



Center for Autism
Applied Developmental Core

Newsletter

Fall 2016



CAS Family Research Lab

Our laboratory continues to grow! Starting with two research assistants in 2011, we now regularly involve 10-15 students at any given time. Please see the highlights on the next page for some introductions, updates, and accomplishments!



Fieldwork Activities Highlighted in 2016 CSUF Community Engagement Report

Collaborations with the Department of Child & Adolescent Studies, the Center for Internships and Community Engagement (CICE), and numerous local treatment agencies has resulted in a fieldwork program aimed at meeting the urgent need for local therapists trained in Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention / Applied Behavior Analysis. Together, we have increased the number of agencies tenfold and our students provided over 1,400 hours of therapy to local children in Spring 2016 alone. This program was recently chosen as the highlight for our College in the University's 2016 Community Engagement Report!



New Research Project Recruiting!

Drs. Baker and Fenning recently received a large grant from the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) to study emotional patterns in children with ASD!

For the past few years, Drs. Baker and Fenning have led the *Autism Emotion Study*, a research project that was funded by intramural grants through CSUF and was focused on investigating the degree to which children's internal emotional arousal tendencies might predict particular challenges and/or strengths. The major goals were to see if the children would tolerate certain measurement systems and to see if some preliminary findings would suggest this to be a worthwhile area of study to pursue.

We are so grateful to the more than 45 families who have helped us with these goals, and we have great news to report: In addition to already learning a great deal about children's emotional patterns, we have also been successful in using the Autism Emotion Study findings to obtain a federal grant to fund our research on a much larger scale for the next several years!

Findings so far. First, what have we learned so far with the AES study? Findings presented at numerous conferences and most recently at the Convention for the *American Psychological Association*, suggest that children's emotional reactivity to various situations may relate to the degree of ASD symptoms and also to whether or not they develop problems with behavior and compliance. Specifically, higher ASD symptoms appear to be associated with higher arousal reactivity. Interestingly, very low emotional reactivity, particularly during tasks in which the children must comply with restrictions, seems to predict more behavior problems.

The New Study will help us to take a closer look to better understand *why* we are seeing these patterns, and also to give us clues as to what parents and other important people in these children's lives *can do* to help. Our findings suggest that children's social interaction is tied in important ways to how physical emotional patterns play out in their behavior (*Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 2015), and this new study will help us dive deeper into additional aspects of the children's biological regulation and to see what types of environmental supports appear to help best for particular children. Assisting us on this study are consultants from the University of Miami, Auburn University, and the University of Utah.

We are very excited about this study and will begin recruiting families later this Fall. As with our previous studies, participation will involve a visit to CSUF (approx. 2 hours) as well as some additional questionnaires. Families will be compensated \$50 for their time. **Thank you to all the families who are helping us to figure out how to best help our children!**

See the *Orange County Register* story here: <http://www.ocregister.com/articles/baker-719342-fenning-children.html>



To participate in our new study, please call
657-278-1088
or

email casfamilylab@fullerton.edu

CSUF Center for Autism, Applied Developmental Core
Phone: 657-278-7891; email: autismcenterkids@fullerton.edu
website: <http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/index.htm>

Meet our Lab Coordinators!



Jackie Moffitt, B.A.

Jacquelyn (left) is a recent CSUF graduate with a degree in Psychology and Child & Adolescent Studies. Jackie began working with our Center as a freshman(!) and is now main coordinator for our major research projects. Jackie also works with Dr. Fenning on her collaboration with the UCI Center (see far right) and plans to apply to clinical psychology doctoral programs to continue her interests in emotion regulation in children with developmental challenges.

Alyssa Bailey, B.S.

Alyssa (right), a recent graduate in Child & Adolescent Studies and Psychology, joined our laboratory due to her interests in family process and children's emotional development. Alyssa also works with families of children who have experienced maltreatment and plans to become a clinical psychologist.

Where Are They Now?



Mariann Howland, B.A.

Marian graduated from CSUF in 2013 and has been coordinating a federally-funded project of pregnancy and infant development at UCI. She has published several scientific articles and plans to apply to clinical psychology doctoral programs soon!

Welcome Dr. Zeedyk!



We are excited to announce the arrival of a new faculty investigator to our Core! **Dr. Sasha Zeedyk, Ph.D.**, received her degree from UCR in Special Education and is now faculty in the Department of Child & Adolescent Studies. Dr. Zeedyk will be bringing to our Center her expertise in childhood education, family process, and the social-emotional development of children with ASD and related disabilities.

Clinical Services Available!

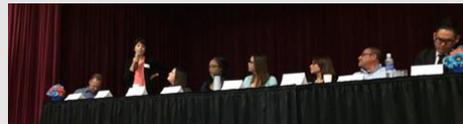
The Applied Developmental Core is excited to expand its services to children and families!



Clinical Services have been expanded! We now offer a variety of services ranging from brief clinical consultations to comprehensive diagnostic evaluations for ASD or other childhood problems. The need for **diagnostic services** can be time sensitive, and we are often able to offer these relatively quickly, to help children move to accessing services as soon as possible. Services are offered on a sliding scale for families in need of financial support and insurance may reimburse families in many instances. **Brief consultation services** can include assessment and treatment/education planning, assistance in accessing resources, and/or working with funding agencies.

Recruiting & Training Autism Therapists

With ASD rates having increased dramatically over the past several years, more and more families are in need of treatment and education for their children. Early Intensive Behavioral Intervention (EIBI), often historically referred to as Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) remains the most scientifically-supported intervention for ASD, demonstrating unparalleled levels of comprehensive gain for many of the children who receive these services.



Intervening early is key, yet many treatment providers are challenged with providing adequate staff to quickly meet the needs of newly-diagnosed children.



Having worked in EIBI at its birthplace at UCLA, Dr. Baker is passionate not only about the benefit to children and families, but also to about the joy it can bring therapists as a career choice. In collaboration with the CAS

Department and CICE (see previous page), Drs. Fenning and Baker have greatly expanded **fieldwork placements** and have developed an EIBI-specific course. This same collaboration developed a **Career Panel/Fair** in 2015 and 2016 in which our partnering agencies came to CSUF and met with students (above). An informational brochure "So You are Thinking of Becoming a Behavioral Interventionist," is available at: <http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/Student/fieldwork.htm>

Improving Oral Health Outcomes in Children with ASD

Many children with ASD experience significant problems with their oral (dental) health. In collaboration with the *Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment Disorders of Southern California*, Dr. Fenning is co-leading a project funded by the U.S.



Department of Health and Human Services aimed at improving oral health outcomes in children with ASD. The project will test a parent-training intervention designed to help families with home dental care and visits to the dental office. Stay tuned for more information about this project!

Giving to the Core



Donations can be given to support any of the activities of the Applied Developmental Core. Email jbaker@fullerton.edu or you can give online at [http://](http://autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/giving.htm)

autismcenter.fullerton.edu/applieddevelopmentalcore/giving.htm

Engaging Students in High Quality ASD Research



Student involvement is key to our Center and to our pursuit of knowledge that will benefit children and families, as highlighted in January in the *Orange County Register* (<http://www.ocregister.com/articles/center-701064-autism-research.html>). Our students are exposed to every aspect of the research process, and have gone on to obtain the *CSUF Outstanding Student Research Award* every year since its inception (2013-2016; left)! Based on their ongoing commitment to student mentorship, Drs. Fenning and Baker were recently given the *2016 CSUF Distinguished Service to Students Award* by the CSUF Alumni Association.