

## Questions for In- Home Autism Treatment Providers

### Contact Information:

#### INNOVATIVE COUNSELING

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Dr. Todd Hamilton, Psy.D. Lead Psychologist

Cynthia Thomas, M.S.,CSW Clinical Director

Lori Werres M.S., Assistant Director

#### A. Therapy

##### 1. How would you characterize your therapeutic approach?

Our approach is best defined as Comprehensive Developmental Treatment for children with Autism.

Innovative Counseling works with the people who know the child the best- parents and family. We will develop the most effective treatment based on proven methods such as Applied Behavioral Analysis, Verbal Behavior Integration, Relationship Development and modified Floortime.

##### 2. How do you work with children who are non-verbal?

A child does not need to speak in order to communicate. We will devote considerable time in the beginning to interpreting the likes and dislikes of the child and use the information to teach the child how to communicate in a way others will understand. This might include verbal work on articulation or fluency, oral- motor exercises, building vocabulary or teaching the child to use external methods in order to ‘jump-start’ speech.

Additionally we have a Communication Disorders Specialist on staff who has spent more than 10 years working with both adults and children with Autism Spectrum Disorders developing speech and language strategies.

##### 3. How do you accommodate the child’s sensory defensiveness?

We will work in the child’s home environment to decrease sensory input in order to carefully build tolerance.

##### 4. How do you deal with a child’s aggressive behaviors?

We believe that a child who shows aggressive behaviors may very well be trying to tell us something they are unable to communicate. We will work with the child and family to identify what might cause the child to act out and develop more positive ways for the child to get their needs met.

5. What services are offered in addition to the in home therapy (i.e. social skills groups, speech therapy etc.)? Are these services also covered by Medicaid? Innovative Counseling has offered several levels of social skills groups to children with Autism Spectrum Disorder. At any time, a group of parents can request a group be developed. A Communication Disorders Specialist is available to evaluate children for speech and language interventions.

Autism diagnosis and mental health diagnosis including ADD/ADHD can be provided by Dr. Hamilton in addition to outpatient counseling and program monitoring.

Innovative Counseling is also a licensed mental health therapy provider with an extensive outpatient practice. A second in-home therapy program is provided for children and adolescents known as "SED" treatment, or Severe Emotional Disturbance.

Child psychiatrist Dr. Orman is available to diagnose and prescribe psychiatric medication as well as on-going evaluation and monitoring.

Nanny-911 is our newest program for families with children experiencing behavioral problems.

A variety of plans including Medicaid are accepted.

B. Entering and Exiting the program:

1. Do you accept all children under the current Medicaid age limit who apply? If not, what are your entrance requirements such as age or IQ?

We accept all children into our program regardless of age or IQ.

2. What testing do you require initially?

Only what the CLTS waiver requires for services to begin

3. Under what circumstances will you accept testing by other agencies such as schools or private therapists?

All evaluations will be accepted.

4. What are the current out of pocket expenses that a parent must pay for the entrance testing? We do not require entrance testing

5. Can parents arrange to have these expenses spread out over a longer time period? Yes.

6. How is the number of therapy hours determined?

Regulations state the number of hours must be between 20-35. Within those constraints the number of hours is determined by Dr Hamilton on a case by case basis.

7. Do you require that a child may not be allowed in any other educational program when he begins therapy? If so, for how long?

On the contrary! Participation in other programs is encouraged whether educational or social and Innovative Counseling will make every effort to collaborate with them.

8. How is a child's progress evaluated and how often is this done?

The senior therapist generally meets with the child for 2 sessions per week to directly evaluate progress. The senior has a weekly consultation with the lead psychologist for each child to discuss progress and strategy. Team meetings occur as needed but at least every 60 days with the entire team including child, parents, case manager, line

and senior therapists, psychologist and any other person who may have input authorized by the parents.

People who see the child daily such as parents and line therapists can always contact the senior or lead to discuss therapy at any time.

9. What are your criteria for a child exiting the program?

When long term treatment goals are achieved. Because we so specifically design a unique program for each individual child, no two treatment plans are alike and so there is no single criteria that will apply to all children.

10. Under what circumstances can a child be dismissed from your program?

Therapy is always by parent choice and parameters are set by the CLTS waiver.

Therapists:

1. What are the minimum educational requirements for line therapists?

We strive to hire line therapists with some college coursework completed as well as relevant experience. Applicants of exceptional ability will also be considered. The minimum the state has established is high-school or GED and 18 years of age.

2. What kind of training are the line therapists given? Who provides the training and what are their qualifications?

30 hours of training is required for line therapists. They are trained by a senior therapist who has at a minimum 2000 hours of experience in the program or by a primary line therapist who has extensive experience. Additionally there is a training manual with a test that must be passed.

3. What should parents do if they have a complaint about a line or senior therapist?

Concerns about a line should be directed to the senior. Concerns about a senior should be directed to the Clinical Director, Cynthia Thomas or Lead Psychologist Dr. Hamilton.

Parents

1. What kind of training is given to parents and other family members? How much training is provided?

Parents and family receive “on-the-job” training in strategies and target areas for therapy. Innovative Counseling believes that the entire family unit should be involved in the process as much as is realistic considering other children, jobs and household responsibilities. The Clinical Director of Autism Services has an adult daughter with Autism Spectrum Disorder and advocates for parents as well as providing support to families.

2. Must one parent be in the home during therapy sessions? What alternate arrangements are acceptable?

It is always preferable for a parent or another adult to be at home during session. On occasion the parent may need to leave to run quick errands or pick up another child and that is acceptable.

3. What, if any, support services such as respite or counseling are offered to families by your organization? How are these services paid for?

Outpatient counseling, group therapy, in-home therapy for children with severe emotional disturbance, medication evaluation and prescription, diagnosis, speech and

language consultation, overall program consultation and recommendation for children in the post intensive phase of autism therapy. Payment can be arranged by several different methods. Please contact the billing office for details.

4. Do you provide prospective families a list of families who have used your services?

No. Confidentiality is rigorously observed.

Other agencies-

1. How do you coordinate with area school districts that the children you are supporting attend?

In every way needed.