autism spectrum
2. Understand what inclusion means and why it works for ALL students
3. Replace common misconceptions about inclusion with an awareness of what the law requires, and of the rich resources available to support those legal requirements
4. Review key research on the impact of school inclusion on social skills, academic achievement, and adult independence and employment
5. Learn how you can work as an effective team member to develop good IEPs and placement decisions
6. Build awareness of the legal, advocacy, and educational resources available to families seeking or sustaining the inclusion of their children.

METHODS TO ACHIEVE OBJECTIVES:

Training content can be delivered via webinar incorporating lecture and discussion (app. 1½ hours). This training also can be delivered in person in a traditional training or classroom setting incorporating lecture, videos, discussion, and interactive group exercises (2-3 hours).