

FSL FAQs

POPARD Family - School Liaison Newsletter



FAQ: HOW CAN I FIND SOCIAL GROUPS IN MY AREA TO HELP ME TEACH SOCIAL SKILLS TO MY CHILD?

Time, especially for a parent, is “zero-sum (0-Σ) economics.” Whatever time you spend on one activity is time you cannot spend on another. So, before you decide to search for social skills groups, it might be helpful to decide on what you hope to get out of attending them. Do you want to:

- Become part of a community of parent caregivers?
- Enhance your knowledge or understanding of autism?
- Develop a skill to intervene with your child?

- Expand your child’s opportunities for social relationships?
- Learn about resources that you can contact to help you in supporting your child?

All of these are useful purposes.

Become part of a community of parent caregivers

Joining a parent group can address more than one of the above. A community of caregivers might become a support to you, your family, and your child.

The Autism Support Network is organized by and for parents:

[Autism Support Network of British Columbia \(autismsupportbc.ca\)](http://AutismSupportNetworkofBritishColumbia.autismsupportbc.ca)

Enhance your knowledge or understanding of autism

For example, to acquire basic knowledge of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), it may be efficient (think “0- Σ economics”) to attend webinars or enroll in courses for your own psychoeducation. There is an enormous variety of these on the internet; the POPARD FAQ: “How can I work on social skills for my child?” provides guidance on evaluating the credibility of what you might find when you begin to search. Depending on the organization of the webinar or course, this can also involve you with a community of caregivers, and that might become a support to your family.

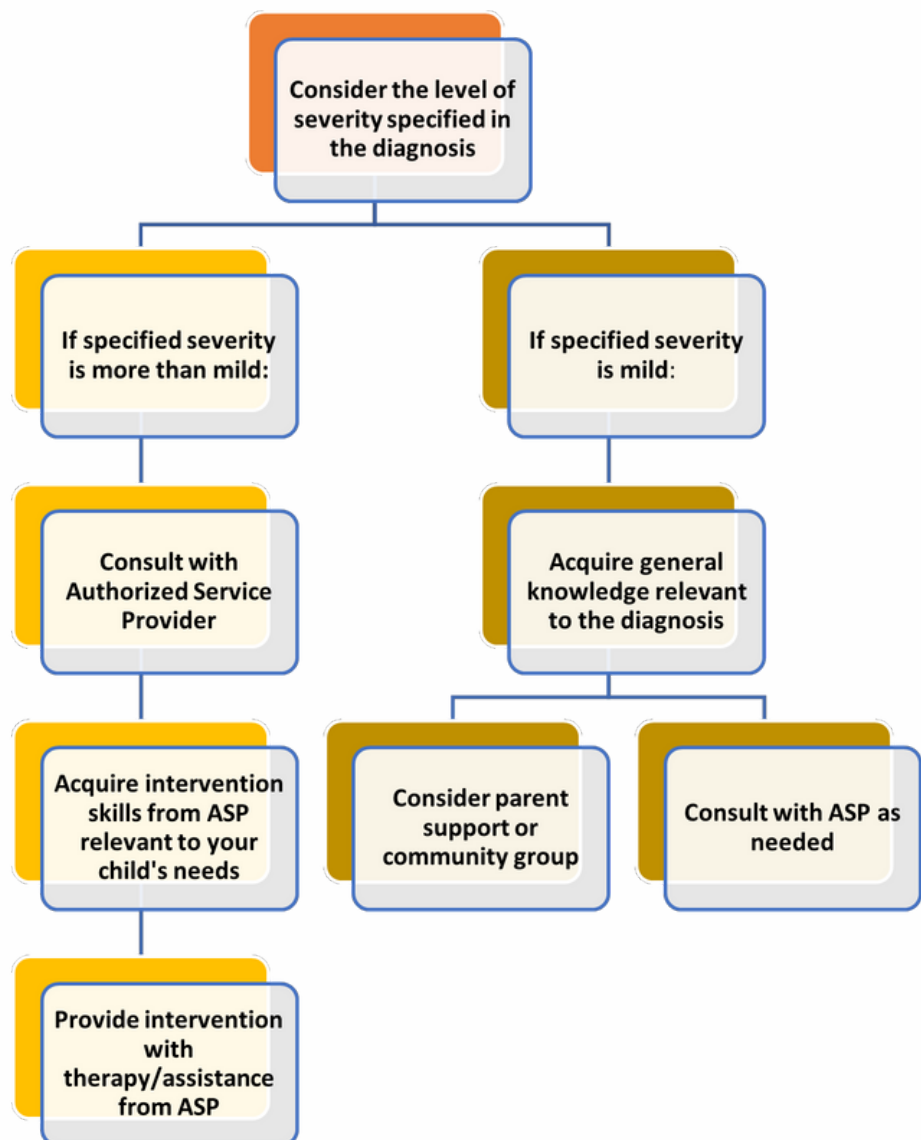
Develop a skill to intervene directly with your child

It is helpful to determine whether your child will be the **indirect** recipient or the **direct** recipient of whatever activity you undertake in their support.

If it is the former, then reading and coursework or webinars or brief consultation with a service provider might be sufficient. If the latter, i.e., if the purpose is learning about interventions that **you will**

provide (“parent-mediated”) to address core symptoms of ASD or to address maladaptive behaviours, then specific individual or group training to help you develop intervention skills is appropriate.

What kind of service or group do you need?



To help you determine the level of service that your child needs, the report you received with your child's diagnosis likely specified a level of severity. If the level of severity specified is "mild," and if intellectual developmental disorder (intellectual disability) or language disorder is not also diagnosed, your child may not need extensive direct intervention by you or a therapist. If the level of severity is "moderate" or "severe," or if the diagnosis of ASD was accompanied by additional diagnoses, it is more likely that your child will require direct, ongoing, explicit intervention and that you will need to acquire intervention skills - because a qualified Autism Service Provider (ASP) is not likely to be in your home to assist your child more than a few hours/week.

Parent-mediated interventions (when parents play an active role in therapy) vary, depending upon the purpose of an intervention. Interventions intended to address skill deficits are different from interventions intended to address maladaptive behaviours. In both of these instances, however, consultation with, if not direct therapy from, qualified service providers is important.

For example, if your child's communication skills are identified as needing support, consultation with and therapy from a Speech/Language Pathologist (SLP) is essential.

Autism Community Training BC ACT - Autism Community Training | Knowledge that Makes a Difference (actcommunity.ca) provides a one-stop shop for training for parents and professional caregivers.

Expand your child's opportunities for social relationships

Social skills training is best performed in the presence of others. Targeted skills training is facilitated by Authorized Service Providers, often at public or private clinics. Targeted training focusses on discrete skills; there is usually an interview with a caregiver and brief assessment to allow the providers to determine if their programme is appropriate for your child. If it is a private clinic, a fee is involved, and outcomes are monitored. Typically, such programmes include a defined number of sessions and may require parent participation (homework is involved).

Private clinics at [Psychologists in British Columbia for Licensed Counseling Psychologist British Columbia \(findprivateclinics.ca\)](http://Psychologists in British Columbia for Licensed Counseling Psychologist British Columbia (findprivateclinics.ca)), provide a variety of health services that often include group programmes intended to address specific issues such as anxiety; you have to contact clinics to determine if they are offering a service that relates to the issue for which you are seeking support. Private ABA clinics may offer a menu of social skills training on an ongoing basis.

Social clubs or friendship groups are more informal. Eligibility is likely to be determined more by interest than an identified need. Fees for your child's participation are likely less than those for targeted social skills groups. Such groups can, nevertheless, be valuable in that they less structured exploration of social relationships and play within the limits of a safe environment supervised by adults who are familiar with children who have a diagnosis of ASD. Social Clubs – AutismBC is a website to assist in finding such groups.

Learn about resources that you can contact to help you in supporting your child

Public, private, and professional services and organizations can assist in finding a group or provider that can assist you.

The Registry of Autism Service Providers at [Registry of Autism Service Providers \(RASP\) - Province of British Columbia \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://gov.bc.ca/registryofautism) is a public service that helps you to search for qualified service providers across several categories, as well as guidance in helping you to construct a team of service providers for your child.

Registered psychologists can be found through the British Columbia Psychological Association [Homepage | BC Psychological Association \(psychologists.bc.ca\)](https://psychologists.bc.ca/) or [Find a Registered Psychologist | BC Psychological Association \(psychologists.bc.ca\)](https://psychologists.bc.ca/find-a-registered-psychologist). The BCPA is professional organization of registered psychologists that provides a search website that helps you to sort availability of psychological services by modality (individual or group), by issue or concern, and by your location.

Speech/Language Pathologists can be found at:

<https://speechandhearingbc.ca/public/find-a-professional/>

For development of self-care skills, consultation with an Occupational Therapist (OT) will be important. See: [COTBC Home - College of Occupational Therapists of British Columbia](https://columbia.edu/cotbc).

**IF YOU HAVE
QUESTIONS OR
WOULD LIKE FURTHER
INFORMATION,
CONTACT POPARD'S
FAMILY-SCHOOL
LIAISON.**

**EMAIL:
FSL@AUTISMOUTREACH.CA**

**PHONE:
604-952-4994**

For treatment of maladaptive behaviours and promotion or prosocial behaviours, consultation with a Behaviour Consultant (a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst or a registered Psychologist or a registered Psychologist who is also a Board Certified Behaviour Analyst – there are such) will be helpful.

General information about BCBAs can be found at [What Is a BCBA \(Board Certified Behavior Analyst\)? - ABA Centers of America](https://www.bcbas.org/what-is-a-bcba).

Some of the above websites [e. g., [Find a Registered Psychologist | BC Psychological Association \(psychologists.bc.ca\)](https://psychologists.bc.ca/find-a-registered-psychologist)], allow you to specify a location and a concern or topic in your search. For other enquiries, you may need to add that to your search, e. g., “social skills group Nanaimo autism SLP” or “social skills group Chilliwack autism BCBA.”

Umbrella information services, such as Autism Information Services BC, are likely a good place to begin. AIS is a government-funded organization that provides guidance on where to search: [autism_brochure_english.pdf \(gov.bc.ca\)](https://autism-brochure-english.pdf). They may seem daunting but can reduce the time you might spend searching (“0-Σeconomics”).