

# A Community Response to Autistic Spectrum Disorders

Panel Group: Jennifer Selden, Ph.D.,  
Brian Armstrong, BCABA,  
Connie Nickou, Psy.D, and Michelle Drake

**Thursday, April 15 2010**

9:30 AM – 11:30 AM

*Registration begins at 9:00 AM*

Konover Auditorium, Dodd Center,  
UConn - Storrs

## Objectives:

Learn to support families affected by Autistic Spectrum Disorder across all settings

## Overview:

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) cause severe and pervasive impairment in thinking, feeling, language, and the ability to relate to others. These disorders are usually diagnosed in early childhood. Autism Spectrum Disorders refer to the overarching group of conditions classified as Pervasive Developmental Disorders and include Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder, Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS), and two rare disorders, Rett's Disorder and Child Disintegrative Disorder (CDD). There is no single best treatment options for all children with ASD. Decisions about the best treatment, or combination of treatments, should be made by the parents with the assistance of a trusted expert diagnostic team.

As the number of children and young adults affected by Autism Spectrum Disorders increases, the search for effective specialized services also increases. Typical interventions do

not always work as they historically have for other disorders, which means a paradigm shift must be embraced. The paradigm shift and experience teaches us that the team approach across the life of the child will be the most effective strategy. Creating a coordinated team approach to each child can present a new challenge as well as a new opportunity for community providers, educators and school counselors, and the parents/guardians to work together. The effort required to build an effective team has exponential impact on the success of the family throughout their journey with Autism Spectrum Disorders. Special Educators, Counselors, Psychotherapists, and Administrators will discover the insights and tools necessary to support the team approach to effective coordination of the necessary specialized services allowing students and families to reach their full potential.

## About the Speakers:

**Jennifer Sleden, Ph.D.** provides neuropsychological diagnostic consultation for clients referred by neurologists and other physicians, mental health providers, hospitals, nursing homes, schools and educators, and attorneys. Dr. Selden is a graduate from Duke University and Nova Southeastern University in South Florida. She is an adjunct instructor at the University of Hartford's Graduate Institute for Professional Psychology. She also is serving as co-secretary of the Connecticut Neuropsychological Society. She maintains a private practice in Groton.

**Brian Armstrong** holds a BA in Psychology from Hofstra University and a Special Education Certification from Southern Connecticut State University. He is a Board Certified Associate Behavior Analyst (BCABA), a licensed Special Education teacher in the state of Connecticut, a member of the Connecticut Association of Behavior Analyst, and founder of both Behavioral Success Associates LLC and Synergy Center Corporation.

In July of 2009 he left his position in special education in the Ledyard Public Schools to create

Synergy Center Corporation in order to help individuals with disabilities and weakened health conditions make quality connections with themselves, their community, and their world.

**Connie Nickou, Psy.D.** graduated from Wesleyan University and received her Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Hartford's Graduate Institute of Professional Psychology. Dr. Nickou has been on faculty in the Department of Psychiatry at Yale University School of Medicine and an adjunct faculty member at the University of Hartford's Graduate Institute of Professional Psychology. Her background includes research, psychotherapy, teaching, expert court testimony, psychological and neuropsychological testing, and programmatic consultation.

**Michelle Drake** has been a mental health advocate since 1996 when her first son was diagnosed with learning disabilities, OCD, ODD and PDD. Her second son was diagnosed with Autism in 2000. Michelle has progressed from advocating for her sons to advocating for all children locally and statewide. She sits on numerous state advisory boards and committees with the goal of improving the mental health system and providing the parent perspective. Michelle currently co-chairs the Southeast Mental Health System of Care. She also is a trained support group facilitator, and recently began a NAMI-CAN group in southeast Connecticut. In 2008 the Drake family was featured as a part of a multi-part television series on mental health "Opening Doors, Opening Minds" which aired on Connecticut Public Television. Michelle is employed by the ARC of New London as a life skill instructor. She also has worked as the assistant coordinator of a parent leadership training program for a parent organization in the state.

Thursday, May 6, 2010

**Co-morbidity in Children & Adolescents**

Panel discussion: Jim Murray, Melissa Deasy,  
Paul Kindall, Cathy Walton  
Walter V. Baker Auditorium, Lawrence &  
Memorial Hospital, New London  
8:30 AM – 10:30 AM,  
Registration begins at 8:00 AM

Thursday, June 3, 2010

**Depression and Suicide**

Panel discussion: Carrie Pichie, Peter  
DeRosa, Corey Gartner, Jonathan Watts  
Konover Auditorium, Dodd Center, UConn  
9:30 AM – 11:30 AM,  
Registration begins at 9:00 AM



**To register** or for questions contact Natchaug Hospital's Community Relations Office at 860-456-1311 x260 or [ssmardo@natchaug.org](mailto:ssmardo@natchaug.org).

Due to space limitations and preparation of materials, registration for these **FREE** seminars is required.

Please allow time for parking and walking to the Dodd Center.

*Natchaug Hospital, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, is accredited by the Joint Commission and is an affiliate of Hartford HealthCare. Natchaug Hospital is licensed by the State of Connecticut, and its special education programs are approved by the Bureau of Special Education.*

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for educators, social workers,  
counselors, family therapists, nurses,  
guidance counselors, child psychologists  
and others who work with  
school-age youth

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