For Whose Benefit?
Evidence, Ethics, and Effectiveness of Autism Interventions

Words to Know
Words to Know in This Toolkit
Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA)

A bad autism service that focuses on changing how autistic children behave. ABA wants autistic children to look and behave like they are not autistic. It teaches autistic children to hide the things that make them “look” autistic.

Aversive:

Using something a person doesn’t like to get the person to stop doing something.
Basic Needs

Things like food, drinks, toys, things an autistic person likes, taking a break, changing what activity the person is doing, giving the autistic person attention, and special interests.

Communication

The different ways people talk to each other.
Conflict of Interest

When someone’s life affects their ability to study a service fairly.

Conversion therapy

Trying to change someone’s gender or sexuality.

Criticism

When someone says they have a problem with a service.
Evidence

Facts that show something is true. You get evidence from studying something.

Exposure therapy

When a practitioner makes an autistic person be around something scary or painful so the person can “get used to” the scary thing.

Functioning labels

Calling someone “high-functioning” or “low-functioning”.

Giving informed assent

Saying “yes” or “no” to a service when you can’t give informed consent.

Giving informed consent

Saying “yes” or “no” to a service.

Mental age

Saying a person has “the mental age” of someone younger than how old the person actually is. Mental age gets used a lot against people with intellectual disabilities.
Non-speaking
When someone can’t talk with their mouth.

Patronizing language
Language that treats autistic people as younger than we are.

Practitioner
Someone who gives a service to autistic people.
Presuming competence

Knowing that if we get the right help, autistic people can learn, think, communicate, and do new things.

Qualitative studies

Studies that use words as their evidence.

Quantitative studies

Studies that use numbers as their evidence.
Restraints

Holding or tying a person down.

Seclusion

Putting someone in a room by themselves and not letting them out.

Self-determination

Making your own choices.
Service

A program that tries to help autistic people. In this toolkit, we also call services “therapies”.

Social skills

Skills that have to do with getting along with other people.

Trauma

Changes in the way someone thinks and feels, after something scary hurt them. Trauma can last a long time.