

## Treatment Intervention Advisory Committee Review and Determination

**Date:** April 29, 2015

**To:** DHS/DLTC

**From:** Wisconsin Department of Health Services Autism and other Developmental Disabilities  
Treatment Intervention Advisory Committee: Lana Collet-Klingenberg, Ph.D. (chairperson) LCK

**RE:** Determination of Listening Therapy as a proven and effective treatment for individuals with autism spectrum disorder and/or other developmental disabilities

This is an initial review

This is a re-review, having previously been reviewed in April 2014 and April 2015.

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### Section One: Overview and Determination

Please find below a statement of our determination as to whether or not the committee views Listening Therapy (also called Therapeutic Listening) as a proven and effective treatment for children with autism spectrum disorder and/or other developmental disabilities. In subsequent sections you will find documentation of our review process including a description of the proposed treatment, a synopsis of review findings, the treatment review evidence checklist, and a listing of the literature considered. In reviewing treatments presented to us by DHS/DLTC, we implement a review process that carefully and fully considers all available information regarding a proposed treatment. Our determination is limited to a statement regarding how established a practice is in regard to quality research. We do not make funding decisions.

#### Description of proposed treatment

Listening Therapy/Therapeutic Listening is a form of Auditory Integration Training (AIT) as the equipment is similar to that used in AIT and is based on the work of Guy Beard (developer of AIT) as well as the Tomatis Method, also a form of AIT. According to a position paper by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) Auditory Integration Training (AIT) is described as follows: "Dr. Guy Berard, an otolaryngologist in France, developed a method of AIT based on the premise that certain people have hypersensitive hearing at selected frequencies and that this can cause agitation, pain, and interference with learning. Berard has explained that even in the absence of hypersensitive hearing, people can present with audiograms that have "peaks" and "valleys," that is, thresholds for adjacent audiometric frequencies that differ by 5 dB or more and result in atypical perception of sounds. In his book, *Hearing Equals Behavior*, Berard (1993) theorizes that these auditory distortions may result in such behavioral disturbances as autism spectrum disorders, learning disabilities, depression, and aggressiveness. Berard suggests that AIT treats these distortions by exercising the middle ear muscles and auditory nervous system in much the same way that muscles are retrained in physical therapy for an injured elbow (Berard, 1993, pp. 78–80). An audiogram, frequently the first step in the Berard method of AIT, is believed to help identify the presence of the auditory "abnormalities" (Berard, 1993, pp. 61–76)

and is used to monitor possible changes as a result of treatment. Berard claims that following AIT, children's audiograms that previously had peaks and valleys, demonstrating areas of hyper- and hyposensitivity, are "flattened," reflecting the elimination of auditory distortions and, subsequently, an improvement in behavioral abnormalities. The validity of defining these "peaks and valleys" as auditory abnormalities has been questioned elsewhere (Gravel, 1994; Miller & Lucker, 1997; Tharpe, 1998, 1999)."

#### Synopsis of review

In the case of Listening Therapy/Therapeutic Listening, please refer to the attached reference listing that details the reviewed research. The committee's conclusions include:

There have been no specific studies published in peer reviewed journals that directly evaluated Listening Therapy, and the majority of those reviewed for the April 2014 review were focused on auditory or sound based interventions. Regarding these studies, limitations included:

- lack of control groups/placebo (majority of studies did not include)
- historical factors (3 month follow-up maximum; not clear that gains at follow-up were related to the intervention)
- data collection procedures (no direct dependent variables measured; primary data reported was parent collected)
- lack of cause and effect attributable to the intervention

During this current review, no new studies were found supporting the effectiveness of Listening Therapy/Therapeutic Listening related to outcomes for individuals with ASD, and there is an identified potential for harm.

In sum, it is the decision of the committee that Listening Therapy/Therapeutic Listening should retain a Level 5 efficacy rating: Untested (Experimental Treatment) &/or Potentially Harmful.

## Section Two: Rationale for Focus on Research Specific to Comprehensive Treatment Packages (CTP) or Models

In the professional literature, there are two classifications of interventions for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (National Research Council, 2001; Odom et al., 2003; Rogers & Vismara, 2008):

- (a) **Focused intervention techniques** are individual practices or strategies (such as positive reinforcement) designed to produce a specific behavioral or developmental outcome, and
- (b) **Comprehensive treatment models** are “packages” or programs that consist of a set of practices or multiple techniques designed to achieve a broader learning or developmental impact.

To determine whether a treatment package is proven and effective, the Treatment Intervention Advisory Committee (TIAC) will adopt the following perspective as recommended by Odom et al. (2010):

The individual, focused intervention techniques that make up a comprehensive treatment model may be evidence-based. The research supporting the effectiveness of separate, individual components, however, does *not* constitute an evaluation of the comprehensive treatment model or “package.” The TIAC will consider and review only research that has evaluated the efficacy of implementing the comprehensive treatment *as a package*. Such packages are most often identifiable in the literature by a consistently used name or label.

National Research Council. (2001). *Educating children with autism*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Odom, S. L., Brown, W. H., Frey, T., Karusu, N., Smith-Carter, L., & Strain, P. (2003) Evidence-based practices for young children with autism: Evidence from single-subject research design. *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities, 18*, 176-181.

Odom, S. L., Boyd, B. A., Hall, L. J., & Hume, K. (2010). Evaluation of comprehensive treatment models for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders, 40*, 425-436.

Rogers, S., & Vismara, L. (2008). Evidence-based comprehensive treatments for early autism. *Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology, 37*, 8-38.

### Section Three: DLTC-TIAC Treatment Review Evidence Checklist

Name of Treatment: Listening Therapy/Therapeutic Listening

#### Level 1- Well Established or Strong Evidence (DHS 107 - Proven & Effective Treatment)

- Other authoritative bodies that have conducted extensive literature reviews of related treatments (e.g., National Standards Project, National Professional Development Center) have approved of or rated the treatment package as having a strong evidence base; authorities are in agreement about the level of evidence.
- There exist ample high quality studies that demonstrate experimental control and favorable outcomes of treatment package.
  - Minimum of two group studies or five single subject studies or a combination of the two.
  - Studies were conducted across at least two independent research groups.
  - Studies were published in peer reviewed journals.
- There is a published procedures manual for the treatment, or treatment implementation is clearly defined (i.e., replicable) within the studies.
- Participants (i.e., N) are clearly identified as individuals with autism spectrum disorders or developmental disabilities.

Notes: At this level, include ages of participants and disabilities identified in body of research

#### Level 2 – Established or Moderate Evidence (DHS 107 - Proven & Effective Treatment)

- Other authoritative bodies that have conducted extensive literature reviews of related treatments (e.g., National Standards Project, NPDC) have approved of or rated the treatment package as having at least a minimal evidence base; authorities may not be in agreement about the level of evidence.
- There exist at least two high quality studies that demonstrate experimental control and favorable outcomes of treatment package.
  - Minimum of one group study or two single subject studies or a combination of the two.
  - Studies were conducted by someone other than the creator/provider of the treatment.
  - Studies were published in peer reviewed journals.
- Participants (i.e., N) are clearly identified as individuals with autism spectrum disorders or developmental disabilities.

Notes: At this level, include ages of participants and disabilities identified in body of research

Level 3 – Emerging Evidence (DHS 107 – Promising as a Proven & Effective Treatment)

- Other authoritative bodies that have conducted extensive literature reviews of related treatments (e.g., National Standards Project, NPDC) have recognized the treatment package as having an emerging evidence base; authorities may not be in agreement about the level of evidence.
- There exists at least one high quality study that demonstrates experimental control and favorable outcomes of treatment package.
  - May be one group study or single subject study.
  - Study was conducted by someone other than the creator/provider of the treatment.
  - Study was published in peer reviewed journal.
- Participants (i.e., N) are clearly identified as individuals with autism spectrum disorders or developmental disabilities.

Notes: At this level, include ages of participants and disabilities identified in body of research

Level 4 – Insufficient Evidence (Experimental Treatment)

- Other authoritative bodies that have conducted extensive literature reviews of related treatments (e.g., National Standards Project, NPDC) have not recognized the treatment package as having an emerging evidence base; authorities are in agreement about the level of evidence.
- There is not at least one high quality study that demonstrates experimental control and favorable outcomes of treatment package.
  - Study was conducted by the creator/provider of the treatment.
  - Study was not published in a peer reviewed journal.
- Participants (i.e., N) are not clearly identified as individuals with autism spectrum disorders or developmental disabilities.

Notes:

Level 5 – Untested (Experimental Treatment) &/or Potentially Harmful

- Other authoritative bodies that have conducted extensive literature reviews of related treatments (e.g., National Standards Project, NPDC) have not recognized the treatment package as having an emerging evidence base; authorities are in agreement about the level of evidence.
- There are no published studies supporting the proposed treatment package.
- There exists evidence that the treatment package is potentially harmful.**
  - Authoritative bodies have expressed concern regarding safety/outcomes.
  - Professional bodies (i.e., organizations or certifying bodies) have created statements regarding safety/outcomes.

Notes: As this therapy is related to AIT, the same cautions exist:

- ~ United Health Care Policy: “It is unknown if the sound levels used for AIT are harmful to hearing.”
- ~ Training devices are not approved by the USFDA.
- ~ Educational Audiology Association (EAA): “In addition to not being proven effective, AIT’s excessive volume levels may harm hearing.”
- ~ ASHS (2003) indicated that practitioners may be violation of the ethics code if they use AIT.

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Date: April 29, 2016

Committee Members Completing Initial Review of Research Base: Roger Bass, Jeff Tiger.

Committee Decision on Level of Evidence to Suggest the Proposed Treatment is Proven and Effective:  
Level heading inserted here: Level 5 – Untested (Experimental Treatment) &/or Potentially Harmful

**References Supporting Identification of Evidence Levels:**

- Chambless, D.L., Hollon, S.D. (1998). Defining empirically supported therapies. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 66(1) 7-18.
- Chorpita, B.F. (2003). The frontier of evidence--based practice. In A.E. Kazdin & J.R. Weisz (Eds.). *Evidence-based psychotherapies for children and adolescents* (pp. 42--59). New York: The Guilford Press.
- Odom, S. L., Collet-Klingenberg, L., Rogers, S. J., & Hatton, D. (2010). Evidence-based practices in interventions for children and youth with autism spectrum disorders. *Preventing School Failure*, 54(4), 275-282.

## Section Four: Literature Review

No new data was provided to the reviewers and no well-designed research was located in medical and behavioral science databases.

### Previously reviewed:

- Chastain, A. (2008) Effectiveness of Listening (Auditory) Therapies. Unpublished review.
- Cipriani, N. (2010). Using evidence-based practice and pilot programming to explore emergent treatment strategies. Unpublished pilot study.
- Hall, L., & Case-Smith, J. (2007). The effect of sound-based intervention on children with sensory processing disorders and visual-motor delays. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 61, 209–215.
- Laila Y. Al-Ayadhi<sup>1,2</sup>, Abdul Majeed Al-Drees<sup>1,2</sup> and Ahmed M. Al-Arfa (2013) Effectiveness of Auditory Integration Therapy in Autism Spectrum Disorders—Prospective Study. *Autism Insights*, 5 13–20.
- NWORA, A.J., GEE, M.C., (2009) A case study of a five-year-old child with pervasive developmental disorder-not otherwise specified using sound-based interventions. *Occup. Ther. Int.* 16(1): 25–43
- Sinha, Y., Hayen, S.N., & Williams, K. (2011). Auditory integration training and other sound therapies for autism spectrum disorders (ASD) (Review). The Cochrane Collaboration, The Cochrane Library, Issue 12 (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/14974028>) .
- Sinha, Y., Silova, N., Wheeler, D., & Williams, K. (2006) Auditory integration training and other sound therapies for autism spectrum disorders: a systematic review. *Arch Dis Ch*, 91, 1018-1022.