



## Proposal for a new Campbell/Cochrane co-registered review within the Developmental, Psychosocial and Learning Problems Group

**Useful notes for completing this form appear at the end of this document. Please consult before beginning.**

Authors completing this form are also advised to note that whilst preparing their review they are required to read and follow: Higgins JPT, Green S (editors). *Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions* Version 5.0.0 [updated February 2008]. The Cochrane Collaboration, 2008. Available in a browsable form from [www.cochrane-handbook.org](http://www.cochrane-handbook.org) and in book form from Wiley from September 2008.

Campbell Collaboration guidelines for authors may also be viewed at:  
<http://www.campbellcollaboration.org/guidelines.asp>

Authors are also advised that if their title registration is accepted, a modified version of this form will be published on the website of the Campbell Collaboration ([www.campbellcollaboration.org](http://www.campbellcollaboration.org))

### Proposed Title (Using Standard Format)

**Social Skills Group for Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders**

### Contact Author Name

**Brian Reichow**

### Motivation for review

**Social skills group interventions are a frequently recommended treatment for social problems faced by individuals with higher functioning autisms. However, until recently, few empirical studies had reported the effects of social skills group interventions. In a systematic review of social skills interventions for individuals with autism, Reichow and Volkmar (in press) identified social skills groups for school-aged children with autism as an evidence-based practice based on the guidelines of Reichow et al. (2008). As shown in the review, multiple studies have now examined the efficacy of social skills groups. The studies included in the Reichow et al. review showed some treatment protocols had large effects while other treatment protocols had less significant effects. The reasons for these**

differences are unknown, but malleable factors such as group size, intervention density, participant's age, participant's levels of psychopathology, pre-treatment social functioning, and the ratio of the number of therapists to group members are possible moderators of effect that are plausible. Two limitations of the review included coverage limited to the period of 2001 – 2008 and lack of statistical synthesis. The research team wishes to conduct a systematic review, with the intention of conducting a meta-analysis where possible and appropriate, of social skills groups for individuals with autism that is not limited by year of publication or age. The proposed research team anticipates locating enough studies to do a careful meta-analysis that includes moderator analyses. The results can then be used to inform best practice guidelines for conducting future social skills group interventions.

#### References:

Reichow, B., Volkmar, F. R., & Cicchetti, D. V. (2008). Development of an evaluative method for determining the strength of research evidence in autism. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 38, 1311-1319.

Reichow, B., & Volkmar, F. R. (in press). Best-evidence synthesis of social skills interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorders. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*.

Has the review already been carried out or published? No

#### Description of proposal

For all points at which you are advised to see Section 4.5 of the Cochrane Handbook for Systematic Reviews of Interventions, available at [www.cochrane-handbook.org](http://www.cochrane-handbook.org) :

- (a) Objective of review (briefly stated) – Systematically review the evidence for the effectiveness of social skills group interventions for individuals with autism spectrum disorders to identify the characteristics of the most successful studies that can be used to create practice guidelines for the conduct of social skills groups.
- (b) Types of study – randomized control trials and quasi-randomized designs comparing the intervention with a control group (e.g., non-randomized controlled trial) will be included in the review. The methods for reducing bias in reviews containing non-randomized studies outlined in Chapter 13 of the *Cochrane Handbook*, including a moderator analysis of outcome by study type, will be followed.
- (c) Participants – children and young adults aged 6 – 25 with autism spectrum disorders (i.e., autistic disorder, Asperger syndrome, pervasive developmental disorder, not otherwise specified [PDD-NOS], Rett syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder). If the data permit, a moderator analysis of outcome by participant characteristic (i.e., age and diagnostic status) will be conducted.
- (d) Interventions and specific comparisons to be made  
experimental – experimental interventions will involve social skills groups. Social skills group interventions for individuals with autism are typically characterized by participation of 2-6 individuals with autism in therapy sessions led by a team of 1-3 therapists. The groups typically meet 1 time per week for 60 – 90 minutes and usually involve greater than 12 sessions (i.e., 3 months). Common topics for the groups include emotional recognition and regulation, social competence, friendship skills, and aspects of social communication. The social skills group interventions included in this review will be characterized by their teaching of specific skills (e.g., greeting a

peer, asking someone to play).

comparison – included studies will compare treatment (social skills groups) to a group not receiving treatment (e.g., no treatment control, waitlist control, treatment as usual).

(e) **Outcomes** – The primary outcome measure will be a standardized measure of social competence (e.g., Vineland Adaptive Behaviour Scales or the Social Skills Rating Scale). However, informal measures of social behaviour, including behavioural observations or researcher created measures and scales, will also be recorded and assessed.

(f) **What subgroup analyses do you intend to undertake?**

- participant age
- level of pre-treatment intelligence, language skills, and level of social functioning
- level of psychopathology
- intervention dosage (e.g., hours per week, sessions per week, total duration)
- group size and ratio of therapists to participants

(g) **Other information relevant to this proposal**

## Review author team and area of expertise

	Name	Area of expertise <i>(please indicate the background and skills of each review author and the expertise they bring to the review team e.g. content, methodology; statistics)</i>
Contact author:	<b>Brian Reichow</b>	<b>content, methodology</b>
Co-author(s) :	<b>Fred Volkmar</b>	<b>content</b>

### Do you or your co-authors have any interests in this topic that could be perceived as conflicts of interest?

Campbell/ Cochrane Reviews should be free of any real or perceived bias introduced by the receipt of any benefit in cash or kind, any hospitality, or any subsidy derived from any source that may have or be perceived to have an interest in the outcome of the review. It is a matter of Cochrane Collaboration policy that direct funding from a single source with a vested interest in the results of the review is not acceptable. See

<http://www.cochrane.org/docs/commercialsponsorship.htm>

Yes  No

If 'yes', what are they?

Is this review the subject of specific funding and/or does it need to be finished within a specific timeframe? If yes, please give details. No.

## Roles and responsibilities

TASK	WHO HAS AGREED TO UNDERTAKE THE TASK?
Draft the protocol	<b>Drs. Reichow and Volkmar</b>
Develop a search strategy	<b>Drs. Reichow and Volkmar</b>
Select which trials to include (2 people + 1 arbiter in the event of dispute)	<b>Dr. Reichow and a research assistant, with disputes resolved by Dr. Volkmar</b>
Extract data from trials (2 people)	<b>Dr. Reichow and research assistant</b>
Enter data into RevMan (Cochrane software)	<b>Dr. Reichow with co-entry by a research assistant</b>
Carry out the analysis	<b>Drs. Reichow and statistician</b>
Interpret the analysis	<b>Drs. Reichow, Volkmar, and statistician</b>
Draft the final review	<b>Drs. Reichow and Volkmar</b>
Keep the review up to date	<b>Dr. Reichow</b>

## Other information

Have you or a co-author written a systematic review before?..... Yes  No   
 If yes, was it a Campbell or Cochrane Yes  No

Review?.....

Have you attended a Campbell or Cochrane Review training workshop?..... Yes  No

If yes, which one?.....

If no, do you require assistance in planning to? Dr. Reichow will attend training in fall 2009. Yes  No

What type of computer do you use?..... Mac  PC

Do you have a copy of RevMan 5.0, the latest version Cochrane Review Manager software? Yes  No

Do you have access to a statistician (**strongly recommended**)? Yes  No

Do you predominantly speak / write in a language other than English? Yes  No

Do you have access to electronic databases relevant to your review topic (eg MEDLINE, PubMed, *The Cochrane Library*, PsycINFO?) Yes  No

Do you have access to a medical / University library: Yes  No

If yes, can you order journal articles not held in the Library? Yes  No

Have you experience of searching databases yourself? Yes  No

Do you have access to reference management software (eg Procite, EndNote, Reference Manager): If yes, which software, and what version? EndNote Yes  No

## Provisional dates for submission of drafts to editorial base

(A) Draft PROTOCOL January 5, 2010.....

(B) Draft REVIEW January 5, 2011. ....

## Agreement to Editorial Review and Publication in The Cochrane Library

By completing this title registration form, **you agree to submit a draft protocol within 6 months**. If there is no correspondence from you during this period, or no draft protocol has been received, the Cochrane Review Group reserves the right to de-register the title or transfer the title to a new author.

**Please note that the CDPLPG does not undertake to publish all protocols submitted (however many iterations are submitted) if they do not meet editorial standards.** Please note that the CDPLPG routinely requests that **data extraction sheets** be submitted along with drafts of completed reviews.

By completing and returning this form, you are accepting responsibility for maintaining and updating the review in accordance with Cochrane and Campbell Collaboration policy, i.e. you will be responsible for ensuring the review is

updated at least every two years. If you are unable to update this review the Review Group reserves the right to transfer the review to a new author.

The support of the editorial team in producing your review is conditional upon your agreement to publish the protocol and finished review, together with subsequent updates, in the Cochrane Library and within the Campbell Library. By completing and signing this form you undertake to publish firstly in The Cochrane Library/ the Campbell Library (concurrent publication in other journals may be allowed in certain circumstances with prior permission of the editorial team). Signatures from all authors on permission-to-publish forms will be required when protocols, reviews and updates are published.

## I understand the long-term commitment necessary when undertaking a Campbell/Cochrane Review.

Form completed by: **Brian Reichow**..... Date: **October 1, 2009**

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	Hide email address	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Hide mobile ph.	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
Bulk mailings accepted:	None <input type="checkbox"/> From primary entity (the CDPLPG) only <input type="checkbox"/> From affiliated entities in the Cochrane Collaboration only <input type="checkbox"/> All <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
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Privacy (*this relates to the manner in which your contact details are held on our database, which is shared with other Cochrane entities*):  
Hide address details Yes  No   
Hide email address Yes  No   
Hide mobile ph. Yes  No   
Bulk mailings accepted: None  From primary entity (the CDPLPG only)  From affiliated Cochrane entities  
only  All   
Country of origin: USA Gender: Female  Male

*Title Approved 6<sup>th</sup> Oct 2009*