

Implementation of PEERS For Preschoolers at Pediatric Behavioral Health and Wellness (PBHW)

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Introduction

- PEERS for Preschoolers (P4P) is a social skills group designed to help young children with neurodevelopmental differences make and keep friends.
- P4P includes a caregiver-assisted program to help caregivers learn how to support their child’s attempts to make and keep friends. Social coaches (caregivers) are trained to support use of social skills outside of group and in the real world.
- Participation in P4P has been associated with improvements in children’s assertion, social engagement, social cognition, social motivation; and decreases in children’s problem behaviors, inattention, and hyperactivity (Park et al., 2022), as well as decreased caregiver stress, increased parenting self-efficacy, and more positive caregiver-child interactions (Factor et al., 2022)
- This group adds to PBHW’s group program by providing an evidence-based social skills group for preschoolers with neurodiversity, while also involving their caregivers to help with generalization of skills.

P4P Session Structure

Child Session Content

- Didactic Lesson via Puppet Show
- Behavioral rehearsals through modified common childhood games (e.g., Simon Says, What Time Is It, Mr. Fox, Musical Chairs etc.)

Parent Session Content

- Weekly Homework Review
- Didactic lesson on how to provide social coaching on the targeted skills

Parent Coached Play

- Children practice newly learned skills during a mock playdate
- Parents practice social coaching during mock playdate
- Parents receive real-life social coaching from treatment team while they social coach their child

Method

Training

- Clinicians attended a 3-day virtual training and PEERS certification program hosted by UCLA and led by Dr. Elizabeth Laugeson, creator of the PEERS program
- Clinicians reviewed materials and manuals provided by UCLA
- Clinicians gathered materials necessary for group

Recruitment at PBHW

- Target ages: 4-6 years old, 3- and 7-year-olds considered on a case-by-case basis
- Caregiver participation required
- Participants were recruited via:
 - Group Referrals
 - Sharing information and flyers with PBHW clinicians across multiple sites
 - Families contacted from other PBHW group waitlists
 - Families who participated in autism evaluations at PBHW were also contacted

Measures

- Data was/will be collected pre- and post-group
- Social Skills Improvement System (SSIS) (Gresham & Elliott, 2008)
 - Parent report measure of social skills, problem behaviors, and academic complaints
- Quality of Socialization Questionnaire (QSQ)—Preschool Version (Laugeson, 2017)
 - Parent report measure of the number of playdates or playgroups children attended in the past month

P4P Session Topics	
Child Sessions	Parent Sessions
Listening and Following Directions	Overview, Characteristics of Good Friendships; Intro to Social Coaching
Meeting and Greeting Friends	Finding Playgroups
Sharing and Giving a Turn	Choosing Playgroups
Asking for a Turn	Preparing for Playgroups
Keeping Cool	Planning Playdates
Being a Good Sport	Suggesting Playdates
Showing and Telling During Play	Preparing for Playdates
Being Flexible	Coaching During Playdates
Asking a Friend to Play	Social Coaching Strategies
Joining a Game	Social Coaching Strategies
Asking to Play Something Different	Social Coaching Strategies
Asking and Giving Help	Social Coaching Strategies
Staying in Your Own Space/Using an Inside Voice*	Social Coaching Strategies*
Final Review*	Disclosing diagnoses to your child and to others*

*Sessions were combined to shorten duration of group

Results

Participants

- 8 children, aged 4-7, and their caregivers were recruited and enrolled in the P4P program at PBHW
 - 7 male, 1 female
 - 3 children carried an Autism Spectrum Disorder, 5 carried an Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, 2 carried another diagnosis, all children experience social difficulties, as reported by parents and/or clinicians.

Preliminary Pre-Intervention Data

- n = 4 (two caregivers were not present, and two caregivers did not fully complete the questionnaires)
- On average, caregivers reported child social skills standard scores in the Low Range ($M = 66$, $SD = 11.22$) on the SSIS
- Caregivers reported, on average, their children hosting 3 playdates ($SD = 2.45$) per month, being invited to 1.75 playdates ($SD = 1.26$) per month, and attending 2.2 play groups ($SD = 1.21$) per month.

Hypotheses

- It is hypothesized that following participation in P4P Social Skills Group, parents will endorse higher levels of social skills on the SSIS and will show a significant difference between pre- and post- ratings on the SSIS.
- It is also hypothesized that parents will report a significant increase in the number of playdates and playgroups that their children participate in after completing the P4P Social Skills Group.

Future Directions

- Continue with pilot trial of P4P group
- Continue with data collection for pre- and post-intervention, compare to UCLA’s data
- Continue to offer P4P as a group at PBHW in the future