



## The P.L.A.Y. Project<sup>®</sup> Agency Training Packet

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## **The P.L.A.Y. Project® Training Packet** **For Professionals Interested in Attending our Agency Trainings**

Dear Professional:

Thank you for your interest in The P.L.A.Y. (Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters) Project® Training Program. As the medical director of the program, the guiding principle of my approach to autism intervention is this: by doing what the child loves, the child will love to be with you.

### **Our Model**

Our program uses a 'train-the-trainer' model. We teach both the theory and practice of The P.L.A.Y. Project, which is based on the DIR/Floortime framework (see pgs. 12-13 for more on DIR). Once we train agency professionals in the model, they are able to implement the model immediately and teach parents in their community this evidence-based, developmental intervention. The parents are then able to work effectively with their young children with autism. The P.L.A.Y. Project methods and techniques are designed to help children resolve the core deficits of autism, which are 1) self-isolation and impaired social skills; 2) language delay and impaired communication; and 3) repetitive behaviors.

Our training is a three-step process:

1. Attend the intensive 4-day training
2. Return to your community to put The P.L.A.Y. Project into practice
3. Complete 12-18 months of follow-up supervision, during which The PLAY Project's experienced supervisory staff provides individualized feedback on 20 of your cases

Successful completion of this training program results in Certification as a P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consultant.

### **Program Development and Research**

It is an exciting time to be joining our network of Home Consultants. The P.L.A.Y. Project's Home Consultation model has been disseminated to more than 100 agencies operating in 27 states, plus a number of programs internationally. The program has been successfully implemented in urban Community Mental Health settings, and in state-wide early intervention systems in Ohio and Utah, as well as district-wide systems in Washington D.C.

The evidence for the effectiveness of The P.L.A.Y. Project is growing. In September 2009 we received \$1.85 million from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to conduct a three-year controlled, clinical study of The P.L.A.Y. Project. Drawing participants from five Easter Seals autism service locations, the study compared the outcomes of 60 children who participated in The P.L.A.Y. Project with the outcomes of 60 children who received standard, community interventions, making it the largest study of its kind. Before and after the 12-month intervention, each child was assessed with a battery of tests to measure developmental level, speech and language, sensory-motor profile, and social skills.



### Background of Cost-Effective Intervention

Several key factors have prompted us to develop The P.L.A.Y. Project<sup>®</sup> intervention and to construct our training model:

- Autism has been widely reported as dramatically increasing in prevalence, and large numbers of children need services.
- The 2001 National Academy of Sciences' report emphasizes that young children (ages 18 months to 6 years) with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) should get 25 hours per week of intensive 1:1 or 1:2 intervention.
- These services can be very expensive when the many intervention hours are delivered by trained therapists; estimates range from \$25,000 to \$60,000 and more per year (compared to P.L.A.Y., which is about \$4,000 per year for families) – and most children require intervention for multiple years!
- Many families (and school districts!) cannot afford these intensive interventions, yet we as a society must find a way to provide these children with proper intervention.
- The intervention can be delivered less expensively when parents invest the intensive hours with their child and they learn the methods and techniques to become their child's best play partner.

### Our Goal

The P.L.A.Y. Project gives parents and professionals an affordable choice for an evidence-based developmental approach to autism intervention. This is a critical point as our society addresses fundamental questions about how to compassionately care for children with autism and their families. If we are to address autism on a broad scale – nationally and internationally – each community needs teams of certified professionals who can train and support parents as they guide their child in developing language and social skills.

I developed The P.L.A.Y. Project out of a need for cost-effective intervention. The exciting part about this program is that I have been able to witness how well it brings families together. As parents learn to relate to their child in a playful and respectful ways, gradually, healing comes to the whole family.

Thank you for your interest in The P.L.A.Y. Project training and supervision program. I look forward to the possibility of working with you to serve children on the autism spectrum.

Sincerely,

*Dr. Rick*

Richard Solomon MD  
Medical Director



## Application Process

**1. Complete an online application at [www.playproject.org/training\\_agency.php](http://www.playproject.org/training_agency.php).** Please return the application materials no later than **60 days prior** to the workshop date. Materials include:

- **Applicant criteria:** We train masters-level professionals (psychologists, social workers, speech and language pathologists, teachers, occupational therapists, etc.) who have an in-depth familiarity with child development, and an ability to playfully follow the child's lead. Applicants should have a ready referral source of clients who would benefit from home consultation. For this reason, we primarily train professionals affiliated with agencies that we believe will be able to successfully implement The P.L.A.Y. Project.
- **Application form:** Please complete the application form included on our website at [www.playproject.org/training\\_agency.php](http://www.playproject.org/training_agency.php).
- **Your financial deposit. We request 50% of the total training fee at the time of application.** Payment may be by purchase order, credit card, or check. The balance of payment is due 30 days prior to the training date. The price of the training and certification (i.e., 4-day weekend plus 12-18 months supervision and licensing) is\*:
  - \$4,800 for one trainee (deposit = \$2,400)
  - \$4,500 each for two trainees from the same agency (deposit = \$2,250 each)
  - \$4,200 each for three or more trainees from the same agency (deposit = \$2,100 each)
  - \$4,200 each for licensed agencies (deposit = \$2,100 each)

**Please NOTE: We will work with an agency's payment and purchase policies.**

*\*The cost includes \$1,500 for the 4-Day Training and \$2,700 - \$3,300 for 12-18 months of supervision and one year of licensing.*

- **Your video:** We require a **10-15 minute** video as part of the application. The video should document your playful interaction with a child, preferably age 2-6 and on the autism spectrum (we accept videos of young children with other special needs if you do not have children with autism on your current caseload). **Videos must be uploaded to ShareFile.** You will receive instructions for uploading your video along with your application.



## Once your PLAY application has been accepted:

### 1. Supplemental education

- a. **Prior to training:** Study the DIR framework developed by Stanley Greenspan MD and Serena Wieder PhD. Online courses are available at [www.stanleygreenspan.com](http://www.stanleygreenspan.com). Two books we recommend:

- *Engaging Autism*
- *The Child with Special Needs*

The focus of your study should be to become familiar with the **6 Functional Developmental Levels (FDL)**.

- b. **Following training:** Watch The P.L.A.Y. Project Workshop 1 DVD, 'Be your child's best PLAY partner.' Each trainee will be given a DVD at the time of training.

### 2. Making travel plans and budgeting your expenses

- a. Trainees should plan to arrive the evening prior to the training so that they are ready to begin the training at 8:30 a.m. the following morning. On the last day, the training ends mid-afternoon (about 3 p.m.) and trainees can usually plan to be home that night for most destinations.
- b. For the Ann Arbor trainings, we hold a block of rooms at Weber's Inn [www.webersinn.com](http://www.webersinn.com) and you will be able to reserve a room in your name (Reservations: 800-443-3050). You are free to book your stay in other locations—we do recommend that you stay in the area for easy access to the training.
- c. Sample estimated budget for the weekend expenses, assuming travel includes flight and rental car = \$675 to \$1,350
  - Flight \$150 to \$400
  - Rental car \$125 to \$225
  - Hotel \$300 to \$550
  - Food \$100 to \$175

“The tools and training that were provided at the training were outstanding. I was able to quickly adapt the materials and begin work with families. I was able to benefit from the years of hard work and expertise of Dr. Solomon and his team. His wealth of knowledge is remarkable. A quality product.”

—Terri Enters

*Lutheran Social Services, Oconomowoc, WI*



### 3. Attending the Weekend

- a. **Venue:** The P.L.A.Y. Project Trainings may be held in several different locations during the year. When the trainings are held in Ann Arbor, Michigan, they have been at Weber’s Inn: [www.webersinn.com](http://www.webersinn.com). When trainings are held in other locations there is usually a sponsor of the event (for example, Easter Seals). The location of “on-the road” training varies based on facilities available in the region.
- b. **Schedule:** The sample schedule for a training weekend is included at the end of this packet. You will begin each training day at 8:30 a.m. and work until about 4:30 p.m. (except the last day, which ends around 3 p.m.), with morning, lunch and afternoon breaks scheduled in. Evenings are open for dinner, exploring the town, etc.
- c. **Training Materials:** When you arrive for the weekend you will be given a training binder which contains the background materials, articles, forms, sample letters and contracts, instructions on your supervision / certification program, etc. After the training you will receive a login to ShareFile, which includes a folder with digital files of all documents in the training binder. **You can write notes in your binder, or you may wish to bring a separate notebook for this purpose.** You will need to carry this ‘fat’ binder home with you on the plane so leave some extra space in your bags!
- d. **Dress:** We recommend casual dress. Some people wear business casual and others comfortably wear jeans. We recommend one better outfit; based on the detailed training schedule, there may be opportunities to interact with families and so you may want the option of a more professional look for these occasions. With few exceptions, Ann Arbor restaurants are casual in this college town.
- e. **Food:** Lunches are provided at the training and we offer coffee and tea during the day. We can accommodate requests for vegetarian diets (on your application form please let us know if you have dietary restrictions or preferences). Dinners are not included and trainees can sample the many fine restaurants in the Ann Arbor area (<http://annarbor.org>). Groups of different sizes and destinations for dinner tend to form organically during the weekend.
- f. **Learning Environment:** Trainees widely report that the learning environment is rich, intensive, challenging, nurturing, and fun.

**Contact Us:** If you have any questions or requests, please call our staff at **(734) 585-5333** or by email at [info@playproject.org](mailto:info@playproject.org).



## The P.L.A.Y. Project<sup>®</sup> Supervision, Certification, and Licensing Overview



### Supervision

The purpose of the Supervision program is to support new Home Consultants as they put into practice The P.L.A.Y. Project techniques, while developing a caseload of children with autism. After the 4-Day Training, you will immediately begin teaching parents The P.L.A.Y. Project methods. Home Consultants will take video footage of each home visit and, using a subset of these video clips, they will receive oversight and further training by Dr. Rick Solomon and his team of Supervisors.

As you work with a diverse caseload of families over time, you will need to know how to assist a range of children. In the beginning, you may be challenged by certain home environments, child profiles, and family dynamics. Our experienced trainers will provide you with supervision to assist you in working through these situations. We will give you feedback on how you are PLAYing and give you suggestions on how you might do it differently.

Following the training weekend you will be given a supervision rotation schedule, contact information for your team of Supervisors, and a log-in for the supervision website, ShareFile.

### Certification

The goal of the Training and Supervision program is for the trainee to reach Certification as a P.L.A.Y. Project<sup>®</sup> Home Consultant. Achieving Certification requires the completion of 20 video supervision submissions over 12-18 months following the 4-Day Training. Throughout your supervision, we will evaluate your progress and give you feedback on your strengths and areas of improvement. At the end, Dr. Solomon and your team of Supervisors will determine if standards of Certification have been met. You will only be Certified if you successfully learn the skills and are competent at delivering The P.L.A.Y. Project<sup>®</sup> model.

During supervision you will be expected to master the following:

- In-depth understanding of The P.L.A.Y. Project Model
- Greenspan's 6 Functional Developmental Levels
- Assessment of these levels across the ASD spectrum
- Application of The P.L.A.Y. Project Skill Sequence
- Use of assessments: FEAS, CARS, Greenspan Social & Emotional Growth Chart and REEL
- Providing quality paperwork, written reviews, and feedback for families
- Coaching parents effectively; guiding them when they are doing too much or too little

We recommend a caseload of 5-10 children with ASD so that you get the most out of your Supervisory learning period; a minimum of 5 children is required. Feedback from our Home Consultants indicates that the Supervisory period is an enjoyable and challenging learning opportunity.



## Licensing

The P.L.A.Y. Project® name has received formal trademark registration from the US Patent & Trademark Office and permission to use the name can only be granted under license. Agencies who implement The P.L.A.Y. Project model will have permission to use our name, logo and program materials under our licensing agreement. The **first year license payment is included** as part of the training fee.

The purposes and benefits of the License are as follow:

- To acknowledge that our joint goal is to provide consistent, high quality educational and training services for children on the autism spectrum in their communities and to fully meet the needs of those communities;
- To permit your organization to use the name of The P.L.A.Y. Project, our protected trademark;
- To protect your organization from others who claim to provide The P.L.A.Y. Project but are not licensed by us;
- To permit your organization to have access to the other components of The P.L.A.Y. Project system, such as website listings, referrals, marketing materials, contracts, handouts, DVDs, trainings, exclusive webinars, professional newsletters, and supervision;
- To authorize certain trained professionals in your organization to serve as Home Consultants and deliver The P.L.A.Y. Project to families to assure continuing quality assurance;
- To assure that all licensed agencies maintain these same high quality standards over time to uphold the good name of The P.L.A.Y. Project;
- To provide for compensation in the form of an annual license fees of \$750.00 beginning the second year, consistent with the valuable rights being transferred under this agreement. The first year license payment is included as part of the training fee.

As The P.L.A.Y. Project grows, we are gaining name recognition in more and more communities—families and child professionals know that our program provides a quality developmental approach to autism intervention.

“ Dear Dr. Solomon—All of us at Family First feel so lucky to have connected with you and The P.L.A.Y. Project, as you have given us the credibility and structure we needed to get started. Our families are thriving with PLAY training and coaching. We thank you for sharing your expertise and your project with us. ”

—Audrey Spellman  
*Executive Director of Family First, Rowayton, CT*





## The P.L.A.Y. Project® Home Consultant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

**What does P.L.A.Y. refer to?** “P.L.A.Y.” is short for Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters. The P.L.A.Y. Project® intervention is a train-the-trainer model that uses Home Consultants to train the parents in their home. This model has been shown to be effective in preliminary studies (see pg. 12). Through Agency Training, we teach our Home Consultants the essentials of the model and help them develop a consistently effective practice. Our goal is for parents to become their child’s best play partner by providing a pragmatic, structured program based on the principles of DIR/Floortime.

**What is the structure of The P.L.A.Y. Project model?** The Home Consultant provides home visits and uses video technology to give families detailed guidance about ways to implement the DIR/Floortime model at home. New Home Consultants will be supported through their own video supervision. Home Consultation typically includes:

- An average of 10 (range 8-12) visits per year to train parents; mid-month video feedback and written report.
- Monthly sessions lasting 3 hours - roughly divided between 1 hour of modeling, 1 hour of coaching the family and 1 hour of feedback (alternative schedules, such as 1-hour weekly visits, are also acceptable).
- The model is flexible and can be adapted to fit your agency’s structure.

**What is the background profile for a PLAY Project Home Consultant?** Home Consultants typically have a master’s degree and are licensed to practice in their child development field, such as Occupational Therapy, Speech & Language Therapy, Special Education, Early Childhood or Child Development, Social Work, Psychology, Infant Mental Health, Physical Therapy, or Nursing. The P.L.A.Y. Project can train professionals with backgrounds in any of these disciplines.



- Home Consultants work in a variety of child-focused settings - early intervention programs, rehabilitation agencies, pre-schools, hospitals, community mental health agencies, universities, or private practice.
- Most, but not all, have experience in working with children with autism spectrum disorders prior to The P.L.A.Y. Project training.
- Home Consultants view themselves as **parent educators**, not as the interventionist who has come to “fix the child.”
- Home Consultants have a natural, playful interactive style and are comfortable following the child’s lead.



**How is a Home Consultant's workday structured?** On a full-time basis a Home Consultant can see 25 families at an average of 10 visits per family, or 250 total visits annually. Half-time home consultants typically see 10 to 12 families or a total of 100 to 120 visits annually; typically they will spend the rest of their time practicing their specialty (e.g. OT or SLP sessions).

- The Home Consultant's schedule is approximately 60% home visits and 40% administrative work. In other words, in a typical week, a full-time home consultant will spend 6 half days conducting home visits and 4 half days reviewing videos of visits, writing reports for families, scheduling future visits, further training, and administration.
- A visit day for a Home Consultant may look like the following:
  - Leave home or office at 8 am
  - Drive one hour to family home
  - Home visit from 9 am to 12 noon
  - Drive to afternoon home visits, lunch on the road
  - Home visit from 1:30 to 4:30 pm
  - Drive one hour to get home



**What is meant by "intensive intervention"?** The P.L.A.Y. Project is an "intensive intervention." This means that Home Consultants train the parents and recommend that parents spend 2 to 3 hours per day in one-on-one engaging interaction with their child with autism. The playful nature of the work helps parents to spend this time without getting burned out. Part of the job of a Home Consultant is to help motivate parents to put in this amount of time. We usually recommend that parents spend multiple 15-20 minute sessions throughout the day. Once parents learn the methods, they often find that they can PLAY at meals, during bedtime, riding in the car and so on, and the children receive many hours per day of intervention with relative ease. The Home Consultant can also train additional family members, friends, or college students to help the parents put in the hours.

**How are videos used in The P.L.A.Y. Project?** Video is used as a teaching tool for both families and new Home Consultants.

- During each home visit, 15 minutes of playful interaction is recorded (the parents and Home Consultant are filmed with the child).
- After the visit, the Home Consultant uses a structured approach to video analysis, called "The PLAY Skill Sequence," which assesses the child's profile. Home Consultants give parents critical feedback on the quality of their play interactions and recommend developmentally-appropriate play techniques that the parents can focus on over the next month. Our supervisory team usually provides this feedback about two weeks following the home visits; this gives the parents additional input halfway between their home visits.
- Home Consultant Trainees send 20 of these videos and reports to Dr. Solomon and his Supervisory team to receive feedback and complete Certification.



**How do we enroll families into The P.L.A.Y. Project?** Establishing a strong referral network is a key part of success with The P.L.A.Y. Project intervention – referrals can come from those who make the ASD diagnosis in the community - pediatricians, neurologists, child psychiatrists, or psychologists - and early intervention programs, community mental health, pre-schools, etc. Internal referrals may come from other services already being offered by the agency, for example, a child with ASD who is receiving speech and language therapy may be a suitable candidate for The P.L.A.Y. Project intervention.

- Giving talks about The P.L.A.Y. Project in the community is also a good way to generate interest in referrals. The Home Consultant can usually give these talks at local libraries, schools, etc. Dr. Solomon is also available to give workshops in your community.
- We recommend that each family enter into a formal contract with the agency to provide The P.L.A.Y. Project services for the year. When you attend the training weekend, we provide an example of the family contract model that we use in Ann Arbor. This example can be modified to cover the specific requirements of each agency.

**Do families receive other types of intervention while doing The P.L.A.Y. Project?** Treating autism usually involves multiple forms of intervention which changes over time. The P.L.A.Y. Project integrates well with other forms of intervention. Home Consultants assist families in finding additional therapies that may be useful to the child and caregivers. Usually the Home Consultant or agency maintains a list of resources and therapies available in the community, such as ABA, Speech & Language, Occupational Therapy, mental health services, and respite care. Home Consultants may also provide assistance with IEP Goals and school-placement issues.

**How is The P.L.A.Y. Project funded?** There are various funding sources for The P.L.A.Y. Project services. Governmental Early Intervention systems provide the program free of charge (available in Ohio, Utah, and Washington D.C.); Community Mental Health Agencies bill Medicaid for the program; in many areas, families pay privately for PLAY services, with non-profits offering sliding scale and scholarship opportunities. Some agencies are able to bill the hours to insurance (e.g. as OT or SLP services). The specialty of the Home Consultant will affect reimbursement rates and availability, which vary by state. States are beginning to cover these services and we predict that coverage will expand as the evidence for The P.L.A.Y. Project is published and as reputation of the program grows.

**Can P.L.A.Y. be used in schools?** The P.L.A.Y. Project methods and techniques can be helpful for school personnel to improve the quality of interactions with children with ASD even for brief interactions. For The P.L.A.Y. Project model to be “intensively” practiced in a school setting, the staff must be able to spend at least two hours per day engaged with the child—this can occur if a para-professional is assigned for one-on-one time with the child. Trained school therapists and teachers may also provide training to parents. The program has been implemented in many schools.





## Theoretical Framework Behind The P.L.A.Y. Project® Overview of DIR® / Floortime

The P.L.A.Y. Project intervention has a sound theoretical basis known as DIR®/Floortime. DIR was developed by Stanley Greenspan, MD and Serena Wieder, PhD whose national center, ICDL (The Interdisciplinary Council on Developmental and Learning Disorders [www.icdl.com](http://www.icdl.com) ), supports our activities.

The P.L.A.Y. Project can be understood as a pragmatic, educational version of the DIR framework. Based on the DIR theory, Home Consultants train parents to deliver intensive, one-on-one interventions that are individualized and engaging. Time intensive and engaging interventions provide a genuine alternative to self-absorption and perseverative activities.

“ I’ve known Rick Solomon for many years and he’s not only a pioneer and a leader in Michigan, but also one of a small group of clinicians and researchers who are transforming the way we care for infants, young children and families with various challenges throughout the world. ”

—Stanley Greenspan, M.D.

“DIR” is short for **D**evelopmental, **I**ndividual-differences and **R**elationship-oriented. “Floortime” refers to the practice of getting down on the floor and playing with the child at his/her level. The focus for working with children using this model is on applying techniques that match the child’s **D**evelopmental level - in order to help the child move up to the developmental ladder. Each child is seen as an **I**ndividual and the intervention program is tailored to match the individual sensory-motor profile and needs of the child. Our strategic focus is to help the child gain social skills and language by building strong **R**elationships with parents, and eventually with peers.

Greenspan and Wieder have studied typically-developing children and those with special needs. They have identified six functional developmental levels (FDLs) and the characteristics that indicate which level the child is working on:

- FDL 1 – Shared attention and self-regulation
- FDL 2 – Engagement
- FDL 3 – Initiation and Simple Communication
- FDL 4 – Complex Communication
- FDL 5 – Early Symbolic
- FDL 6 – Advanced Symbolic



## Overview of DIR® / Floortime (cont.)

Children with special needs tend to grow through the same levels as typical children, except that the child with developmental delays will go through each stage at a later chronological age. Recognizing these levels gives us strong clues as to how to engage effectively with each child. At the lower levels the focus is on engagement and regulation of feelings – we might play physical games that stimulate the sensory motor system. At the middle levels, the child is working on initiation and simple communication – we might wait for the child to communicate that they want ‘more.’ At the higher levels, the child is learning to think symbolically – we might present problems for the child to solve. The play is customized and the child responds to this individual attention.



The following are some key principles that guide a DIR-based model:

- Meet the child where they’re at and guide them where they need to go.
- Follow the child’s lead: we teach how to be with the child and watch for him to let us know his interests, and what will most likely engage him (in contrast to the adults having an agenda for how the child will spend his time).
- Read the child’s cues . . . often these can be very subtle.
  - Read gestures, body language, eyes, language or sounds to determine what activities to offer to the child
  - Read the child’s “affect” or expressed feeling state, and respond appropriately

After learning the DIR fundamentals, it can be challenging to know how to apply these principles with a given child and family, and this is where The P.L.A.Y. Project comes in. We build on these principles to provide a Home Consultation program and parent training model that can be taught, is reproducible, and can be tested. The P.L.A.Y. Project provides tools and guidelines for delivering a practical Home Consultation program - assessment forms, videotaping, reviewing of films and preparing family feedback reports, appropriate toys, contracting and charging fees for these services, referrals, and administrative matters. During the training weekend, a fully-organized training binder is provided that covers many of these practical details.





## Evidence for Effectiveness of The P.L.A.Y. Project Program

The following is an abstract version of a study of The P.L.A.Y. Project conducted by Dr. Solomon while he was a faculty member at the University of Michigan. The full manuscript was published by the British peer-reviewed journal, *Autism*, in May 2007.

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### **Abstract: Evaluation of a Training Program for Young Children with Autism: The Michigan P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consultation Model<sup>1</sup>**

Richard Solomon, Jonathan W Necheles, Courtney Ferch, and David Bruckman.  
Pediatrics and Communicable Diseases, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI.

**Background:** Autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) are increasing dramatically. The National Academy of Sciences recommends individualized, comprehensive, and intensive therapies, yet such interventions are not readily available. The Michigan P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consultation (PPHC) program, which trains parents of children with ASD appears to be a cost effective, clinically efficacious and replicable intervention program.

**Purpose:** Evaluation of results for the first year's pilot of 74 PPHC program families.

**Design/Methods:** 74 sequentially referred young children (ages 18m-6y) diagnosed with ASD participated in the PPHC program. Home consultants trained parents through structured monthly home visits to use social-pragmatic (play and language-based) methods of intervention. Parents were encouraged to deliver a minimum of 15 hours per week of 1:1 interaction. Video measures by blind raters before and after intervention documented children's functional developmental gains and parents' interactional skills. Clinical and standardized measures of autism severity, and parent satisfaction were also obtained before and after the first year of intervention.

**Results:** 68 of 74 children completed the 8-12 month program. Average age was 3.7 years. Most parents had some college education. Pre/post ratings of videotapes by blind raters using the Functional Emotional Assessment Scale (FEAS) showed significant increases ( $p \leq 0.0001$ ) in Child Sub-scale scores. Translated clinically, 45.5% of children made good to very good functional developmental progress. Based on home consultants clinical ratings 66% showed significant ( $p \leq 0.001$ ) progress. Low fidelity (fewer hours) of intervention yielded a trend toward poorer outcomes ( $p=0.09$ ). Pre/post ratings of FEAS Parent Sub-scale score of parents' abilities to interact contingently with the autistic children showed no statistical differences. Satisfaction with home consulting services showed an overall satisfaction rate of 90%. Average cost of intervention was \$2500/year.

**Conclusion:** Nearly half the children participating in the PPHC program made good to excellent progress in the first year of intervention. Parents have the interaction skills necessary to effectively engage their autistic children. More hours of intervention resulted in improved outcomes. The P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consulting program shows promise as a cost-effective intervention for young children with autism.

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<sup>1</sup>Full manuscript provided upon request.



## **NIMH Phase II Additional Evidence for Effectiveness of The P.L.A.Y. Project Program**

Through the support of a \$1.85 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Richard Solomon, MD, is conducting a 3-year study of The Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters (P.L.A.Y.) Project Home Consulting model, a parent-training program that addresses the need for intensive early intervention for young children on the autism spectrum.

The following is an abstract version of the study. Drawing participants from four Easter Seals autism service locations; this randomized controlled clinical trial compares the outcomes of 60 children who participate in The P.L.A.Y. Project with the outcomes of 60 children who receive standard, community interventions. Before and after the 12-month intervention, each child is assessed with a battery of tests to measure developmental level, speech and language, sensory-motor profile, and social skills.

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### **ABSTRACT: RANDOMIZED CONTROLLED TRIAL OF THE P.L.A.Y. PROJECT INTERVENTION MODEL FOR AUTISM**

The development of a reliable, cost-effective form of intensive intervention for the treatment of children with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) is a major priority for both the health and education systems in this country. A large majority of states do not provide such interventions because there is a national shortage of trained personnel and also because such interventions, when provided by professionals, are very expensive (\$25-60K). The most recent prevalence estimate for ASD from the CDC is 1 in 150 children. We have developed an innovative train-the-trainer solution to potentially address this national need. The P.L.A.Y. Project (Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters) Home Consultation model can quickly and effectively train masters level child development experts to train parents at home for one-tenth the cost (\$4K) of having professionals providing intensive services in accordance with recommendations of the National Academy of Sciences. Using Greenspan's DIR/developmental framework, and a highly-structured educational approach including video feedback, home consultants train parents how to be their child's best play partner. This makes sense because not only does every parent want a better relationship with his or her child, but they have the strongest commitment to help their children and can provide the hours needed. We have preliminary clinical evidence from a pilot study to show that this model is promising. Furthermore, in the Phase I SBIR controlled study just completed, 2 intervention and 2 control sites each enrolled 20 children with ASD. In close partnership with Easter Seals and Michigan State University, the grant successfully piloted the procedures needed for execution of the Phase II trial. The results of the controlled study, despite small numbers and brief intervention, were encouraging. Parents learned the methods of The P.L.A.Y. Project and children in the intervention group showed major improvements. Early dissemination of the model into the real world settings of community agencies, schools, and hospitals has also been successfully accomplished. Our hypothesis for the next clinical trial is that the parent-training intervention model can improve functional outcomes for young children with autism. We expect that a successful trial would encourage private insurers and government agencies to approve major increases in funding for autism intensive intervention services, resulting in wide dissemination of this model, substantial growth in our business, and significant social benefit.



## The P.L.A.Y. Project® Training Weekend Sample Schedule & Content for Four-Day Training

Note: Details are subject to change. Content is primarily provided by or led by Dr. Rick Solomon and team. Alternative schedules followed for trainings held outside of Ann Arbor.

### SAMPLE TRAINING SCHEDULE

Schedule	
<p style="text-align: center;">Day 1</p> <p><b>NOTE: First 2 days start early!</b></p> <p>8:30 – 10:00 AM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Interviews and Introductions</li> </ul> <p>10:00 AM – 12:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the Model</li> <li>• Watch &amp; Learn : DIR Levels 1-4</li> </ul> <p>12:00 – 1:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunch</li> </ul> <p>1:00 – 5:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch &amp; Learn : DIR Levels 1-4 (cont.)</li> <li>• Structured vs Unstructured Play</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Day 2</p> <p><b>NOTE: First 2 days start early!</b></p> <p>8:30AM – 10:00 AM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overview of the Training Binder</li> </ul> <p>10:00-12:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch &amp; Learn: DIR Levels 5-6</li> </ul> <p>12:00 – 1:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunch</li> </ul> <p>1:00 – 3:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Watch &amp; Learn wrap up</li> </ul> <p>3:00 – 4:30 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family Issues</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;">Day 3</p> <p>9:00 – 9:30 AM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Consultation Movie</li> </ul> <p>9:30 – 10:30 AM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment Measures</li> </ul> <p>10:30 AM – 12:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Home Visit Video Review with paperwork</li> <li>• Fidelity Manual</li> </ul> <p>12:00 – 1:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunch</li> </ul> <p>1:00 – 4:30PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Panel</li> <li>• Home Visit Video Review with paperwork</li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;">Day 4</p> <p>9:00AM – 12:00PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FEAS/MBRS Lecture</li> <li>• Case Studies (small groups)</li> </ul> <p>12:00PM – 1:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lunch</li> </ul> <p>1:00 – 4:00 PM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intro to Supervision</li> <li>• Launching your Home Consulting program</li> <li>• Administrative Issues / Pragmatics</li> </ul>