

BUILDING BLOCKS® Early Intervention Service **Parent Information Sheet**

Establishing Routines

Children with autism respond to structured programs and routines in their daily life. Routines assist the child with autism to understand what is happening and provide predictability to the child's life.

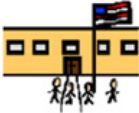

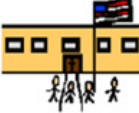










“Children with autism will learn more easily, express more interest and have fewer behaviour problems if there is predictability to their daily and weekly routines” (Olley, 1984).

- Routines may vary from family to family, but, in general, it is a good idea to establish routines around certain times, such as mealtimes and bedtime, and activities such as toileting, preschool and shopping.
- Families should take into consideration the particular needs of their child with autism, family lifestyle and siblings when planning any family timetables. It is important to remember that your child with autism is only one member of your family, and the needs of other family members also should be considered when you are structuring routines, sequences and timetables.
- Routines should be presented visually in a format that your child is able to read and understand. For example it may be more appropriate to show your child his placemat to indicate dinner rather than a photograph of the family sitting at the table having dinner. Another child may respond to the packaging of the noodles or soup or the empty bread wrapper to indicate that it is time to sit down and eat.
- Use visual supports to augment your verbal directions for each routine, for example, “*bath time, go bathroom*” as you show your child a photograph of him/her in the bath.
- Organise visual supports in such a way to maximise their use. If they need to be portable, place them in a flip folder or keep together on a metal ring. Other visual supports may be placed on the wall in the bathroom (toileting/bathing sequence), bedroom (bedtime routine), kitchen (mealtime routine) or in the preschool.
- Visual supports for routines often contain a sequence of photographs – these may be velcroed to a strip of cardboard and placed near where they will be used. Each photo step in the



sequence is removed as the step is completed and “posted” by the child into a “finish box” (a tissue box with a slot in the top, for example).

- Another example of a visual support used to indicate a routine is a “daily timetable”. This may be as simple as a small board with a photograph of the main event of the day attached. The board might show a photograph of preschool on Mondays, on Tuesdays this is changed to a photograph of your child’s speech pathologist and on Wednesday, if it is an at home day, the board may feature a favourite activity such as the local park, grandma’s house or a special video. A more complex visual routine may show a weekly timetable listing the days of the week and one or two activities for each day.

Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
preschool 	Speech 	preschool 	preschool 	park 	home 	grandma's 
television 	McDonald's 	television 	television 	shopping 	swim class 	

- Organise structured activities for inside and outside play as part of your child's daily routine. Use a visual choice board during play sessions to indicate play choices and to show your child what the play routine will be for that session. *(This may be a sheet of cardboard, cork board or piece of felt with up to four photos of play activities attached by Velcro. Allow your child to choose which activity to do first from the board. When the first activity is complete, pack away to activity, “post” the finished photo in the finish box and choose the next activity from the remaining photos).*
- Introduce less demanding /physical activities at the end of the day such as supervised water play in the bath, listening to music, looking at books or playing with a favourite toy. This enables your child to wind down before bedtime.
- Although weekends tend to be less routine and structured for most families, it is still important to maintain some routines around mealtimes, bath-time and bedtime to ensure that your child feels secure and does not becomes anxious or stressed.

- As changes to routines are inevitable (a rainy day prevents a trip to the park, illness prevents your child attending preschool), it is important to build procedures for “planned change” into your routines and also your visual supports. This may involve warning your child about changes ahead of time, replacing the picture of preschool, if your child is unable to attend, on your visual timetable with a photograph of a replacement activity, allowing your child more transition time between activities and remaining positive about the changes.