**9th Annual Statewide Conference**

**Keynote:**

**Early Foundations of Language in Autism Spectrum Disorders**

Presenter: Helen Tager-Flusberg, Ph.D.

Description:

Language deficits in autism are complex and diverse. Many methods have been used to examine them including eye tracking, brain imaging, and, more recently, studying younger siblings of children with ASD. This presentation will summarize findings from current sibling studies in the field, with an emphasis on the brain and behavioral foundations that support language development. Developmental differences between sibling groups and implications for understanding the origins of autism will be discussed.

Objectives:

1. Learn about studying infants at familial risk for autism spectrum disorders.
2. Learn about early brain development, particularly as it relates to language acquisition.
3. Learn about differences between high and low risk infants and the implications for understanding the origins of autism.

Target Audience:

Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School Administrators, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists

Biography:

Helen Tager-Flusberg received her Bachelors in Science in Psychology from University College London, and her doctorate from Harvard University. Since 2001 Dr. Tager-Flusberg has been at Boston University initially with primary appointments in the Department of Anatomy and Neurobiology and Pediatrics at the School of Medicine and now as Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences at Boston University. Dr. Tager-Flusberg is the Director of the Center for Autism Research Excellence at Boston University. She has conducted research on autism and other neurodevelopmental disorders (including Williams syndrome, Down syndrome, Prader-Willi syndrome, 16p, and Specific Language Impairment) for over 35 years, investigating developmental changes in language and social cognition in these populations using behavioral and brain imaging methodologies. Her research has been funded by the National Institutes of Health and private foundations, including Autism Speaks, The Simons Foundation, the Autism Consortium, the Nancy Lurie Marks Family Foundation and March of Dimes. She is the Principal Investigator of an NIH-funded Autism Center of Excellence, which focuses on minimally verbal individuals with ASD. Dr. Tager-Flusberg has edited seven books and written over 200 journal articles and book chapters. She is the Past President of the International Society for Autism Research, serves on the editorial board of several professional journals and is Associate Editor of the *Journal of Neurodevelopmental Disorders*. She has
presented her research at many professional conferences, parent advocacy groups and training institutes.

**Breakout Sessions:**

**1A: Facing Your Fears: Managing Anxiety symptoms that Interfere with Everyday Life in Individuals with ASD**

Presenter: Judy Reaven, Ph.D.

Description:

This presentation will review the core components of a manualized, cognitive behavioral group treatment approach developed to reduce the severity and interference of anxiety symptoms in children and adolescents with high-functioning autism spectrum disorders (Facing Your Fears). An overview of the intervention will be provided along with the results of treatment studies conducted to date. Videotaped examples will be shown throughout the presentation.

Objectives:

1. The learner will identify the child components of a cognitive-behavioral group treatment for children with ASD.
2. The learner will identify the parent components of a cognitive-behavioral group treatment for children with ASD.
3. The learner will identify the modifications necessary for delivery of a CBT protocol for children with ASD.

Target Audience:

Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School Psychologists

Biography:

Judy Reaven, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University Of Colorado School Of Medicine and is the Director of the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinic of JFK Partners, a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. She received her B.A. from Vanderbilt University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Missouri – Columbia. She has worked in the field of developmental disabilities as a clinician, researcher and educator since 1985. Clinical and research interests include the co-occurrence of mental health symptoms in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders, including the development of an evidenced-based treatment intervention for anxiety symptoms in children with ASD (Facing Your Fears: Group Therapy for Managing Anxiety in Children with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders; Reaven et al. 2011). She has co-authored a number of peer-reviewed publications. Dr. Reaven has been the PI on grants funded by private foundations dedicated to autism research (CAN, Autism Speaks, OAR) and is currently the PI on a federally funded project (NIMH) exploring the initial dissemination of the Facing Your Fears treatment program.
**1B: The Role of Adaptive Behavior in Evidence-Based Practices for ASD**

Presenter: Celine Saulnier, Ph.D.

Description:

The presentation will focus on adaptive behavior profiles in individuals with ASD, particularly in the gap between cognitive potential and independent, real-life skills through adulthood. Strategies for appropriate assessment, treatment, and intervention for adaptive behavior deficits will be discussed.

Objectives:

1. Define adaptive behavior and how it is differentiated from cognition or ability.
2. Describe common profiles of adaptive functioning in ASD.
3. Identify effective treatment strategies for enhancing adaptive functioning.

Target Audience:

Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School Administrators, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists

Biography:

Celine Saulnier, Ph.D., is the Clinical Director for Research at the Marcus Autism Center, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta and Assistant Professor in the Division of Autism and Related Disorders, Department of Pediatrics at Emory University School of Medicine. She obtained her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Connecticut, after which she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Yale Child Study Center before joining their faculty. At Yale, Dr. Saulnier was both the Training Director and the Clinical Director for the Autism Program. At the Marcus Autism Center, Dr. Saulnier oversees a clinical assessment core that provides diagnostic evaluations for all individuals participating in research. Her research focuses on adaptive behavior deficits in autism, as well as early detection in infants and toddlers. Dr. Saulnier is co-author of the book, Essentials of Autism Spectrum Disorders Evaluation and Assessment.

**1C: A Girl's Eye View: Understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders in Females**

Presenter: Shana Nichols, Ph.D.

Description:

Much of our understanding of autism spectrum disorder (ASD) has been based on research and intervention development that has predominantly been conducted with males. Recently, an emerging focus has identified the importance of the female experience of ASD and how it may be different in ways from that of males on the spectrum. This workshop will highlight what is currently known about gender issues and ASD and will identify important target areas that females with ASD face. Using case examples effective strategies for social, emotional, and physical development will be discussed.

Objectives:
1. Participants will be able to discuss the importance of understanding the different experiences of males and females with ASD.

2. Participants will be able to describe some of the unique issues facing females with ASD.

3. Participants will be able to identify important content areas for teaching and intervention and associated effective strategies for addressing learning and skill development.

Target Audience:

Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School Administrators, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists

Biography:

Shana Nichols, PhD is a licensed clinical psychologist and researcher and has worked in the field of ASD for nineteen years. She is Owner and Director of ASPIRE Center for Learning and Development in Melville, NY, an outpatient assessment, treatment, and consultation program. Dr. Nichols specializes in the experiences of females with ASD, growing up and adolescence, and dual diagnosis and mental health. She is a sought after speaker nationally and internationally, and is the lead author of the book Girls Growing Up on the Autism Spectrum: What Parents and Professionals Should Know about the Pre-Teen and Teen Years. Dr. Nichols is also a co-author of the treatment package Facing Your Fears: Group Therapy for Managing Anxiety in Children with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders.

1D: Striving for Independence: Teaching Self-Help Skills to Individuals with Autism

Presenter: Jennifer Toomey, Ph.D.

Description:

The importance of teaching self-help skills to individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders is often overlooked. However, without these important skills, individuals with ASD may be more restricted in their ability to participate in community outings, school and recreational activities and ultimately vocational and residential programs. This presentation will focus on identifying age-appropriate functional self-help skill targets for individuals with ASD. Using examples and video models, participants will learn and begin to develop a plan for teaching self-help skills to the individuals they serve.

Objectives:

1. Participants will be able to identify age appropriate and functional self-help skills

2. Participants will be able to conduct a task analysis of a targeted self-help skill

3. Participants will be able to develop a plan for teaching targeted self-help skills

Target Audience:

Parents, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School Administrators, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists
Biography:

Jennifer A. Toomey is a Licensed Psychologist and the Coordinator of Research and Program Evaluation at Summit Educational Resources in Getzville, NY. She has numerous publications on the characteristics and treatment of individuals with autism spectrum disorders. Much of her research has focused on the evaluation of a manualized summer social skills development program for individuals with high-functioning autism disorders. Additionally, Dr. Toomey is working on a privately funded grant to develop and validate a treatment sensitive short instrument for individuals with ASD.

2A: Facing Your Fears: Identifying and Managing Anxiety in Individuals with ASD and Intellectual Disabilities

Presenter: Judy Reaven, Ph.D.

Description:

Effectively managing anxiety symptoms can help children and adolescents become more successful in academic setting and participate more fully in their daily lives. This presentation will review assessment strategies for identifying symptoms of anxiety in youth with ASD and intellectual disabilities. A review of modifications to Facing Your Fears, a cognitive behavioral group treatment approach, for individuals with ASD and ID will be provided.

Objectives:

1. The learner will identify assessment strategies for identifying anxiety in youth with ASD and ID.
2. The learner will identify the child component of modified CBT program for youth with ASD and ID.
3. The learner will identify the parent component of a modified CBT program for youth with ASD and ID.

Target Audience:

Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School Psychologists

Biography:

Judy Reaven, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Pediatrics at the University of Colorado School of Medicine and is the Director of the Autism and Developmental Disabilities Clinic of JFK Partners, a University Center of Excellence in Developmental Disabilities. She received her B.A. from Vanderbilt University, and her M.A. and Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Missouri – Columbia. She has worked in the field of developmental disabilities as a clinician, researcher and educator since 1985. Clinical and research interests include the co-occurrence of mental health symptoms in children and adolescents with autism spectrum disorders, including the development of an evidenced-based treatment intervention for anxiety symptoms in children with ASD (Facing Your Fears: Group
Therapy for Managing Anxiety in Children with High-Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorders; Reaven et al. 2011). She has co-authored a number of peer-reviewed publications. Dr. Reaven has been the PI on grants funded by private foundations dedicated to autism research (CAN, Autism Speaks, OAR) and is currently the PI on a federally funded project (NIMH) exploring the initial dissemination of the Facing Your Fears treatment program.

2B: Identifying and Supporting Students Who Have Conditions Co-Morbid with ASD

Presenter: Celine Saulnier, Ph.D.

Description:

Autism Spectrum Disorders are commonly associated with other diagnoses and comorbid conditions including anxiety and depression. Distinguishing between ASDs and other conditions can often be challenging. This presentation will focus on strategies for appropriate assessment and treatment in this population.

Objectives:

1. Identify diagnostic criteria for ASD
2. Detect common comorbid conditions associated with ASD (e.g., anxiety, depression, OCD)
3. Differentiate ASD symptomatology from associated neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g., ADHD, OCD, motor disorders)

Target Audience:

Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School Administrators, Paraprofessionals, School Psychologists

Biography:

Celine Saulnier, Ph.D., is the Clinical Director for Research at the Marcus Autism Center, Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta and Assistant Professor in the Division of Autism and Related Disorders, Department of Pediatrics at Emory University School of Medicine. She obtained her doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Connecticut, after which she completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the Yale Child Study Center before joining their faculty. At Yale, Dr. Saulnier was both the Training Director and the Clinical Director for the Autism Program. At the Marcus Autism Center, Dr. Saulnier oversees a clinical assessment core that provides diagnostic evaluations for all individuals participating in research. Her research focuses on adaptive behavior deficits in autism, as well as early detection in infants and toddlers. Dr. Saulnier is co-author of the book, Essentials of Autism Spectrum Disorders Evaluation and Assessment.
2C: Practical Strategies to Support Individuals with ASD Meet the Common Core Standards

Presenter: Melissa Malani, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

Description:

The CCSS Anchor standards span grades K-12 and prepare students for College and Careers. This breakout session will outline the English Language Arts (ELA) Anchor standards’ specific domains and review a research-based strategy for each domain to support students with ASD to meet the ELA Standards. Strategies that are easily implemented in the classroom for each of the Speaking & Listening, Reading, Writing, and Language strand domains will be presented and discussed.

Objectives:

1. Identify the various domains of the ELA Anchor standards.
2. Identify strategies to encourage mastery of the ELA standards across domains.
3. Implement strategies within a classroom setting

Target Audience:

General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers and Related Service Professionals

Biography:

Melissa D. Malani, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, is a practicing speech-language pathologist at Florida Speech-Language Pathology, Inc., the Orlando-based private practice that she owns and operates, an adjunct instructor for UCF, a professional learning facilitator, and an AAC consultant for Saltillo Corporation serving the Northeast Florida territory. As an adjunct instructor with UCF, Dr. Malani teaches numerous graduate and undergraduate courses in the areas of language, literacy, and school-based issues. Dr. Malani has served as a community clinical educator with the UCF Communication Disorders Clinic since 2003. Dr. Malani has participated in numerous research projects, authored and co-authored peer-reviewed journal articles and presentations, and professional development workshops. She has been an invited author and presenter for several topics including adolescent language and literacy, digital literacy, augmentative/alternative communication, and the Common Core State Standards Initiative. She is an active member of the American Speech-Language Hearing Association (ASHA), the Florida Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists (FLASHA), and the International Reading Association (IRA).
The explosion of applications, hardware, and adaptive devices holds great promise for learners with autism, across intellectual, emotional and physical domains. Modern technologies can help even our learners with greatest needs learn new skills, provide opportunities for practice, application, and problem-solving, enjoy socialization opportunities with peers close by or across the globe, help schedule their day, and even find a voice. We now can know in “real time” what’s been learned or still needs to be taught, and can even use sensors and other devices to know when things might need attention. With the world of possibilities provided by a technology assist, how do teachers, parents, and any of us know what technologies are evidence-based and helpful for whom, for what, and under what conditions? This session will review technologies that show promise or have demonstrated effects for special needs learners and their teachers, and provide useful criteria for making technology selections.

Objectives:

1. Participants will identify promising technologies for ASD learners in the areas of instruction, measurement, and behavior management.

2. Participants will identify evidence-based or promising instructional, reporting, and usability components of educational hardware, software and apps.

3. Participants will use specific criteria to identify and evaluate research-based instructional, reporting, or usability components of educational apps.

Target Audience:

Parents, General Education Teachers, Special Education Teachers, Related Service Providers, School Administrators, Paraprofessionals, and School Psychologists.

Biography:

Janet S. Twyman, Ph.D., BCBA, NYSLBA is a noted proponent of effective instruction and using technology to produce individual and system change. A career educator, she has been a preschool and elementary special education teacher, a principal and administrator and university professor and researcher. A sought after speaker nationally and internationally, Dr. Twyman has presented on leveraging new technologies for diverse learners and setting at the United Nations. She has served on the boards of numerous organizations including the Cambridge Center for Behavioral Studies (chairing the Education Group) and PEER International (assisting township schools in Port Elizabeth, South Africa). In 2007-08 she served as President of the Association for Behavior Analysis International. While an Associate Professor of Pediatrics at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, Dr. Twyman is also the Director of Innovation & Technology for the U.S. Dept. of Education’s National Center on Innovations in Learning. She has published and presented widely on evidence-based innovations in education and the systems that support them to produce meaningful difference in learners’ lives.