

FASD Intervention Strategies

Research funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Intervention strategies can vary greatly for individuals who experience FASD. Historically, interventions have been based on both experiences of parents and professionals including work with individuals experiencing other disabilities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently funded the evaluation of five unique programs targeting intervention strategies for individuals who experience FASD. While each study was distinct, there were some common elements, including:

- Parent education and training
- Teaching children specific skills other children learn through observation or abstraction
- Integration into an existing system of treatment

Goals of the interventions were:

- Improve developmental outcomes of the individuals with the FASDs
- Improve the lives families
- Reduce secondary disabilities

All five studies had positive outcomes for individuals and their families.

Bruin Buddy, University of California at Los Angeles

Individuals experiencing FASD have challenges in social situations due to communication issues as well as interpreting social cues. Utilizing parents as facilitators, Child Friendship Training (CFT) is a social skills building program utilizing small groups, modeling, role-playing, and coaching. In addition, there was concurrent parent education on effects of prenatal alcohol exposure.

Specific topics addressed included one-on-one play, joining others engaged in play, developing social networks, often through common interests, avoiding conflict, and negotiation.

Modifications in program delivery (not content) of CFT for FASD resulted in significant improvements to both positive peer interactions and positive behaviors. Parents were also satisfied with the program.

Math Interactive Learning Experience (MILE), Georgia

This program consisted of intensive, short-term instruction and training of caregivers to help participants learn strategies to compensate for neurodevelopmental deficits. Instructional methods were consistent across school, home, and therapeutic environments.

Program results included improved math skills, valuable resources for parents, and positive behavior changes for participants.

Children's Research Triangle, Illinois

The focus of this Executive Functioning Training was to address the brain's ability to process information through teaching self-regulatory strategies to help children with FASD improve connections between sensations, emotions, and actions. Participants were either in foster care or adopted from foster care, considered high-risk for secondary disabilities. The curriculum was based on the Alert Program, commonly known as "How does your engine run."

Results showed improvements in memory, cause and effect, reasoning, planning, and problem solving.

Parent Child Interaction Therapy, University of Oklahoma Health Science Center

This study compared Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) and Parenting Support and Management (PSM). Both programs emphasized positive discipline, however, the PCIT involved the children into parental skills coaching. Both programs resulted in improvements in behavior, child self-esteem, and caregiver stress. PCIT had greater improvements, but also was more costly.

Families Moving Forward, University of Washington

This program targeted parenting attitudes and parenting responses in birth, foster, adoptive families raising children with FASD. Behavioral consultations addressed caregiver support and education, including positive behavior supports, through home visits and school visits to address "accommodations" for school age children.

Caregivers experienced improvements in attitude, behavior, self-efficacy, and ability to address family needs. Child related stress also declined in caregivers. These improvements resulted in a reduction of negative child behaviors.

<http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/fasd/research-intervention.html>

(Bertrand, Jacquelyn, 2009. *Interventions for children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders (FASDs): Overview of findings for five innovative research projects*. Research in Developmental Disabilities, 30(5) 986 – 1006.)