

FEAT AUSTIN

Families for Effective Autism Treatment



Parent Hotline: 512-656-6099

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New Board Member

Lisa Hunter Ryden -VP of Scientific Research

My husband and I have two very active sons, an 8 year old son with autism and a neurotypical son who is 4 years old. I am a member of the American Society of Clinical Pathology, Association of Molecular Pathology, and the American Association of Clinical Chemistry.

We have started ABA, GFCF, antiviral treatment, chelation, and other biomedical treatments within the past year, and in many ways feel we are just beginning the recovery process for our son.

I look forward to meeting the wonderful people in FEAT Austin, and will happily share my 'knowledge base' of autism research. My goal is to bring you the latest scientific research in an easy to understand format, because I understand that not everyone has a background in science. If you ever have any questions about a medical or scientific topic, I hope to be able to answer your question as soon as possible, or provide you with an expert who can help you. My vision is for the global autism community to unite and be one voice. We must bring awareness to the effects of environmental toxins on our health and future generations. We must secure more funding for unbiased research studies for possible genetic and environmental causes of autism as well as research studies for treatments which are *recovering* our children. We must advocate for early childhood diagnosis using genetic and immunological testing to ensure safety of antibiotics and vaccines. Current research shows that autism is an immune disorder, and the immune system can be treated. Recovery *is* possible. I look forward to joining a great team of parents and advocates, and together we can accomplish great things.

What is FEAT?

We are a non-profit organization of parents, caregivers and concerned professionals dedicated to providing Education, Advocacy and Support to families of children with autism and other developmental disabilities, supporting scientifically proven treatments to help parents navigate the huge array of options.

Our Board consists of parents of children with Autism: Angela Day—President, Debbie Bridge—VP of Political Affairs, Christine Robinson—VP of Fundraising, and Lisa Hunter Ryden—VP of Scientific Research.

Our Advisory Board contains ten Board Certified Behavior Analysts that donate their services to provide free trainings and inexpensive seminars in behavior strategies in everything from challenging behaviors to social skills.

FEAT Austin 2009 Goals

- Improve Adult Services through legislative means, including the pilot program recommended by the Texas Autism Council.
- Support efforts to maintain HB1919 for this legislative session
- Develop Web Casting support for all of our meetings and seminars to allow parents that cannot attend to view and interact from the comfort of their homes
- Increase the number of ABA and Biomedical Training events in the Austin area.

Plea to Members

If you could make copies of this newsletter and drop it off at all the usual places you go, many more families will get the word that there are free and inexpensive ABA resources here in Austin.



Ask the BCBA

For some families, the holidays can be a stressful time of year. Because of communication, behavior, and sensory challenges, individuals with autism sometimes have a difficult time enjoying the holiday festivities like the rest of us can. In this issue of Ask the BCBA I will provide some general ideas on how to address common challenges during the holiday season.

Preparation:

Once you have determined where your family will be celebrating the holidays begin preparing your child for the transition. Visiting a new place and spending an extended period of time with unfamiliar people can create high anxiety in some individuals with autism. Begin preparing your child for what will be expected and what will happen so that they are not caught off guard with any changes. Start talking to your child about what will happen. Consider using a picture schedule or other visual supports that map out exactly what will happen. If activities will change each day consider using a picture schedule that can be changed out each day with different pictures depending on what is planned. A picture schedule can provide structure to what can be a chaotic time and yet still be flexible to where you can create a different schedule for each day. Use pictures that explain the places you will visit, the people you will see, and the activities the child will be expected to participate in. Be sure to schedule in familiar activities or breaks throughout the day as well so that your child still experiences some of the activities they are used to participating in at home.

Preparing Family Members:

Family and friends many times genuinely want to make a loved one with autism feel comfortable in their home but often do not know how. If you plan to spend the holidays in another home begin preparing family and friends on how to approach or react to your child. Inform family members about what your child likes. In behavior analysis therapists always begin by “pairing” with the individual. Pairing involves pairing a person with a child’s preferred items and activities so that the child associates the new person with positive items and activities in their life. It helps establish a relationship. Inform family members of special activities or items that keep your child happy under normal circumstances so that family members can be sure to have the same items in their home prior to your arrival. That will help your child establish a rapport with new people. If your child is non-verbal or has limited verbal communication, inform family members about ways to communicate with your child.

If your child uses sign language or pictures, educate family members on specific signs or pictures so that they can find ways to communicate and interact with your child during the visit. Also, if your child experiences behavior challenges, prepare family members for appropriate responses to challenging behaviors. Sometimes family members want to help but their responses may do more harm than good. Explain to family members what they should do. Do you expect them to intervene?, do you want them to ignore behaviors?, Do you want them to walk away,? etc. Tell them what “helping” actually looks like.

Practice Makes Perfect!

Practice makes perfect with any skill. If you are visiting family or friends in your local area for the holidays, consider practicing meeting those people a few times before the actual holiday. That way your child can familiarize themselves with new people and the new environment. If you are spending the holidays out of town and will be flying, consider practicing going to the airport so that your child can familiarize themselves with the airport environment and routine. Take visual supports with you to explain the steps the child will be expected to follow during your travel day. If your child is sensitive to loud noises or large crowds, consider practicing going to places like shopping malls to desensitize your child to these environments. Or if being in a large crowd even for a short period of time is too much, consider teaching your child an appropriate way to communicate they need to leave so that they do not resort to challenging behaviors. Teach them to ask for a break or to sign the word break and be sure to reinforce these appropriate responses when they happen so that they are more likely to happen in the future.

Prepare and practice and you are on your way to having an enjoyable holiday season. I am thankful every day that I get to work with wonderful, dedicated families that teach me every day what life is all about. I thank you. Have a wonderful Thanksgiving Holiday with your loved ones!

Rany Thommen, M.Ed., BCBA

Bluebonnet Trails Autism Program

rany.thommen@bluebonnetmhm.org



Political Corner

Americans' have chosen their new commander in chief Senator Barack Obama. History is in the making throughout the political arena.

What's next? Texas is raving up for the 81st legislative session. What is your position with the current policies with regards to disabled Texans? The time is now get to know your government officials. How do you find your elected officials for your district? Visit <http://www.fyi.legis.state.tx.us/>.

Parents, caregivers, educators, and administrators can make a difference in the lives of individuals living with autism. Here are a few tips on how to advocate:

- Testify at the Capitol
- Visit your legislator
- Share your story
- Collaborate with organizations and connect Legislators to local efforts
- Develop a rapport with Legislators
- Communicate with Legislators
- Be informed

Be aware of the importance of advocating in a cohesive manner. Constituents must be knowledgeable about the cause in which they support. For more information about joining autism support organizations send an email to FEAT at info@feat-austin.org.

Debbie Bridge

Vice President of Political Affairs

groups.yahoo.com/group/Texas-Autism-Politics

www.snopes.com

www.factcheck.org

Book Review Corner

Changing the Course of Autism: A Scientific Approach for Parents and Physicians \$12.49

By Bryan Jepson

This is an excellent guidebook for physicians and parents! Every doctor who treats our children should have one. I am giving a copy to my pediatrician.

My vote 🙌🙌🙌🙌

Mother Warriors: A Nation of Parents Healing Autism Against All Odds

(Hardcover) \$15.00

By Jenny McCarthy

This is an easy read (about 4 hours) but not for anyone who doesn't want a good cry. Reading the stories of parents who encountered many more challenges than the average person and how they responded to those challenges was inspirational. Jenny can be crude at times, and drops the "F" bomb in this book, but overall it is a good book.

My vote is only three hands, because I didn't really learn more on how to heal my son and you may want to wait to read it when the library has it rather than spend the money.

My vote 🙌🙌🙌

Lisa Hunter Ryden

Vice President of Scientific Research

Tip

Each School District should have a lending library. Ask your special education teacher. If they don't have these books, ask them to buy them. They probably will.



Science in the News

A genetic pathway to language disorders

By [Bruce Bower](#)

Web edition : Wednesday, November 5th, 2008

One gene's regulation of another gene may foster a common childhood language disorder

Genes speak to each other in their own molecular dialect. By tracking one such conversation, scientists have identified a genetic relationship that may contribute to the common childhood language disorder known as specific language impairment, or SLI.

A gene called *FOXP2* communicates with another gene, *contactin-associated protein-like 2*, or *CNTNAP2*. That process hampers the *CNTNAP2* ability to make a protein that helps to direct prenatal and later brain growth, say geneticist Simon Fisher of the University of Oxford, England, and his colleagues.

What's more, children with specific language impairment frequently inherit certain versions of the *CNTNAP2* gene, Fisher's team reports online November 5 in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. The team suspects that these *CNTNAP2* variations are particularly susceptible to *FOXP2* regulation.

Analyses of the neural consequences of *CNTNAP2*'s tweaking by *FOXP2* should begin to illuminate the roots of language problems that characterize not only SLI but also other childhood disorders, such as autism, the researchers assert.

Language problems characteristic of autism closely resemble SLI. "The same genetic effects on language impairments can operate across distinct developmental disorders," Fisher says.

Fisher's new study "shifts the focus from a 'language gene' to 'networks of language-related genes,'" comments developmental psycholinguist Mabel Rice of the University of Kansas in Lawrence. Rice agrees with Fisher that common genetic pathways may underlie language impairments observed in different developmental disorders.

In defense of that possibility, Fisher notes that studies published earlier this year by two separate teams found an association between *CNTNAP2* variants and autism. Those researchers also noted that high levels of *CNTNAP2*'s brain protein accumulate in language-related areas, suggesting the protein is related to language development.

Specific language impairment consists of unexplained difficulties in producing and understanding language, often revolving around delayed vocabulary and grammar skills in healthy, intelligent children. An estimated 7 percent of 5- to 6-year-olds exhibit SLI.

Since 2001, researchers have tried and failed to link *FOXP2* variants directly to specific language impairment, without considering how *FOXP2* regulates other genes. That quest was inspired by a report that members of an extended family

diagnosed with symptoms of SLI and with speech and intellectual impairments had inherited a specific *FOXP2* mutation. It turned out that this genetic alteration, which deactivates the gene, occurs extremely rarely and is not a cause of SLI.

Psycholinguist Karin Stromswold of Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J., calls the new findings "a bold step in the elucidation of the genetic underpinnings of language impairment." She emphasizes that the new study is also a first step toward examining the roles of numerous *FOXP2*-regulated genes in language disorders.

Versions of *FOXP2* appear in many animals, including primates, birds, bats and mice. This gene has been linked to song production by birds, learning of movement sequences by mice and use of echolocation by bats.

In earlier studies of human neurons grown in the laboratory, Fisher's group identified more than four dozen brain-related genes potentially regulated by *FOXP2*.

In their new study of genetic material isolated from laboratory-grown brain cells, the researchers found spots on the *CNTNAP2* gene that received *FOXP2*'s protein. *CNTNAP2*'s ability to generate its own protein in these human neurons dropped sharply when the regulatory gene's protein was present.

A second phase of the investigation examined *CNTNAP2* mutations in the members of 184 nuclear families. Each family consisted of two parents and as many as four children, at least one of whom had been diagnosed with specific language impairment before entering the study. Family members who performed especially poorly on a test of ability to repeat spoken nonsense words received an SLI diagnosis from Fisher's group. Difficulty with this task is a strong marker of SLI, Fisher says.

Participants who carried either one or two copies of certain *CNTNAP2* variants displayed specific language impairment more frequently than did those who lacked the same variants. One key set of *CNTNAP2* mutations occurred in 40 percent of those who scored extremely poorly on the nonsense-word task, versus 29 percent of those who scored extremely well on the same task.

It will be important to determine whether brain effects of the *FOXP2*-*CNTNAP2* pathway promote all or only some components of SLI, Rice notes. Other evidence suggests that different genetic roots influence difficulties in repeating nonsense words versus struggling with vocabulary and grammar.

"The genetics approach used in Fisher's study is like opening a new bag of tools to sort out the ways different genes can interact to influence language acquisition and impairment," Rice says.

Comment: This is interesting research, and I hope we have more research into genes which affect language.

Lisa Hunter Ryden

Vice President of Scientific Research

FEAT-Austin Calendar of Events

All of the monthly FEAT trainings listed are FREE.
Full-day workshops require a registration fee.

☺ **December 2-4: 17th Annual Texas State Autism Conference**

<http://www.autism.esc2.net/conference.asp>

Arlington Convention Center, Arlington, Texas

☺ **January 15: Challenging Behaviors**

6:30-8:30pm, Children's Autism Center

Amanda Boutot, M.Ed, BCBA

☺ **January 29: Biomedical Intervention, Treating the Source**

6:30-8:30pm, Children's Autism Center

Dr. Kendal Stewart of Neuro-Sensory Centers & Steve Orlando of Neurobiologix

☺ **February 19: Capturing and Creating the Motivation to Learn in a Child with Autism**

6:30-8:30pm, Children's Autism Center

Phyllis Sample, M.Ed., BCBA

☺ **March 19: Social Skills for HFA/Aspergers**

6:30-8:30pm, Children's Autism Center

Ashley Schexnayder, M.S., BCBA

☺ **April 15: ABA in the Classroom**

6:00-8:00pm, Central Texas Autism Center

Kelle Wood Rich, M.Ed., BCBA

☺ **May 13: Introduction to Verbal Behavior**

6:00-8:00pm, Central Texas Autism Center

Kelle Wood Rich, M.Ed., BCBA

January 15: Challenging Behaviors

Location: Children's Autism Center

1717 N. Mays
Round Rock, Texas 78664
512-248-0644

Time: 6:30-8:30pm

Presenter:

Amanda Boutot, M.Ed, BCBA

The presentation will cover addressing challenging behaviors including physical aggression, verbal aggression, noncompliance, and other behaviors that interfere with learning. The presenter will discuss how to prevent behaviors from occurring in the first place, determining the functions of challenging behaviors, and how to develop plans to address these behaviors using research-based strategies.



January 29: Biomedical Interventions, Treating the Source

Location: Children's Autism Center

1717 N. Mays
Round Rock, Texas 78664
512-248-0644

Time: 6:30-8:30pm

Presenter:

Dr. Kendal Stewart of
Neuro-Sensory Centers
Steve Orlando of Neurobiologix

ADD, ADHD, Sensory Integration, and Autism – Seeing the Problem, Treating the Source

Dr Kendal Stewart will discuss Biomedical Interventions for ADD, ADHD, Sensory Integration, and Autism. Steve Orlando will cover the Neurobiologix supplements related to those interventions.



February 19: Capturing and Creating Motivation to Learn in a Child with Autism

Location: Children's Autism Center

1717 N. Mays
Round Rock, Texas 78664
512-248-0644

Time: 6:30-8:30pm

Presenter:

Phyllis Sample M.Ed., BCBA

Capturing and creating motivation to learn is the key to a successful academic and social life. Phyllis Sample will teach us how to accomplish this invaluable learning foundation for our children with Autism.



March 19: Social Skills for HFA/Aspergers

Location: Children's Autism Center

1717 N. Mays
Round Rock, Texas 78664
512-248-0644

Time: 6:30-8:30pm

Presenter:

Ashley Schexnayder, M.S., BCBA

Topics include: the challenges individual's with autism face in social interaction, assessing a child's social skills before implementing interventions, ideas on intervention including child-guided strategies instead of just teacher-guided strategies, with a Q & A session afterwards.



April 15: ABA in the Classroom

Location: Central Texas Autism Center

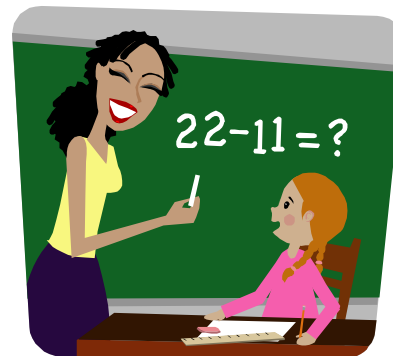
Central Texas Autism Center
3006 Bee Caves Road, Suite B-200
Austin, Texas 78746
512-328-5599
<http://www.ctac1.com>

Time: 6:00-8:00pm

Presenter:

Kelle Wood Rich, M.Ed, BCBA

This presentation will discuss how to apply principles of ABA in the classroom. Teachers often face the challenge of applying ABA when it is difficult to provide a 1:1 ratio between student and teacher. This presentation will be presented by a teacher for teachers and parents and will cover ways to reinforce, prompt, address behavior challenges, collect data, and teach in the classroom environment using research-based strategies.



May 13: Introduction to Verbal Behavior

Location: Central Texas Autism Center

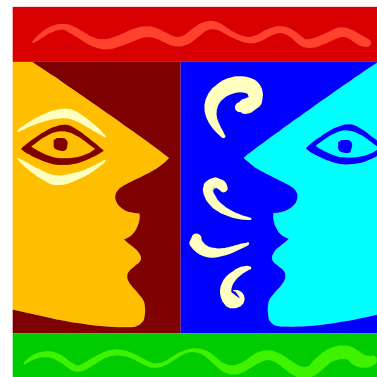
Central Texas Autism Center
3006 Bee Caves Road, Suite B-200
Austin, Texas 78746
512-328-5599
<http://www.ctac1.com>

Time: 6:00-8:00pm

Presenter:

Kelle Wood Rich, M.Ed, BCBA

This presentation will cover an introduction to Verbal Behavior, a specific component of behavior analysis that addresses speech and language. First introduced by B.F. Skinner, behavior analysts believe that vocal behaviors have the same controlling variables of any other behavior. This training will provide information on assessing a child's vocal behavior, beginning a verbal behavior program, and collecting data for students of different levels.



Classifieds Section

This is a very affordable option. Please note that FEAT-Austin does not in any way screen families, therapists, or organizations that place ads. Inclusion in the classifieds in no way implies an endorsement or certification by FEAT-Austin.

WANTED: DRIVER for SPECIAL NEEDS TEEN

Help needed for transporting 15 years old female to and from therapy.
fgirl20002000(at)yahoo.com

WANTED: TUTOR and LIFESKILLS COACH

I am looking for a full time individual with some experience working with children with disabilities, to help me continue to home school my 13 year old son with Down Syndrome/Autism, and his typically developing sister that is 16. I will be working from home most of the time.

This person will be responsible for everything that a home school family does during the day, including teaching cooking while preparing lunch, and cleaning up. (That mom kind of stuff) Applicant must absolutely adore animals and children above all else, and have a proven method in place for both managing those stressful days that can happen with special needs children, as well as redirecting problem behaviors.

Must be at least 18 years old, legal work status, clean criminal history. Salary range from \$9.50-\$11.00/hour based on experience. Contact Pat in Northwest Austin on the Metro rail stop near Wells Branch Parkway and Mopac by email at cdebellis(at)austin.rr.com.

WANTED: ABA THERAPIST

Family looking for therapist to provide in-home ABA therapy for 8 year old child with Autism. Must have experience working with children with autism. Please contact Mary at mcabrera2000(at)sbcglobal.net

WANTED: ABA THERAPIST

ABA therapist required at home for 4 year old child diagnosed with PDD. She is verbal and follows directions and easily interacts with adults. Need therapy to facilitate peer interaction. 2 days/week is required and salary is negotiable according to qualification and years of experience. 512-248-0339 or krits_876(at)yahoo.com

AVAILABLE: ABA THERAPIST

I am an ABA therapist with 3 years experience providing ABA in home and center based settings under a BCBA. 4 years total experience working with this population, experience with ages 5-17. Experience with dual diagnoses and the full range of severity. Relocating to Austin at the beginning of September. Available for in home ABA programs or center based programs and social skills groups. References/resume provided upon request. Andrew Penner, B.S. apenner(at)gmail.com

WANTED: LIFE COACHES

Currently setting interview dates for Community Coaches to work with young adults with Autism. As a coach you will work with a young person with Autism and his/her family ,supporting home living and employment skills enhancement, local recreation, fitness, social and leisure activities. Coaches will receive training and ongoing support through The College of Community Living. Future plans are to also provide health insurance and merit bonuses for coaches.

Contact: Cheryl Wallace /The College of Community Living (include CofCL in the subject line) at lakelizards5(at)sbcglobal.net

WANTED: ABA THERAPIST

I am a mom of 2 boys, Jack and Will, ages 6 and 4. We live in Schulenburg, TX. My boys have autistic characteristics but have not been diagnosed PDD. There is limited access to treatments here, please help hooperdeeann hooper(at)cvtv.net

WANTED: RESPIRE PROVIDER

Family looking for respite provider for 13 year old child with Aspergers. Must have experience working with children with autism. Please contact Nicole at scootieface(at)gmail.com

WANTED: ABA THERAPIST

I am looking for an ABA trainer in Austin/South Austin area and in North Houston area: Spring, Woodlands. Thank you for your help and referrals. Marcela Pinzon mpr2432(at)yahoo.com

Children's Autism Center offers affordable in-home consultation and in-home training for parents and therapists caring for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and other language, sensory, and behavior challenges. We will come to your home to provide training on the principles and techniques of applied behavior analysis, conduct assessments, and develop programs for your child. 512-248-0644 or phyllis_rr@yahoo.com

**Looking for an in-home therapist? Are you a therapist yourself that can provide ABA services in the home? If you would like to place an ad, simply email the text to classified@feat-austin.org and put "Classified" in the subject heading . There is no charge for this service.

Local ABA Centers and Consultants

ABA4Kids

www.aba4kids.com

888-802-4ABA

Amanda Boutot PhD, BCBA

www.amandaboutotconsulting.com

Autism Center for Education

www.aceautism.com

9600 Escarpment Blvd., Suite 745-222

Austin, TX 78749

512-895-9570

Austin Autism Consulting

www.austinautismconsulting.com

Bluebonnet Trails MHMR Autism Program

rany.thommen@bluebonnetmhmr.org

1009 N. Georgetown Street

Round Rock, Texas 78664

512-244-8209

Capitol School Horizon Program

www.capitolschool.org

2011 W. Koenig Lane

Austin, TX 78756

512-467-7006

Central Texas Autism Center

www.ctac1.com

3006 Bee Cave Rd., Suite B-200

Austin, TX 78746

512-328-5599

Children's Autism Center

512-248-0644

Moore-Weis Children's Center

www.moore-weis.org

1303 Lorrain Street

Austin, TX 78703

512-472-6080



CARD

www.centerforautism.com

Michael S. Allen, Psy.D.

3001 Bee Caves Rd. Suite 150

Austin, TX 78746

866-833-3898 Ext 106

Central Texas Autism Center

www.ctac1.com

3006 Bee Cave Rd, Suite B-200

Austin, TX 78746

512-328-5599

Children's Autism Center

Phyllis Sample, M.Ed., BCBA

1707 N. Mays

Round Rock, Texas 78664

512-248-0644

Phyllis_rr@yahoo.com

Explore Autism

www.exploreautism.com

Spectrum—Social and Recreation

www.spectrumsocial.net

1509 W. North Loop Blvd

Austin, TX 78756

512-524-5482

If you are close to a university, you may also be able to find graduate students in training to become Board Certified Behavior Analysts. This is a very affordable option to run an in-home ABA program. Currently Texas State offers an Autism/ABA program as well as The University of Texas at Austin. Contact professors from these programs to see if you can find help.

For a full listing of all BCBAs (Board Certified Behavior Analyst) in the Greater Austin area, complete a search on the Behavior Analyst Certification Board website at www.bacb.com. Click on "consumer information," then "certificate registry."