

Integrated Nutrition Education Through the Part C Early Intervention Services for Children With Autism Spectrum Disorder: Material Reviews Involving Providers and Parents

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Objectives: To collect provider and parent feedback on feasibility of a nutrition education intervention, *Autism Eats*, for children with ASD through the Part C Early Intervention (EI) Services, and to refine the manual and intervention materials based on the feedback.

Methods: A formative survey study was conducted. EI providers ($n = 9$) and parents of children with ASD ($n = 7$) reviewed the 10-lessons of *Autism Eats* intervention and provided their feedback online. The survey consisted of seven Likert-type (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) questions on the following aspects: (1) the amount of preparation time; (2) clarity of instructions; (3) the amount of allocated time for lesson procedure; (4) relevance of activities to the goal and objectives; (5) feasibility of families' completing activities; (6) satisfaction with provider notes; and (7) relevance to improving nutrition in children with ASD. Additionally, participants completed

three open-ended questions to provide written feedback. Descriptive statistics for quantitative data and content analysis for open-ended responses were used.

Results: The mean of overall scores for all lessons was 4.4 ± 0.5 from the EI providers and 4.1 ± 0.2 from the parent participants, on a 5-point scale, indicating that both providers and parents perceived the intervention materials as feasible and acceptable. The mean of each of seven aspects of the lessons ranged from 3.9 (the amount of allocated time) to 4.5 (relevance to improving nutrition in children with ASD) on a 5-point scale. Common themes for the qualitative analysis included reducing technical terms, condensing instructions, reordering the lesson sequence, improve clarity, more visuals, more elaboration/explanation on certain parts, and positive feedback. One of the parent participants commented, "Introducing anything new to a child with autism could be really hard. This handbook has really helped in way I didn't think of working with my son with ASD."

Conclusions: Based on the findings, *Autism Eats* intervention materials have been revised. The final intervention includes 10-weekly nutrition sessions, two-monthly booster sessions, and social media components. These updates will be utilized for the pilot randomized controlled trial in 2022–2023.

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