

Distance education for parents of children with autism found effective

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Los Angeles, London, New Delhi, Singapore and Washington DC (February 1, 2010) — Through the use of instructional DVDs, parents of children with autism can learn how to teach their child to communicate and improve their behavior, according to research published in the January 2010 issue of *The Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*.

Family members play a central role in the education and treatment of [children](#) with [autism](#). However, training parents in appropriate techniques can provide unique challenges.

Often, mothers and fathers are not available at the same time to participate in training. Contemporary work schedules no longer conform to a traditional 9 to 5 schedule, further complicating efforts to help parents with their child. And, many families are simply too far away from training opportunities to participate on a regular basis. Providing [family members](#) with the type of flexibility they need to participate in training is often beyond the capability of most of these programs.

Researchers at the University of California, Santa Barbara (Nicolette Nefdt, Robert Koegel, George Singer and Michael Gerber) explored whether providing training to parents through DVDs could help bridge this gap. The good news is that parents did improve their skills through watching the training videos, and there were improvements in [child behavior](#) as well.

"Many parents of children with ASD are motivated and able to

implement evidenced based intervention with minimal support," said researcher Nicolette Nefdt. "Once provided with a rationale, step by step instructions and video examples, parents were able to change their behavior and begin teaching their child to communicate. Parents who completed the program commented mostly on the ease and flexibility of use of a program such as this one, the value of the video examples and the enjoyment of working with their child".

"This is very exciting to us, as we are now able to help many more people more quickly than we could otherwise," said co-author Robert Koegel.

More information: The article "The use of a self-directed learning program to provide introductory training in pivotal response treatment to parents of children with autism" is available free for a limited time at pbi.sagepub.com/cgi/reprint/12/1/23

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