ABSTRACT

DISSERTATION TITLE: Web-based training in behavioral interventions: Examining knowledge and empowerment in parents of children with autism spectrum disorder

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The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of a web-based training program in behavioral interventions to parents of children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Changes in parental knowledge of behavioral interventions, parental empowerment (as measured by the Family Empowerment Scale; FES, 1992), and skill in identifying and requesting evidence-based treatments for educational planning were assessed following participation in the web-based training program. The current study reports the findings of a sample of 14 parents of children, ages 6-12, with ASD. Parents were randomly assigned to treatment and waitlist control conditions, during which the treatment group completed five hours of a web-based training program (Autism Training Solutions; ATS). Repeated measures ANOVAS were used to analyze between and within groups effects for parental knowledge, empowerment, and skill in identifying and requesting evidence-based treatments in their child’s IEP. Results of the repeated measures ANOVAs indicated significant between and within groups effects in parental knowledge of behavior interventions. Changes in parental empowerment were not observed. Pre- and post-training comparisons indicated a significant interaction for treatment in parental ability to request evidence-based treatments in their child’s IEP, while a near significant interaction for treatment was observed in parental ability to identify evidence-based treatments over those with
little empirical support. Descriptive analyses of satisfaction with the training program indicated that parents were, overall, satisfied with the ATS training experience. Implications and limitations of the current study, including a limited sample, are discussed, as well as suggestions for future research. The positive changes experienced by parents who participated in the training suggest a need to replicate this study with a larger sample.