

Fact Sheet: Autism Early Intervention Best Practice Guidelines

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aeiou
FOUNDATION
for children with autism

Autism Early Intervention Best Practice Guidelines

The AEIOU Foundation model of learning for children aged 2½ to 6 years with an Autism Spectrum Disorder is based on the Best Practice Guidelines for autism early intervention.

The Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing conducted a review in 2006 to identify the most effective model of practice in early intervention (EI) of children with Autism Spectrum Disorders. The aim was to evaluate and establish key best practices to provide a guideline to intervention services.

AEIOU strives to deliver a program that aligns with these Best Practice Guidelines. Below is a summary of the key components currently provided by the AEIOU Foundation.

Preparation

- Inclusion of family as collaborative partners in reviewing child's developmental history, family history, as well as establish strengths, needs and planning interventions.
- Child receives multidisciplinary examination and direct observation by experienced clinicians to assess communication and relevant health conditions.

NOTE: Diagnosis and assessment of relevant health conditions (vision, hearing, anxiety and intellectual disability) are conducted by a Paediatrician, child Psychiatrist or specialist clinician.

Timing

- Optimal time for intervention to begin is between 2 and 4 years of age.

Process

- In consultation with parents, establish an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for the child's education specific to their needs and strengths and review and revise regularly in light of the child's progress and ongoing needs.

Intensity

- A program of at least 20 hours per week over an extended period of time of at least two years.

The AEIOU learning program operates from 9.00am to 2.30pm Monday to Friday (9.00am to 12.00pm on Wednesdays). Families can elect to attend the program part time however full time participation is recommended.

Associated Therapies

- Multidisciplinary specialist support: Speech Pathology, occupational therapy, educational support, early childhood professionals, psychologist and counselling.

Psychologist and counselling only available at some AEIOU centres.

Settings

- Programs to be delivered in a variety of settings: individually or with typically developing peers, centre-based or home-based.
- Include typically developing peers for a part of the program in a supported environment.

In a child's second year at AEIOU they begin their transition into their next level of schooling on a part-time basis with support from their AEIOU teachers. Each AEIOU centre accounts for the whole spectrum of autism disorders and recognises no one program will suit all children and family needs.

Program Design and Methods

- A highly structured program: objective focused, predicable and consistently managed.
- Supportive teaching environment: prompting, praise and generalisation strategies.
- Low child / staff ratio: maximum 2-4 children per adult in a centre-based program.

Problem Behaviours

- A functional approach to problem behaviours including positive behaviour support (PBS): teaching alternative appropriate skills, and communication skills to replace the problem behaviours.

Content and Focus

- Teach and build functional communication, social interaction and daily living skills utilising multimodal teaching techniques (pictures, signs).
- Manage changing situations/environments and new people, address sensory issues and challenging behaviour.

Family Collaboration

- Support for family members: access to parent education programs, access to parent to parent groups and planned respite care especially in key times like first diagnosis and school entry.

Planned respite care is not available at this stage.

Staffing

- Teachers, speech pathologists and occupational therapists and psychologists; personnel specifically trained in working with children with autism.

Research and Evaluation of Program

- Evaluation of treatment outcomes built into EI programs using systematic assessment of the child's social, cognitive, and adaptive functioning before, during and at the end of the program.

These evaluation measures are being integrated into some AEIOU centres. A Research Advisory Group coordinates all research projects.

Transition

- Early intervention program integrates ongoing support during and after transition.
- Parents, teachers and therapists collaborate in preparing the child for transition.

Roberts, J. M. A., & Prior, M. (2006). *A review of the research to identify the most effective models of practice in early intervention of children with autism spectrum disorders*. Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, Australia

Find out more

The AEIOU Foundation	Visit aeiou.org.au
The AEIOU curriculum and centre-based programs	Call the Parent Assistance team 1300 ASD HELP (1300 273 435)
Early intervention for children with autism spectrum disorders: guidelines for best practice	Visit www.health.gov.au (publications / early intervention)