

## Embarking on the Autism Journey

### The Occupational Therapy role in navigating the early phases of identification, diagnosis and service provision for ASD

Expressions of Interest Sought

Term 3, 2022

Life is a complex journey filled with all sorts of unique experiences, relationships, strengths and struggles. This is true for both individual's with neurotypical or neurodiverse development. However, we know that for many neurodiverse individuals and their families, the journey of observing their child's challenges or "differences", learning about autism and accessing/navigating service pathways for diagnostic assessment, diagnosis and related support services can be a challenging and stressful experience. A journey that is highly influenced by personal, cultural, and environmental factors.

Occupational therapists have a unique role in supporting children and their families to gain an understanding of the individual's abilities and difficulties in participating in daily occupations, activities and routines across environments. Information gathering using an occupational performance perspective can be highly effective in contributing to a diagnostic formulation, as well as supporting families to understand, accept and navigate the implications of a potential ASD diagnosis for their child.

This workshop will explore the Occupational Therapy role in the early phases of identification, diagnosis and service provision for ASD from the perspective of information gathering to support diagnostic assessment, as well as supporting families embarking on this journey.

#### Workshop Aims/objectives

It is envisaged that the workshop would cover the following aims/objectives:

- Where/how to starting the journey as a clinician
  - An overview of the ASD DSM-V diagnostic criteria and the National Guidelines for the Assessment and Diagnosis of Autism
  - An overview of the occupational therapy role in gathering diagnostic information/observations
  - An understanding of ASD from a participation and occupational performance perspective
- Opening the road map with families
  - Introducing the concept of ASD with families (ie having those difficult conversations)
  - Supporting a referral for a diagnosis
  - Unpacking a diagnosis/non-diagnosis with families – what it means for their child/family
- Navigating support services
  - Supporting families to create functional therapy goals
  - An overview of evidence-based intervention approaches for ASD
  - Supporting the occupational roles of a parent as they embark on the journey of raising an autistic child

However, we are interested in feedback from potential participants so that we can provide a more targeted workshop that is able to meet the needs of attendees. We have therefore created a brief survey to assist us gather information relevant to understanding the learning needs in this area

[Survey Link](#)

This workshop is suitable for occupational therapists.

## About the Presenter



**Charmaine Bernie** Charmaine is an occupational therapist, lecturer and researcher with 20 years' experience across community and tertiary hospital settings in Australia and overseas. She has specialised in paediatric assessment and intervention, completing her PhD on pathways to autism diagnosis with the University of Melbourne. Charmaine has used Occupational Performance Coaching with parents and caregivers as part of her post-graduate work, becoming qualified trainer in 2019, as well as being a certified trainer for the Cognitive Orientation to daily Occupational Performance (CO-OP) approach since 2009. Her special interests include supporting function and participation for young and school age children with Developmental Coordination Disorder, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and other developmental disabilities, while ensuring families are accessing the right support at the right time.

**Expressions of Interest** for this workshop are now open. Please contact Zi Mei Events on [info@zimei.com.au](mailto:info@zimei.com.au) or (07) 3847 8375 to express your interest.

