

# Caregiver Training Modules for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorder and Restricted Eating

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## Background

- 90% of children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) experience feeding difficulties
- Children with ASD are often reported to have unusual eating habits such as:
  - Rigid mealtime behaviors
  - Limited food repertoire
  - Food sensitivities and refusal related to food texture, color, smell and temperature.
- Children with ASD who have restricted eating are at increased risk for nutritional deficits which may contribute to worsening ASD
- Many behavioral interventions have been effective for increasing food intake
- Eating enjoyment, positive mealtime environment and enthusiastic modeling in both adults and peers have been shown to increase food acceptance and social interaction in children.
- Educating caregivers has been shown to be effective in reducing problematic mealtime behaviors and food selectivity.
- Education and training increases caregiver competence and promotes healthier lifestyles



"This picture shows a typical mealtime for my nephew Bobby, a picky eater. Here he is coloring, not eating. We ended up boxing the food and taking it home!"

- Rachel Rice, LEND trainee

## Specific Aims

### Aim 1:

- Create and produce caregiver education modules on training topics related to improving mealtime behaviors in preschool children with ASD and restricted eating

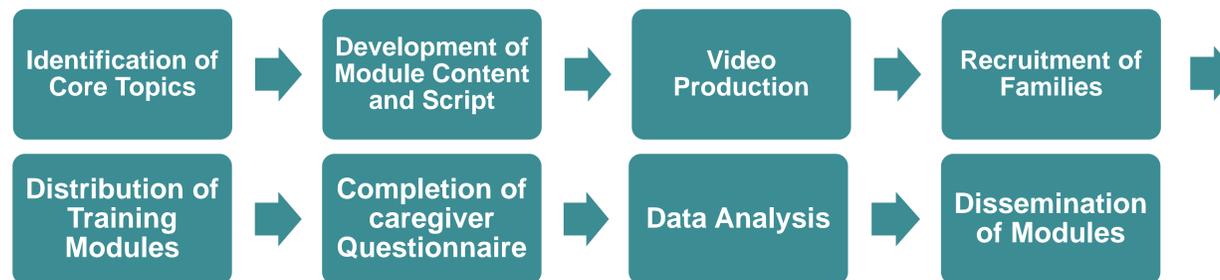
### Aim 2:

- Assess the feasibility and satisfaction of caregivers who will evaluate the content and format of the training modules
- Evaluate caregiver knowledge gained from viewing the modules

## Methods

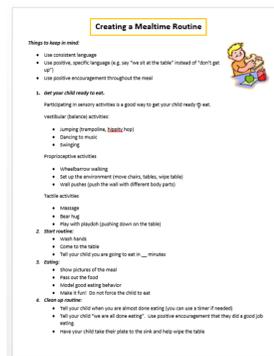
**Participants:** A total of 15 caregivers of preschool-aged children (ages 3 to 6 years) with ASD who have restricted eating will be recruited.

**Procedure:**



**Development of Training Modules:**

- Identify core topics for caregiver education
- Develop trial training video
- Disseminate and elicit caregiver feedback
- Incorporate feedback into Phase 2 of video production process



**Core Topics:**

- Creating a Mealtime Routine
- Setting up the Environment for Mealtime
- What's on the Plate
- Using Visual Schedules
- Components of Food
- Making Mealtime Fun
- Managing Mealtime Behaviors
- Prompting during Mealtime

## Discussion

- Overall responses showed positive feedback to our trial training video
- Caregiver response rate was 4 out of 11. This was less than expected likely due to time constraints
- Content/script development and video production took longer and was more complex than anticipated
- Length of the trial training video was longer than intended (15 minutes vs 5 - 7min)
- We will incorporate caregiver feedback related to video length and feeding strategies to guide future modules



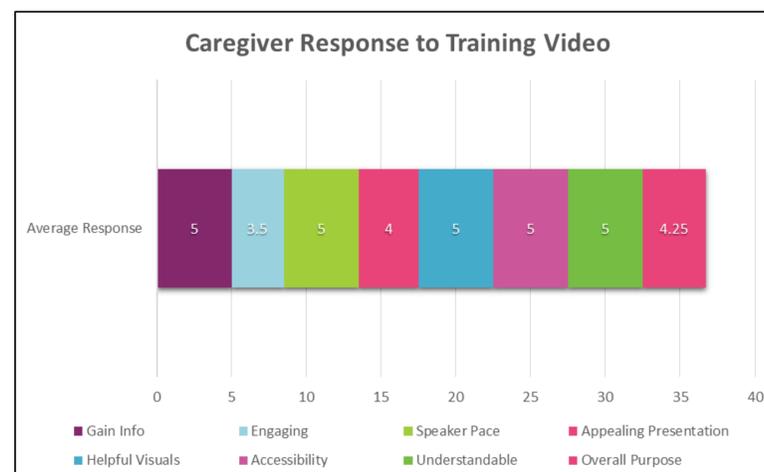
## Results

**Trial Training Video:**

*Creating a mealtime routine* trial training video was recorded and produced. Training Video was made available to feedback participants on youtube website.

**Caregiver Survey:**

Four caregivers provided feedback and responses were analyzed



"I think it would be helpful to also show a child who is not as receptive... and how to continue the mealtime routine or what verbiage you would use when that occurs."  
- Caregiver 1

"If it was 3 separate shorter videos... A premeal video then a meal video then post meal video may keep attention span longer."  
- Caregiver 2

"I really enjoyed the real video examples within the presentation."  
- Caregiver 3

## Next Steps

- Research grant submitted for funding 8 professionally-edited video training modules (video + handout materials)
  - Survey feeding professionals on the training modules content and format
  - Create and produce 8 video training modules
  - Assess the feasibility, satisfaction and knowledge learned from caregiver participants
- This study will inform a future feeding study for young children with Autism Spectrum Disorder

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