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Information provided by Mary Stammen, Special Education Director for the Griggs/Steele/Trail Special Education Unit.

Serving Students with Autism in Rural Settings presents a unique set of challenges and at the same time creates a unique set of opportunities. We don't have a set programs/teachers to put students with autism into within each district i.e. autism classrooms, or autism teachers. Sometimes we have only one student in a building with no teacher specifically trained in autism. The positive impact of no set program presents the opportunity to develop truly individualized plans/programs for these students.

Serving students with Autism in a Rural Setting requires some creative planning. Having a "Standard Protocol" of steps to follow for Identification of Disability, Defining Student Needs, Developing Student Goals, Creating Student Plans and Implementing Plans is the key to successful programs.

We have developed a "Standard Protocol" for each of those levels of Planning. This "Standard Protocol" includes tools/programs that require various levels of training. Each staff member has been involved at some level of training for each of the tools utilized. Parents have also had some exposure to the tools listed. Not every staff member is an expert on all the tools... rather they are familiar with all the tools. We do however have an expert of each of the tools and we call upon them when we are at that specific point in the process.

One: Identification & Defining Needs: A multidisciplinary team facilitates the implementation of the following... Formal Outside Evaluation, **Ziggurat Model**, Informal Inventories

Two: Developing Student Goals: A multidisciplinary team facilitates the development of goals generated from the needs identified in the step above.

Three: Creating Student Plans: A multidisciplinary team facilitates the creating of the student plan using **The Comprehensive Autism Planning System (CAPS)**. This tool begins with the end in mind and includes a daily schedule embedding the supports/structure and modifications needed for success. It also addresses the skills needed and a way of measuring progress. In addition, it addresses the social/communication/sensory needs as well as the reinforcement needed to increase the likelihood that the behavior will occur again.

Four: Implementing Plans: Specific or combinations of interventions are then considered for teaching the necessary skills identified in the CAPS. We choose from the following list **TEACCH, PECS, Social Stories, Visual Schedule, Positive Behavior Supports PBS/Fix It Shop. IPAD Apps.**

Following these steps and using these tools have defined and created a structure that staff and parents are able to understand and follow. It provides the structure that is needed yet allows for individualization of each students plan.