



The P.L.A.Y. Project Awarded \$1.85 Million Grant from the National Institute of Mental Health

*Grant to Fund Research on Play-based Early Intervention for Autism; Confront
Increasing Numbers of Young Children on the Spectrum*

Ann Arbor, Mich.—September 24, 2009—Through the support of a \$1.85 million grant from the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), Richard Solomon, MD, is conducting a three-year study of The Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters (P.L.A.Y.) Project Home Consulting model, a parent-training program that addresses the need for intensive early intervention for young children on the autism spectrum.

Today, approximately one in every 150 children is diagnosed with an autistic spectrum disorder. As the fastest growing disability in the U.S., autism continues to gain public attention, yet there is a national shortage of personnel trained in intensive approaches as recommended by the National Academy of Sciences (NAS). [The P.L.A.Y. Project](#) addresses this shortage by using a ‘train the trainer’ approach, which promotes rapid dissemination of the program.

Developed by [Dr. Solomon](#), P.L.A.Y. is a practical, family-friendly application of renowned child psychiatrist Dr. Stanley Greenspan’s Developmental, Individual-differences, Relationship-based (DIR) framework, popularly known as DIR/Floortime. Through structured monthly home visits focused on modeling, coaching and video feedback, consultants train parents to engage their child with autism in ways that promote emotional connection and communication. By training parents to participate in their child’s intervention, the program also promises to be cost-effective. **The P.L.A.Y. Project costs under \$4,000 per year, in comparison with other interventions that cost \$40,000 to \$60,000 per year.**

Details of the study: With research-design guidance from Michigan State University, and community-outreach support from Easter Seals, The P.L.A.Y. Project is conducting a randomized, controlled, and blinded clinical trial. Drawing participants from five Easter Seals autism service locations, the study compares the outcomes of 60 children who participate in The P.L.A.Y. Project with the outcomes of 60 children who receive standard, community interventions, making it the largest study of its kind. Before and after the 12-month intervention, each child is assessed with a battery of tests to measure developmental level, speech and language, sensory-motor profile, and social skills.

“Preliminary research and early dissemination into community agencies, schools and hospitals around the world has demonstrated the effectiveness of our model,” said Dr. Solomon, medical director of The P.L.A.Y. Project. “Positive research outcomes would support efforts to encourage private insurers and government agencies to approve increases in funding for play-based autism intensive intervention services and ultimately, help children with autism become more engaged with the world around them.”

About The P.L.A.Y. Project®

Created by Richard Solomon, MD and based on the DIR® (Developmental, Individual-differences, Relationship-based) theory of Stanley Greenspan, MD, The P.L.A.Y. Project emphasizes the importance of helping parents become their child’s best P.L.A.Y. partner through evidence-based practice. Practical, affordable, and family-friendly, the P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consulting model has become widely practiced with positive clinical and research results. The program is operating in three countries and 26 states in the U.S., including many Easter Seals locations. More than 300 trained Home Consultants serve over a thousand children on the autistic spectrum every year. For more information about The P.L.A.Y. Project, visit www.playproject.org.

*[Pilot study](#) published in the May 2007 issue of the peer-reviewed journal, *Autism: The International Journal of Research and Practice*: R. Solomon, J. Necheles, C. Ferch, and D. Bruckman. “Pilot study of a parent training program for young children with autism: The P.L.A.Y. Project Home Consultation program.” *Autism* 11, no. 3 (2007) 205-224.