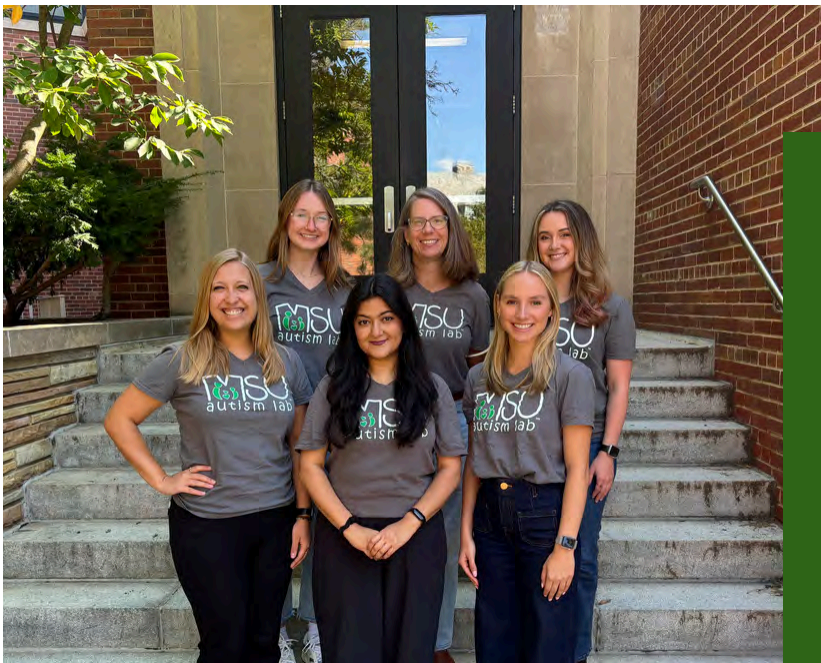


WINTER 2026 NEWSLETTER



AUTLAB@MSU.EDU | 517-432-0831



BACK ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT):
NICOLE WARREN (LAB MANAGER
AND RISE STUDY PROVIDER
LIAISON), DR. BROOKE INGERSOLL
(PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR), AND
LAUREN DUVALL (GRADUATE
STUDENT)

FRONT ROW (LEFT TO RIGHT):
HANNAH TOKISH (GRADUATE
STUDENT), DR. MEHREEN HASSAN
(RISE STUDY POSTDOCTORAL
FELLOW), AND ISABELLA BABORE
(RISE STUDY CAREGIVER LIAISON)

NOT PICTURED: ANA POMALES
RAMOS (GRADUATE STUDENT)

The MSU Autism Research Lab, directed by Dr. Brooke Ingersoll, PhD, BCBA-D, focuses on the development and implementation of evidence based, community viable, interventions for young children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) and their families.

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RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

OVER THE PAST SEMESTER, OUR LAB MEMBERS HAVE BEEN BUSY PRESENTING OUR LABS RESEARCH AT VARIOUS CONFERENCES!



Past and present lab members, Hannah Tokish M.A., Ana Miguel Pomales Ramos M.A., Katherine Pickard, Ph.D., and Diondra Straiton, Ph.D., presented on a panel focused on adapting and improving community-based behavioral interventions for minoritized autistic youth at the Association for Behavioral and Cognitive Therapies (ABCT)

Our postdoctoral fellow, Mehreen Hassan, Ph.D., presented her findings from a scoping review on Project ImPACT focused on child and caregiver outcomes at the Division for Early Childhood Conference



Post baccalaureate research assistants, Isabella Babore and Nicole Warren traveled to Washington, DC to the American Speech-Language Hearing Association to present a project focused on identifying recourses for adapting Project ImPACT for minoritized autistic children



Our 2nd year graduate student, Lauren Duvall, was awarded a grant from the Early On Center for Higher Education for her thesis, Impact of Social Networks on the Social Validity of Autism Evidence-Based Practices in Early Intervention Providers

Our director, Dr. Brooke Ingersoll traveled to Buenos Aires, Argentina to give a talk at the Autism and Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Intervention (NDBI) International Congress.

Her talks titled “Project ImPACT: A Community-Viable Parent-Mediated Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Intervention (NDBI)” and “Improving Service Delivery by Training Providers in Caregiver-Implemented Reciprocal Imitation Teaching” discussed the two interventions for children with social communication challenges, and how they are being implemented in the community.



She also can be found on an episode of Autism Weekly discussing the impact of parent mediated interventions and some of the key strategies from her program, Project ImPACT.

[LINK TO PODCAST EPISODE!](#)

CRIEI

Conference on Research Innovations in Early Intervention

UPCOMING EVENTS!

Mehreen Hassan, Ph.D., along with RISE colleagues Kyle Frost, Ph.D., and Eric Shannon, Ph.D., will be doing a panel at the Conference on Research Innovations in Early Intervention on Training, Fidelity, and Adaptation: Implementing caregiver coaching in Part C Early Intervention.

University Undergraduate Research & Arts Forum

April 17, 2026



A group of our undergraduate research assistants are busy preparing projects for the Undergraduate Research and Arts Forum (UURAF) that will take place at the Breslin Center on April 17th.

CURRENT STUDIES



Michigan State University's Autism Lab is one of the four sites conducting research as part of the RISE Study. This study is a multi-site clinical trial examining effective early intervention methods for toddlers with early signs of autism.

Specifically, the study investigates the effectiveness of Reciprocal Imitation Training (RIT) in publicly funded early intervention programs in four states. The project will provide information on the effectiveness of parent-mediated RIT when delivered in community settings and may find moderators of outcomes and other factors that influence the quality of intervention.

As of July 2025, recruitment of participants (both families and intervention providers) is complete, thank you to all families and providers who participated!



RISE Study Follow-Up Opportunity

The RISE Study is conducting a follow-up study, recruiting RIT Later Providers!

We're excited to invite RIT Later providers to take part in a follow-up study connected to our upcoming RIT Workshops!

Participants will complete two short sets of surveys (2 and 6 months after the workshop) to share their perspectives on the RIT training, its feasibility, and how they may use RIT with families on their EI caseload. Providers will receive \$10 for each completed survey (\$20 total).

Interested? Please contact:

MSU Provider Liaison: Nicole Warren (warre240@msu.edu)

Dr. Mehreen Hassan (hassan57@msu.edu)

Dr. Eric Shannon (eric_shannon@rush.edu) for details.

PEACE 4 ImPACT

A collaborative study between Michigan State University and the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia focusing on their Early Intervention System. The study will evaluate the impact of the PEACE implementation toolkit and determine the level of support needed to improve early intervention providers' use of caregiver coaching with families of young children. Families receiving caregiver coaching will be assessed for both caregiver and child outcomes, as well as the cost-effectiveness of the implementation toolkit. The study aims to enhance the services provided to families of young children with developmental delays and improve their long-term outcomes.




To learn more, email
peace4impact@pennmedicine.upenn.edu

or follow us on Instagram [@peaceatpenn](https://www.instagram.com/peaceatpenn)



Article Spotlight!

Adapting measures of motor imitation for use by caregivers in virtual contexts: Reliability, validity, and sensitivity to change

Brooke Ingersoll¹  | Mya Howard¹ | Devon Oosting² | Alice S. Carter²  |
Wendy L. Stone³ | Natalie Berger⁴ | Allison L. Wainer⁴ | Emily R. Britsch³  |
RISE Research Network

What was this study about?

Young children learn a lot by copying others—clapping hands, pushing a toy car, or pretending to feed a stuffed animal. This skill, called imitation, is especially important for learning language and social skills. Many young children with autism or early signs of autism have a harder time with imitation, so it's a key focus of early intervention.

What did we want to know?

Can we reliably measure a child's imitation skills at home, using video calls, with parents helping instead of a clinician being in the room?

What did we do?

177 families of toddlers who had early social communication concerns participated. Parents played simple imitation games with their children at home, while a trained assessor coached them over Zoom.

Two types of imitation were checked:

“You Do It” – the parent asks the child to copy a clear action (like shaking a rattle) to evaluate structured-elicited imitation
“Copy Cat” – a more playful back-and-forth game where the parent copies the child first, then shows a new action to measure spontaneous-social imitation.

The researchers looked at whether these virtual assessments were accurate, consistent, and able to show progress over time.



Key Findings

- ✓ Caregivers could do the activities correctly, with virtual guidance.
- ✓ The assessments were reliable (different raters agreed on the scores).
- ✓ The assessments could pick up changes over time, meaning they can track progress.
- ✓ Children generally copied better when directly asked than during free play—something researchers already knew, which shows the virtual version works like in-person testing.

MSU Psychological Clinic

Offering mental health services to the Greater Lansing community

The MSU Psychological Clinic aims to create a safe and affirming environment that embraces all identities that you may hold. To help serve your needs, they offer individual, family, couples, and group therapy options as well as a range of assessments from top experts in the field.

MSU clinical psychology doctoral students, as well as other trainees or students enrolled in practicum, receive intensive and specialized training through the Clinic. The MSU clinical psychology doctoral program believes in providing its trainees opportunities to work with clients from diverse backgrounds (e.g., ethnic/racial/economic/ religious/sexual) across the lifespan (child/adult). Clinicians treat and assess clients with a range of specific disorders and problems. Individual, family, and group interventions are taught. Students also receive exposure to different theoretical orientations and multiple therapeutic techniques.

All trainees are supervised by licensed psychologists who are also faculty at Michigan State University.

Our therapy practices

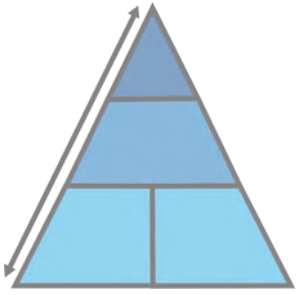
Our clinicians are trained in multiple treatments, including:

- Acceptance Commitment Therapy
- Behavior Therapy
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)
- Emotion Focused Therapy
- Family Systems Treatment
- Parent Training/Coaching
- Psychodynamic Psychotherapy



Project ImPACT is being offered in the MSU Psychological Clinic. For more information see the flyer below!

Contact Information: Phone: 517-355-9564
Fax: 517-353-5437 Email: clinic@msu.edu



Project ImPACT is a coaching program for parents of toddlers and preschoolers with ASD and other social communication delays. Project ImPACT teaches parents evidence-based strategies to support their child's **social engagement, communication, imitation, & play.**

ImPACT is a **naturalistic, developmental, and behavioral** intervention.

Naturalistic

Teaching occurs during play and daily routines

Developmental

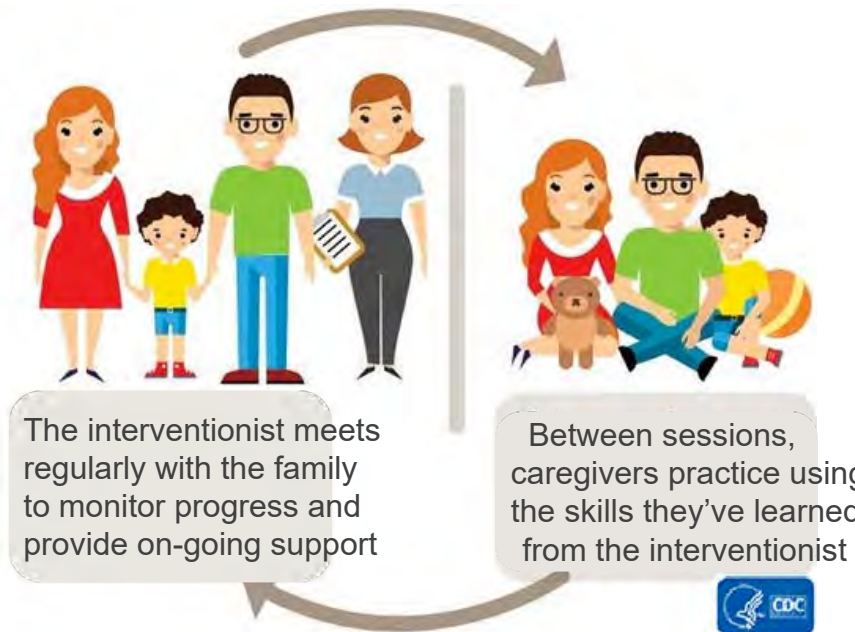
Supports the caregiver-child relationship

Behavioral

Uses ABA teaching and learning techniques

What can families expect?

- **Work with your coach** to set **individualized** goals, learn, practice, and problem solve.
- You and your child meet with a coach to **learn and practice the strategies**
- Practice what you learn daily during **play or routines.**



What are the benefits of parent coaching?

- **Help your child use and transfer new skills** to every-day settings
- Meet recommended **25 intervention hours/week** with coaching and practice
- **Help you feel more confident** in supporting your child
- **Improve the parent-child relationship** and decrease parenting stress

This program is offered **in-person or over telehealth** at the MSU Psychological Clinic.

We are offering this experience as a group or individual model, depending on interest and need. Financial assistance may be available. Due to licensing restrictions, only families residing in Michigan can participate.

To see if your family is eligible, call
(517) 355-9564



Frequently Asked Questions

Learn more about Project ImPACT at this website, which includes a helpful video to introduce the program: <https://www.project-impact.org/>

- **How can I know if ImPACT will work for my family and my child?** ImPACT uses an individualized approach where your coach works with you to choose social communication goals, strategies, and activities that are most important to you and your family. The strategies are based on a long history of research in child development and applied behavior analysis (ABA). There's a lot of research evidence showing that this program helps children build skills and helps parents feel more confident in addressing their child's needs.
- **This sounds like it is a lot of work for me. What if I don't have time to practice?** This approach does require more parent participation than other programs. Your coach will work with you to come up with a plan that works for your family's schedule and routines. The goal is to teach you to use the strategies during activities that you already do with your child every day. Some parents set aside other time to practice at the beginning, but we know this isn't always possible. That's OK. By the end of the program, the strategies will be simple to use throughout the day without adding another thing to your list!
- **I was told my child should get ABA. Is this program ABA?** ABA, or applied behavior analysis, is a set of learning principles that guide certain intervention programs. ImPACT is a Naturalistic Developmental Behavioral Intervention (NDBI), a newer class of intervention which blends learning principles with developmental principles to build social communication throughout play and daily routines. NDBIs have a very strong evidence-base and are considered best practice for young children with ASD. ImPACT was co-developed by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) and can be broadly considered ABA – however, since it is a NDBI, it may look quite different from many ABA programs.
- **How is Project ImPACT different from (traditional) ABA?** The focus of Project ImPACT is to help children engage and communicate their wants and needs in a way that is understood by others. As the parent, you choose the social communication goals you want for your child with the support of a coach. Project ImPACT uses naturalistic ABA techniques, which means your child begins a teaching episode within the context of play or other daily routine by communicating an interest in something. You then prompt or cue your child to communicate in a slightly more complex way and then reinforce them naturally, by giving them what they ask for. Project ImPACT does not use mass trials or discrete trial teaching (DTT), artificial reinforcers, compliance training, punishment or aversives, and does not attempt to suppress non-harmful behaviors (e.g., stimming) that your child may use to self-regulate.
- **I think my child needs speech therapy instead of Project ImPACT. What is the difference?** Many of the strategies used in ImPACT are similar to those used in speech therapy, since ImPACT was co-developed by a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP). Whether you work with an SLP or not, you can learn strategies to help your child communicate from your coach. Your coach can help you decide if work with an SLP is needed to help your child develop other kinds of communication skills.
- **What if I think my child needs more intensive services or like the services I am already getting?** ImPACT isn't meant to take away from services that your child needs, but it helps to bring together the most common strategies and skills in a way that works for parents of young children with social communication delays. The program will help your child adjust to the types of strategies used in more intensive center-based programs and help you learn the vocabulary and strategies that are involved in other services. This program is a great way to help you and your child build skills you need to help your child be successful as they grow.
- **Are you recommending this class for me because I need to learn how to be a better parent?** This is not a parenting class. This is a way to give you some strategies to interact a little differently with your child since they are learning a little differently than some other children. The coach will learn about your child from you, and then will work with you to choose specific strategies that will help your child.
- **I want to participate in this program. What will I be doing in these sessions?** Appointments usually start by reviewing strategies with your coach and talking about how it is going at home. You might read about the strategies and watch videos of other parents using them. The coach shows you how to use the strategy with your child and coaches you while you practice for most of the session. The coach will also talk with you about the best ways to use these strategies at home that work for you and your family.
- **How do I find a Certified Project ImPACT Coach?** We maintain a list of providers who have completed Project ImPACT Certification. We make every attempt to keep this list updated. Providers who are not certified may also use Project ImPACT. If you are unable to find a certified coach, you may want to look for a provider in your area who uses the curriculum.

STAY CONNECTED!



For more information on upcoming projects, research, workshops, and more, visit our website: <https://autismlab.psy.msu.edu/>



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