

## Introduction and Rationale

Speech language pathologists in Ohio have unique and significant contributions and professional development needs surrounding supporting students with autism (and autism spectrum disorders including Aspergers), teachers and other professionals/paraprofessionals and families. The Ohio Board of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology as well as the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) have very strict Codes of Ethics that detail the mandates of SLPs to provide all services competently. Because of the number of students in Ohio with autism, all SLPs must be skilled in screening and early detection, assessment diagnosis, and intervention, working with families, collaboration, research, and advocacy. Additional professional development needs may exist within each of these areas including assistive technology and augmentative and alternative communication, social and pragmatic language interventions, and methodologies of best practice.

ASHA has prepared several documents including the principles for SLPs technical report, the roles and responsibilities of SLPs and autism, and the knowledge and skills necessary for the practicing SLP. Each document may be found at the following link:

Principles for Speech-Language Pathologists in Diagnosis, Assessment, and Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders Across the Life Span: <http://www.asha.org/docs/html/TR2006-00143.html>

Roles and Responsibilities of Speech-Language Pathologists in Diagnosis, Assessment, and Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders Across the Life Span: <http://www.asha.org/docs/html/PS2006-00105.html>

Knowledge and Skills Needed by Speech-Language Pathologists for Diagnosis, Assessment, and Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders Across the Life Span: <http://www.asha.org/docs/html/KS2006-00075.html>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC 2007) and the Autism Society of America (2007), estimate that 1 in 150 individuals have an autism spectrum disorder. As that number continues to increase, the need for highly trained and qualified professionals is critical. Speech-language pathologists play a vital role in the assessment, identification, and intervention of children with autism.

Nationally as many as 1.5 million Americans are estimated to have autism. The United States Department of Education estimates that autism is increasing at a rate of 10-17% per year. These numbers are consistent with what is being witnessed in Ohio. According to the Ohio Department of Education, in 2007-2008, 10,648 children in Ohio schools were identified as having autism. In 2008-2009 that number increased to 12,537. Now more than ever it is critical that speech-language pathologists take the lead in professional development and practice to effectively serve individuals with autism.