

# Starting a Social Skills Group at Your Organization

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# General Disclaimer

- ▶ This presentation reflects our best understanding of the processes.
- ▶ Providers are encouraged to confirm all information presented by reviewing their own independent contracts and business practices with provider representatives.
- ▶ This presentation does not reflect opinions of any organization outside of those represented in the presentation.

# Guest Presenters

Amanda Kelly, PhD, BCBA-D

- ▶ Dr. Kelly has been working in the field of ABA for over 13 years. She has served as Director of Home Based Services at [Firefly Autism](#) in Denver for the past four years. In her current role, she supervises a team of Board Certified Behavior Analysts and Registered Behavior Technicians providing ABA therapy in the home and community.

Kristina Mosely, BCBA

- ▶ Kristina has been a BCBA for 10 years, graduating from the University of Washington with a masters in special education. She has since developed several social groups in Colorado, trained staff in implementing social skill instruction, as well as planned and coordinated intensive social skills programs. She joined the team at Firefly Autism four years ago and is the lead social skills group program coordinator.

# Today's Agenda

- ▶ Client Intake, Assessments, Creating Groups
- ▶ Staffing and Training
- ▶ Curriculum and Goals
- ▶ Activities and Homework
- ▶ Funding, Insurance and Authorizations
- ▶ Coding
- ▶ Questions



# Intake, Assessments, and Creating Groups



# Client Intake - Who is a good fit?

- ▶ 3-6 clients per social group\*
- ▶ Clients should have basic communication skills (i.e. communicate wants needs and basic emotions, vocally or via AAC device/sign)
- ▶ Physical aggression towards peers, Moderate to severe property destruction, and elopement behaviors may be considered inappropriate for group setting.
- ▶ Students should be around the same age (1-3 years of each other, depending on age)
- ▶ All students should have similar skills and/or complimentary skill sets (one needs to learn to follow, then other needs to work on initiating)
- ▶ Use a simple client intake form as first step (See our example)

# Assessments

- ▶ SSRS/SSIS - Social Skills Rating/Improvement Scale (*Gresham & Elliot*)
- ▶ Social skills checklist (e.g. <https://www.thehelpfuleounselor.com/response-to-intervention-the-ultimate-social-skills-checklist/>)
- ▶ Social skills area of VB-MAPP
- ▶ BRIEF - Behavioral Rating Inventory of Executive Function (*Gioia, Isquith, Guy & Kentworthy*)
- ▶ Observations/Parent Interview
- ▶ Social Emotional Skills - Summary Form (*Social Skill Strategies, Book A: N. Gajewski, P. Hirn, & P. Mayo*)
- ▶ Social Profile (*Scott Bellini, Indiana Center for Autism*)
- ▶ Vineland Adaptive Behavior Scales
- ▶ NEPSY II (*Korkman, Kirk & Kemp*)

# Creating Groups Initial Intakes

- ▶ Initial intakes - essential to successful group.
- ▶ 3-6 students of similar age with similar social skill ability (based off of your initial intake form)
- ▶ Schedule a time with the parent to complete the SSIS/social skills checklist or other assessment you choose (ideally before the intake session but not requirement).
- ▶ Have 3 students attend the initial intake group, choose one student to focus at a time (1 hour min observation) - take notes on his/her social skill abilities w novel peer OR complete observation w known peers if possible.
- ▶ Use intake group observations and checklists/assessments to determine if child is good fit for the group as a whole and to form session goals for the child.



# Creating Groups

- ▶ Gather information on the first 3 students (student order is created by first come first serve)
- ▶ After the first 3 students have completed their intakes then you can add additional students one at a time to complete their initial intake
- ▶ Sometimes due to skill level, inaccurate parent reports, behaviors, or scheduling a specific student is found to be an unfit match for a specific group.
  - ▶ Communicate openly with parents during the initial intake interview that there is no guarantee of addition to group. If one student is not a good fit, immediately reschedule in the next student in the list.
- ▶ Children who are not a good fit for a current group will go on a waiting list with detailed notes for addition to more appropriate group

# Staffing and Training

# Choosing Staff

- ▶ \*\*\*3-6 student social group students have one head teacher and one support teacher
- ▶ Schedule commonly once per week for 1.5 - 2 hours depending on insurance authorizations, scheduling, resources, etc.
- ▶ Qualifications
  - ▶ BCBA (97158)
  - ▶ RBT (97154) who is supervised at least monthly by BCBA
  - ▶ Support person *may* be less qualified individual but **MUST** be proficient at data taking and skilled at NET, contriving MOs, creating teaching opportunities, antecedent management strategies, etc.

# Choosing Staff - Lead Instructor

- ▶ Lead instructor responsibilities
  - ▶ Responsible for goal implementation and direction of antecedent management strategies and reactive procedures.
  - ▶ Chooses activities for the session that provide opportunities to work on specific skills based on the goals
  - ▶ Creates session schedule
  - ▶ Communicates with families and support staff about progress, goals, and schedule changes
  - ▶ Completes progress write ups for insurance companies and families based on session data every 6 months
  - ▶ Provides token system reinforcement
  - ▶ Directs completion of weekly session notes

# Choosing Staff - Support Instructor

- ▶ Support instructor responsibilities
  - ▶ Develops and maintains rapport with their students
  - ▶ Utilizes antecedent management strategies to ensure higher likelihood of productive group
  - ▶ Take sessions data for all students throughout the session
  - ▶ Prompts any student when needed while lead instructor gives instruction
  - ▶ Sets up materials for next instructional activity
  - ▶ Shares session note responsibility
  - ▶ Provides support as needed for redirection

# Curriculum and Goals

# Creating Curriculum and Goals

Rotherham-Fuller (2013) identified 6 key domains.

- (1) Motivation to interact,
- (2) Self-awareness
- (3) Non-verbal and verbal interactional skills
- (4) Understanding affect in oneself and others
- (5) Social intelligence and awareness
- (6) Friendships and play.

► Goals should be adapted and individualized for the group.

# Curricula and Goals

- ▶ Social Thinking Curriculum (*Garcia-Winner*)
- ▶ You are a Social Detective (*Garcia - Winner*)
- ▶ Zones of Regulation (*Kuypers*)
- ▶ The Hidden Curriculum (*Myles, Trautman & Schelvan*)
- ▶ Model Me Kids
- ▶ Teachers pay Teachers has a plethora of affordable resources:
  - ▶ Social Skills Group Lessons
  - ▶ Skill of the week
  - ▶ Teens edition social skills activities and printables
  - ▶ Emotional Intelligence PDF
  - ▶ Perspective taking activities



# Curricula in Groups: Best Practices

- ▶ Use a developmental and age appropriate curriculum within each session
  - ▶ Create goals that correspond to assessment
  - ▶ Adapt curriculum goals as necessary
  - ▶ Include activities within the session that correspond to curriculum
  - ▶ Allow ample opportunities to practice skills both during structured play and naturally occurring/contrived opportunities.
- ▶ Include goals that are socially significant and will facilitate positive social interactions with others

# Sample of Social Skill Checklist

SOCIAL PLAY & EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	Almost Always	Often	Sometimes	Almost Never
<b>1.1 Beginning Play Behaviors</b>				
1. Maintains proximity to peer within 1 foot				
2. Observes peers in play vicinity within 3 feet				
3. Parallel play near peers using the same or similar materials (e.g., playing cars near a peer who is also playing cars)				
4. Physically imitates peer				
5. Verbally imitates peer				
6. Takes turns appropriately during simple games				
<b>1.2 Intermediate Play Behaviors</b>				
1. Shares toys and talks about the activity with peers, even though the play agenda of the other children is different				
2. Physically and verbally responds to interactions from peers (accepts toy from peer, answers questions)				
3. Returns and initiates greetings with peers				
4. Know appropriate ways of joining in an activity with peers				
5. Invites others to play				
6. Takes turns during structured activities				
7. Obeys game rules				
8. Requests toys, food, and materials from peers				
<b>1.3 Advanced Play Behavior</b>				
1. Plays cooperatively with peers during imaginative play				
2. Makes comments about what he/she is playing to peers				
3. Organizes play (suggests ideas to peers on how to play)				
4. Follows peer play plans				
5. Takes turns during unstructured activities without a time limit				
6. Offers toys, food, and materials to peers				

# Sample Data Sheet: Corresponding Goals to Assessment

Student	Play	Verbal behavior	Appropriate Protest	Pretend play	Target Behavior and notes
1	Initiate Follow Turn taking Ask Give	Comment Response comment to peer Questions	Says stop or I don't like that Says no thanks	theme Pretends with play object Interacts with peer using play object	
2	Initiate Follow Turn taking Ask Give	Comment Response comment to peer Questions	Says stop or I don't like that Says no thanks	theme Pretends with play object Interacts with peer using play object	

- ▶ Play goals correspond to assessment
  - ▶ 1.2 section 5 invites other to play
  - ▶ 1.3 section 4 follow peer play plan
- ▶ Verbal behavior correspond to assessment examples
  - ▶ 1.3 section 2 makes comment about play
- ▶ Pretend play goal correspond to assessment
  - ▶ 1.3 section 1 cooperative imaginative play

# Data Sheet

- Paper vs system data
- All students must fit on one page
- Operational definitions of each goal is on a corresponding treatment plan document
- All goal fitting on one page makes it easiest to transport
- Goals are either frequency of DTT identified on the data sheet with a + or a P

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Monday Social Skills Group

Student	Play	Verbal behavior	Appropriate Protest	Pretend play	Target Behavior and notes
1	Initiate  Follow  Turn taking Ask Give	Comment  Response comment to peer  Questions	Says stop or I don't like that  Says no thanks	theme  Pretends with play object  Interacts with peer using play object	
2	Initiate  Follow  Turn taking Ask Give	Comment  Response comment to peer  Questions	Says stop or I don't like that  Says no thanks	theme  Pretends with play object  Interacts with peer using play object	
3	Initiate  Follow  Turn taking Ask Give	Comment  Response comment to peer  Questions	Says stop or I don't like that  Says no thanks	theme  Pretends with play object  Interacts with peer using play object	
4	Initiate  Follow  Turn taking Ask Give	Comment  Response comment to peer  Questions	Says stop or I don't like that  Says no thanks	theme  Pretends with play object  Interacts with peer using play object	
5	Initiate  Follow  Turn taking Ask Give	Comment  Response comment to peer  Questions	Says stop or I don't like that  Says no thanks	theme  Pretends with play object  Interacts with peer using play object	

# Goals Relating to Social Skills Checklist on Treatment Plan

<b>Objective:</b> Client will use a pretend play set to perform 3-5 sequential actions while interacting with a peer with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.		Progression
<b>Baseline Performance:</b>	Baseline is 40%	
<b>Current Performance:</b>	65% average accuracy across past 3 sessions	

<b>Objective:</b> client will request an item, during a structured activity, from a peer by saying "my turn" and holding out his hand with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.		Progression
<b>Baseline Performance:</b>	Baseline is 10% on 6/19	
<b>Current Performance:</b>	60% average accuracy across past 3 sessions	

<b>Objective:</b> When a peer requests an item, during a structured activity, by saying "my turn" client will give it to him/her, with 80% accuracy across 3 consecutive sessions.		Progression
<b>Baseline Performance:</b>	Baseline is 20% on 6/19	
<b>Current Performance:</b>	50% average accuracy across past 3 sessions	

<b>Objective:</b> During a 10 minute unstructured play time, client will engage with a peer for a frequency of 5 appropriate interactions (by following or initiating action) across 3 consecutive unstructured play times.		Progression
<b>Baseline Performance:</b>	Baseline 2 follow 0 initiate 6/19	
<b>Current Performance:</b>	4 following and 1 initiate	

- ▶ Goal one corresponds to 1.3 Advanced Play behavior goal one on social skills checklist
- ▶ Goal 2 corresponds to 1.2 Intermediate Play behavior Goal 8 on social skills checklist
- ▶ Goal 3 corresponds 1.2 Intermediate Play behavior goal 1 on social skills checklist
- ▶ Goal 4 1.3 Advanced Play behavior goal 4 on social skills checklist

# Activities and Homework

# Activities Schedule

1.5 - 2 hour Group:

- ▶ Check-in in big room
- ▶ circle: hello, share time
- ▶ Obstacle course - cooperative play
- ▶ Snack conversation
- ▶ Transition to new room
- ▶ Structured pretend play
- ▶ Earned outside free play
- ▶ Parent pick up

# Activities Schedule

## Full Day:

- ▶ 9.00am: Group greetings
- ▶ 9.15am: Fireflies Unite!
- ▶ 9.30am: Attention and Names King square
- ▶ 10.00am: Big gym and obstacle course
- ▶ 10.30am: Snack - conversation skills
- ▶ 11.00am: Charades/Freeze Dance
- ▶ 11.30am: Cheering and compliments
- ▶ 12.00pm: Ask for Action Playground/follow the leader
- ▶ 12.30pm: Lunch Bunch - conversation skills
- ▶ 1.00pm: Show n Tell, commenting to peers
- ▶ 1.30pm: Losing is ok!
- ▶ 2.00pm: Snack - conversation skills
- ▶ 2.30pm: Gross motor play in big gym
- ▶ 3.00pm: Home



# Homework/Parent Involvement

\*due to HIPPA signed releases from all parties should be secured prior to parent observations.

- ▶ Short observations at the start of first few sessions are possible if requested.
  - ▶ (Typically reactivity is high when parent is present so keep observations short and limited).
- ▶ Set expectations at the start of the term regarding involvement
- ▶ Ask parents at the beginning of each session to name one social thing they did with their child - discuss in group.
- ▶ Encourage parents to help the students choose an item to share with the group each week
- ▶ If new behaviors occur, request that parents monitor that target behavior.
- ▶ Collaborate with other professionals within the organization if they also serve that client.
- ▶ Give a short summary of progress at the ends of each group to each parent.
- ▶ Several groups members have invited other social group members to birthday parties outside of the treatment setting!

# Funding and Insurance

# Private Pay and Insurance

- ▶ Private Pay may be more common with social skills groups than other ABA programs
  - ▶ Set a private pay fee schedule and have parents sign a financial agreement
- ▶ Billing codes are usually 97158/97154 or H2014
- ▶ Tricare does not allow groups
- ▶ It is not appropriate to bill 1:1 direct therapy for a child in a group if insurance does not allow for groups codes
- ▶ Insurance will require authorizations and documentation

# Authorizations

- ▶ You can request “regular” assessment codes to perform an assessment
- ▶ For “ongoing” services, request the social skills group code for an authorization
- ▶ And, include appropriate request for protocol modification and parent training
- ▶ Get authorization from insurance just like you would for daily ABA therapy programs

# Treatment Plans and Notes

- ▶ Insurance will require treatment plan
  - ▶ See sample treatment plan goals
  - ▶ Session notes are necessary
- ▶ Include ALL information normally in session/SOAP notes.
- ▶ Audits for SS billing have been common
  - ▶ Ensure data, session notes, summary reports, etc. are complete.

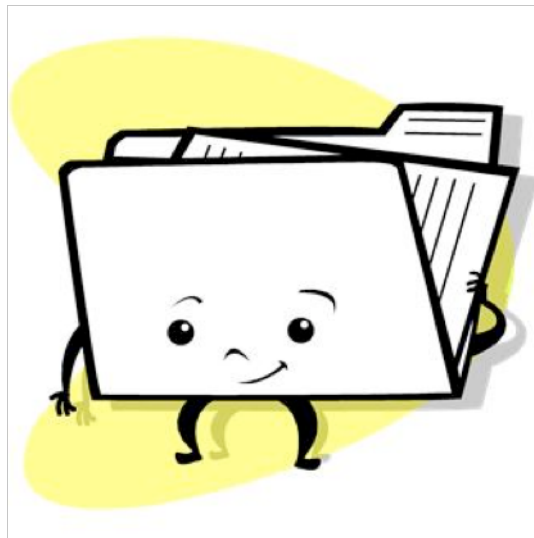
# Coding and Billing

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- ▶ Billing codes:
  - ▶ 97158 = BCBA running the group
  - ▶ 97154 = Behavior Technician running the group
  - ▶ H2014 = Behavior Technician running the group
- ▶ For scheduling, provider has multiple clients on schedule
- ▶ Bill 97158/97154/H2014 for EACH client during that session.
- ▶ BCBA can bill regular protocol modification or supervision codes as appropriate
  - ▶ Regular billing rules apply for 97155 (only one client at a time)
  - ▶ 97155 is NOT allowed to concurrently bill with 97154

# Hand Outs

1. Worksheet of goals and activities
2. Sample treatment plan goal outline
3. Example flyer for marketing and outreach





# Questions?

- ▶ Contact Us: [info@ababilling.net](mailto:info@ababilling.net)
- ▶ Facebook Group:  
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ababillinginshelp/?fref=nf>
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