

**Telehealth Delivery of a Family-Focused Intervention to Reduce Anxiety in Youth
with Autism Spectrum Disorders in Rural Colorado**
Susan Hepburn, PhD., Principal Investigator
University of Colorado Denver

Program Abstract

The goal of this two-year project is to develop and evaluate the use of interactive televideo technology to deliver a promising mental health intervention to families of children with ASD who are geographically removed from specialty medical centers. Over the past six years our team has developed an original, manualized, family-focused, cognitive-behavioral, multi-family group intervention package, designed specifically for families of youth with ASD and significant anxiety, called Face your Fears (FYF; Reaven et al, 2009). Efficacy data are promising, and broader dissemination of the intervention is the next step in program development. Given the obstacles faces by rural families of children with autism as they seek specialized care, and the impact of co-occurring psychiatric conditions on child and family functioning, finding innovative ways to link specialists with families of psychiatrically complex youth with ASD is an important research goal. Specific aims of the proposal are: (1) To refine the policies, procedures, and treatment materials (e.g., Facilitators Manual, Parent Workbook, Youth Workbook) of the Face Your Fears (FYF) intervention package for delivery as a telehealth application (i.e., interactive televideo); (2) To assess the feasibility and acceptability of the telehealth intervention for families of anxious youth with ASD; and (3) to estimate the degree of change and variability of response to the telehealth intervention on youth outcomes (anxiety disorder diagnoses and independent clinician ratings of anxiety severity) and family outcomes (caregiver strain, impact on family, parent mental health, parenting sense of efficacy) using a repeated measures within subjects design.

KEY WORDS:

Access to health care
Developmental disabilities
MCH research
Family-centered health care
Psychosocial services
School-aged children
Specialized care
Rural populations