

## ASD Identification Teams Project

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### Tips for Getting a Child's Best Behavior during Testing with the STAT

*Who should be in the room?* Ideally, the examiner (you), the parent and the child should be the only people in the room (except during the videotaped sessions). If the parent needs to bring the child's sibling(s), make sure a second adult who can watch the sibling(s) during the session accompanies the parent.

*Will my exam room work?* In most cases, maybe. You will need enough space to accommodate free play on the floor with toys, a small chair for the child and a small table for presenting the toys, and chairs for you (or an exam room stool) and the parent. If the room is not carpeted, provide a 5 x 8 ft (or one the right size for your space) carpet for floor play.

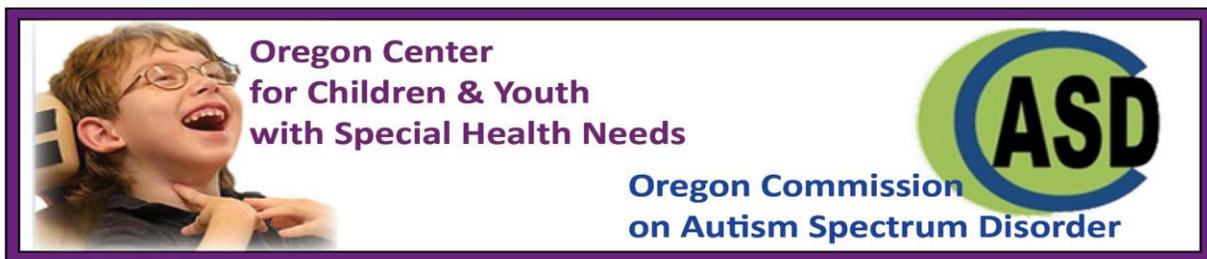
*Pay attention to possible distractions.* Make sure any window is covered with a venetian blind or similar covering to decrease/eliminate visual distractions from outside activities. The biggest potential distraction is the presence of a sibling. Please see comments above.

*Ask parents if their child has any specific sensory issues.* Some children are sensitive to very bright lights or fluorescent lighting. Use environmental light only, low lighting or incandescent lights when necessary. Some children are also very sensitive to certain types of sound, for example, babies crying, or will pay attention to and be distracted by low environmental sounds you and I would not typically notice. Schedule the exam in a quiet room and at a less busy time in the office if possible. In addition, some children are very sensitive to being touched. Plan to conduct the STAT before your physical exam and ask the parent to provide any necessary physical redirection of the child during the STAT.

*How do I start the exam?* Follow the directions in the STAT protocol:

1. Place all of the STAT play materials on the floor, preferably before the child enters the room.
2. Sit on the floor and encourage the child to sit down. Position yourself about 3-4 feet from the child. Ask the parent to sit to one side and behind the child.
3. Then start with the first test item, Turn-Taking.

*What about children who are resistant to being tested?* Just as children come in all shapes and sizes, they also come with a variety of behavioral styles or temperaments. A child may be slow-to-warm-up but respond positively after 5-10 minutes in the room, or a child may be overly active and show little or no social engagement at any time. Here are a couple of examples and some strategies to address each:



Slow –to-warm-up child: the child may initially hide behind his or her parent or persist in wanting to be picked up and held by the parent. Typically the slow-to-warm-up child is clear with his or her request to be picked up, maintains good eye contact with the examiner (to make sure what is going to happen next) but remains passive or actively resists requests to participate with test materials. This child may vigorously protest if touched by the examiner. So go slowly. Allow the child to adapt to the new surroundings. Try to find a toy from the STAT kit that is engaging or let the child start to play with a favorite toy from home. Avoid touching or close physical approach. When the child begins to interact with the toys, avoid changing test materials rapidly. A slow-to-warm-up child may insist on persisting to interact with one toy but may agree to letting that toy rest on the table next to them so that you and they can move on to the next test item. Ask the parent to do any physical redirection such as encouraging a wandering child to re-engage with a test item on the table.

Overly-active child: the overly active child may not choose to sit on the floor next to the toys but prefer to wander about the room. If the child regularly returns to interact with test materials, allow him or her to wander about the room. After a period of time, if the child is not interacting with test materials, try to physically enclose the child by having his parent sit him or her down on a small chair behind the child's table. Tables that have a small semi-circular cut-out for the child are excellent at encouraging the child to stay seated at the table. If your table does not have a cut-out, try positioning the child while seated in the chair with his or her back to the wall and the table immediately in front of him or her. If necessary, ask the parent to sit next to the child. As a last resort, have the parent position the child on their lap and present the test materials on an adjustable tray or table.

For children with limited sustained attention, you also may need to increase the pace of presentation of test materials. Make sure you allow each child the required number of trials with each item.

Provide frequent positive reinforcement for compliance and direct interaction with test materials for all children. Try taking a brief break for children who have a number of refusals on test items. When you resume, try an item that may be more engaging to the child and return to the other item later.