

Autism teleconference set

Interactive session to expand reach of Maui families

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A teleconference on an approach to help children with autism "learn," offered by Talk About Curing Autism (TACA) Hawaii Support Group, will be held Monday evening in Kihei.

This interactive session, the third offered on Maui since June, gives parents of island children with autism a chance to be exposed to information and Oahu service providers, an event announcement said.

"Maui has so few autism-specific services and professionals in the field," said Kiele Pennington of the Autism/Pervasive Developmental Delay Family Support Group on Monday.

TACA teleconferencing sessions also are offered on the North Shore of Oahu and on the Big Island and will come soon to Kauai, said Pennington.

The teleconference on applied behavioral analysis (ABA) will feature Amy Wiech [®], who is a board-certified behavioral analyst with a master's degree in education, and Emaley McCulloch, a board-certified assistant behavioral analyst.

They will present videos on how the ABA approach has impacted Hawaii children with autism and their families. Wiech and McCulloch also will show how online videos can train parents and professionals in implementing ABA and other evidence-based interventions, an event news release said.

The goal of ABA is to "teach the children (with autism) to learn," said Pennington.

ABA teaches social, motor and verbal behaviors and reasoning skills, according to the Healing Thresholds Web site for families of children with autism.

"ABA treatment is especially useful in teaching behaviors to children with autism who may otherwise not 'pick up' these behaviors on their own as other children would," the Web site said, adding that ABA can be used by a parent, counselor or certified behavior analyst.

ABA uses behavioral observation and positive reinforcement or prompting to teach each step of a behavior, the Web site said. Good behavior is reinforced with a reward. Undesirable behaviors, or those that interfere with learning and social skills, are watched closely to determine what triggers and reinforces the action. The goal is to remove the triggers and reinforcers from the child's environment.

The teleconference is free, and no preregistration is required. It will be held from 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Rainbow Mortgage, Azeka's Oceanside, 1280 S. Kihei Road, Suite 222. Registration will begin at 6:45 p.m.

No child care will be provided.

The goal is to hold a monthly TACA teleconference. The program also has the support of Beautiful Son Foundation and Autism Bridges Maui.

TACA Hawaii is an Oahu nonprofit with national affiliation. The goal of TACA is to provide information, resources and support to families affected by autism, said the news release on the teleconference. For families who just received an autism diagnosis, TACA aims to speed the time from diagnosis to treatment.

For more event information, contact Pennington at 344-4148 or e-mail info@autismbridgesmaui.org.

On the Net:

* TACA Hawaii - www.tacanow.org/hawaii.

* Beautiful Son Foundation - www.beautifulsonfoundation.org.