



# *Early Intervention Colorado Autism Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers: Executive Summary*

In July 2009, the Colorado Department of Human Services, Division for Developmental Disabilities, with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, began collaborating with the University of Colorado, School of Education and Human Development to develop the *Early Intervention Colorado Autism Guidelines for Infants and Toddlers*. The purpose of these *Guidelines* is to ensure that infants and toddlers, birth through two years, who have characteristics of Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) receive early intervention services based on their individualized identified need, and not on a prescriptive curriculum or treatment model.

The *Guidelines* document is also intended to assist local early intervention programs to provide early intervention services that are derived from evidence-

based practices, published research and early childhood clinical judgment that will increase the awareness and knowledge of families, providers, and early intervention administrators.

The content of the *Guidelines* is compiled from a review of research-based programs and models, as well as state-of-the-art information from experts in the field of Autism Spectrum Disorders, and work with family members who have young children with ASD. The *Guidelines* approach early intervention service decisions consistent with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 (IDEA) that mandates that appropriate services be based on scientifically based research, are available statewide to all infants and toddlers, and meet the individualized needs of the eligible child and family.



The *Guidelines* are organized in different sections to address the various target audiences of this document. While anyone who has an interest in the provision of or receipt of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with ASD will benefit from reading the entire document, the “Guiding Principles” section is essential reading for all—administrators, policy makers, providers, families, and advocates. The twelve Guiding Principles are:

1. Services must be individualized for each child and family.
2. Family involvement and participation is critical.
3. Early delivery of intervention must be encouraged.
4. Families have a right to evidence-based practices.
5. Intervention is based on an individualized developmental curriculum designed to address the specialized needs of the infant or toddler with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
6. Intervention is planned and systematic.
7. Infants and toddlers with Autism Spectrum Disorders should have regular and deliberate exposure to typically developing peers.
8. Challenging behaviors are addressed using positive behavioral interventions and supports.
9. Intervention should focus on developing communication skills.
10. The development of social relationships is integral to successful outcomes.
11. Getting to quality outcomes is not just about hours of direct services.
12. The transition from the early intervention program to preschool special education and related services should be well planned.

Other sections of the *Guidelines* may be of more or less utility to various readers. For example, all early intervention providers working with infants and toddlers with ASD and their families should be familiar with and directly incorporate into their practice the strategies suggested in the “Designing Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSPs)” section. Similarly, teams of providers and program administrators may find “A Tiered Model for Thinking About Specific Needed Services” section to be useful in the overall design of systems and the allocation of resources. Families and providers are keenly concerned about the use of specific practices with the best chance of producing desired outcomes. These readers may well find particularly valuable information in the “Evidence-Based Interventions and Measuring Outcomes” section.

### **Suggested citation**

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### **Summary drawn from**

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