



Home Consulting Program Summary Written for Parents Considering Enrolling

Introduction

The P.L.A.Y. Project® Home Consulting Program provides training and support for families of children with autism right in their home. Trained consultants teach parents techniques that are effective, fun, and useful in day-to-day interactions with their child with autism. By providing training in the home, consultants see the family in an environment where the child feels comfortable, rather than in a setting unfamiliar and possibly intimidating to the child.

The P.L.A.Y. Project was created by Dr. Rick Solomon in Ann Arbor, Michigan. This program is a practical application of the DIR / Floortime model of Stanley Greenspan MD, a nationally-respected child psychiatrist. The P.L.A.Y. Project has been piloted with over 1,000 families in sites all over the Midwest and is currently offered by more than 80 agencies, schools and hospitals located in 23 states. The Consultants have degrees in child development fields (for example Speech, OT, Psychology, Social Work, or Special Education) and receive intensive training by Dr. Solomon and his supervisory staff in the The P.L.A.Y. Project® model, prior to working with families. After this training they then make 3-hour visits approximately monthly to families' homes to teach parents how to provide intensive, one-on-one, play-based services to their young children with autism. (Some centers provide 1-hour per week of training instead of longer monthly sessions, but usually the parents will travel to the agency for these alternative schedules.)

You can receive additional information about The P.L.A.Y. Project and Home Consulting programs by visiting the website at www.playproject.org. Information about The P.L.A.Y. Project at EnCourage Institute can be found at <http://encourageinstitute.com/playproject>.

Diagnosis

Before Joining the Home Consulting Program, the first step for parents is to establish the diagnosis of an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) for their child, by getting an evaluation, either by the school system or by a knowledgeable professional. Diagnostic office consultations with Richard Solomon, MD, the Medical Director of The P.L.A.Y. Project, are readily available through The Ann Arbor Center for Developmental and Behavioral Pediatrics. Dr. Solomon may also recommend preliminary screening with the Autism Diagnostic Observation Scale (ADOS) which may be available sooner than waiting for an appointment with Dr. Solomon. Parents who have a firm diagnosis do not need to see Dr. Solomon to enroll in The P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consulting Program. In Western Michigan there are several professionals that diagnose autism spectrum disorders – often a developmental pediatrician, neurologist, child psychiatrist, child psychologist and other specialties. Your pediatrician should be able to recommend a diagnostic professional.

Rationale for The P.L.A.Y. Project

Parents spend more time with their children than all of their teachers and therapists combined. By training parents to be their child's best P.L.A.Y. partner, the child receives intensive (more hours of), high quality intervention. We recommend that parents and other caregivers, once trained by our Home Consultant, then apply themselves for 2 hours per day PLAYing with their child; usually provided in multiple 20-minute sessions. This can be a very enjoyable time with your child. Our Consultants show you practical ways of making every interaction with your child a growing and learning experience. Bath-time, meals, outdoor play: each of these daily routines can be used to help your child build meaningful relationships.

Home visits allow the Consultant to see your child in the place where he/she is most comfortable, so the Consultant can see how he/she acts most naturally. The Home Consultant will videotape segments of the home visits, to monitor your child's progress and give suggestions for more effective techniques. This allows the Home Consultant and your family to design and implement an individual P.L.A.Y. Skill Sequence for your child. The P.L.A.Y. Project DVD is the best introduction to the P.L.A.Y. Skill Sequence (this can be purchased online at www.playproject.org and select the DVD button, then purchase). The DVD may also be available directly from your Home Consultant. We recommend that families view the DVD as a first step in beginning The P.L.A.Y. Project.

Home Consultation typically includes:

- Family support
- 10 visits per year (the range equals 8 to 12 visits)
- 3 hour sessions roughly divided between 1 hour of modeling, 1 hour of coaching the family and 1 hour of feedback.
- Selected videotaping of P.L.A.Y. interactions with written evaluations and feedback.
- Assistance with IFSP or IEP Goals

The Home Consulting Program has a thorough program evaluation that includes:

- Periodic surveys to assess family satisfaction with consulting services.
- Documentation of progress using a combination of family information, various questionnaires/assessments and video rating scales.
- Resources for families – handouts and referrals to other types of comprehensive therapies (Speech & Language, Occupational Therapy, etc.) if needed.

First Visit

The first visit provides an opportunity for the Home Consultant and your child and family to begin to get to know each other. The Home Consultant can explain some of the basic elements of what will occur during the home visits. Background information is collected to ascertain current services that the child is receiving, and to establish baseline for behaviors associated with autism and level of cognitive, language, adaptive, social, and sensory functioning for your child. These assessment and intake forms can occupy 1.5 to 2.5 hours of the first visit. If you have not attended a Level 1 seminar or reviewed The P.L.A.Y. Project DVD, you will be given an overview of the presentation (approximately 1 hour).

Baseline Play - After the completion of the assessments you will be asked to play with your child as you usually do. Your Home Consultant will videotape a 15-20 minute segment of you playing with your child. During this time you just play normally with your child. You will not be given any instructions on how to play during this segment of the visit. The purpose of this is for your Home Consultant to see how you naturally play with your child. If there is time after the assessment and filming, your Home Consultant will model various P.L.A.Y. techniques and begin to instruct you in playing with your child. One of the important benefits of the home visits is that your Home Consultant can model techniques with your child's own toys, making it very easy for you to understand how to apply the techniques. After your visit, your P.L.A.Y. Consultant will send you a copy of the videotape taken at the time of this visit along with an assessment and any supplemental handouts that might be helpful.

Second Visit and More

Your second and subsequent home visits will not require the formal assessments used in the first visit. These visits follow the guidelines described above, i.e., 3-hour sessions with videotaping. Home visits allow the Consultant to see your child in the place where he/she is most comfortable, so the Consultant can see how he/she acts most naturally. The Home Consultant will coach parents on how to PLAY more effectively with your child with autism. This type of PLAY assists the child to work through the core deficits of autism. The Consultant will also videotape segments of the home visits, to monitor your child's progress and give suggestions for more effective techniques, followed by audio and written feedback reports.

Costs of The P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consultation:

Since the parents provide most of the hours of intensive intervention, The P.L.A.Y. Project can be offered at a cost that is affordable for many families. The following summarizes these expenses offered by EnCourage Institute for Teaching and Learning:

- Each family signs a formal contract that details the obligations and expectations for both the Home Consultant and the parents
- Typically a family will sign up for one year initially; most families continue the contract for a second year

- We usually plan for 10 visits per year; some families want 12 visits (every month) and some request 8 visits
- We charge \$390 per visit at the EnCourage Institute offices.
- Since our Home Consultant will travel to your home we charge a travel fee based on distance; a travel fee schedule is provided as part of the contract; we do not charge for the Home Consultant's hourly fee during travel time.
- Thus for the typical 10 visit program, the charge for the year is \$3,900. plus travel
- We expect that \$780 (for the first and last visit) plus the travel fee is to be paid at the time of signing the contract, coinciding with the first visit.
- A monthly payment schedule of \$390 will then be invoiced until the total charge is paid, thus completing the annual obligation for these fees; number of months will depend on the number of visits planned under the contract.
- Cancellation of visits: We encourage families to keep their scheduled appointments. We have a firm policy around cancelling visits that are planned. Cancelled visits are often difficult to make up due to short notice and busy schedules.
- Cancellation of contract: While we initially sign a contract for a one year period, we allow early cancellation for an administrative fee of \$100; a common reason why a family might cancel is if they move out of the region.

Research Evidence for The P.L.A.Y. Project

Dr. Solomon has evaluated 68 children, each enrolled for 8 to 12 months of intervention in The P.L.A.Y. Project at the University of Michigan. The results showed that 47% of the children made good to very good progress (increasing 1 to 1.5 functional developmental levels during the study) and 32% made fair progress. The research paper has been published in May 2007 by the peer-reviewed British journal, *Autism*. A copy is available upon request.

Dr. Solomon is currently leading a second study of The P.L.A.Y. Project sponsored by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). The study participants have been enrolled at Easter Seals community sites and the data are being analyzed independently by Michigan State University. The outcomes for this study will compare the development of children receiving The P.L.A.Y. Project intervention with those receiving standard interventions.

Two intensive Interventions - The P.L.A.Y. Project Compared with ABA

Research evidence shows that children with autism spectrum disorders do best when they receive intensive intervention. There are two basic types – *behavioral*, such as ABA (also known as Applied Behavioral Analysis) and *developmental*, such as The P.L.A.Y. Project. Below is a chart that compares these approaches to assist parents in making the choice for their child. In general terms we recommend that younger children benefit most from PLAY which provides the opportunity for them to develop joyful engaging relationships and communication with their parents and peers. Once the child has reached a level of social and language development then we recommend adding ABA to strengthen skills and get ready for school. These approaches are complementary and many children can benefit from receiving both.

Comparison of Developmental and Behavioral Approaches		
Area	Developmental, The P.L.A.Y. Project	Behavioral, ABA
Parent Role	Parents as PLAY Partners	Parents as Program Facilitators
Emphasis	Affect Emphasized	Behavior Emphasized
Initiation	Child Initiated	Program Initiated
Philosophy	Follow Child's Lead	Program Goals Dominant
Structure	Strategic and Flexible	More Highly Prescribed
Intensity	Flexible Intensity	Intensity Prescribed
Interaction	PLAYful Interaction	Teaching Drills & Skills
Repetitive Behaviors	Perseverations Seen as Useful Guides	Perseverations Extinguished
Environment	More Naturalistic	More Controlled
Generalization to Other Settings	Early Generalization Common	Later Generalization Typical
Outcome	Relationship, Social Skills Language and Feelings	Competence in Varied Skill Areas

The Parent as Experts

We consider you, the parent, to be the expert on your child. Our Home Consultants are expert on autism and have been intensively trained to guide you and teach you techniques so that you can more effectively assist your child move up the developmental ladder, and increase language and social skills.

We hope that you will consider whether The P.L.A.Y. Project is right for your child with autism and for your family. Our goal is for you to be your child's best P.L.A.Y. partner!

Enrolling in The P.L.A.Y. Project

To enroll in The P.L.A.Y. Project at EnCourage Institute for Teaching and Learning please contact our office at:

- Phone: 616-530-2224
- Email: playproject@encourageinstitute.com

We will let you know if we currently have a spot available. If not, we can often refer you to one of the other P.L.A.Y. Projects around the region.

We look forward to supporting you, the parents, in providing better care for your child.