NIH Workshop on ‘Nonverbal’ School Aged Children

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Defining Minimally Verbal

- Small repertoire of spoken words or fixed phrases that are used communicatively.
- Exact number of words may vary across children, from no spoken words or phrases to perhaps 20 or 30, depending on a range of factors including age, intervention history, and access to alternative/augmentative communication (AAC) systems.
- Spoken words or phrases may be restricted to limited contexts and one or two functions (e.g., requests with familiar adults).
- Rate of spoken language is usually very low and may include scripted phrases that have been highly trained (e.g., I want X).
- May use echolalic or stereotyped language that does not appear to be functionally communicative.
Assessment

• First area to address.....

• Interventions depend on good assessments

• Good assessment can lead to meaningful outcomes
Year long work group

• NIH colleagues…Judith Cooper, Alice Kau, Lisa Gilotty, Ann Wagner, Frank Avenilla, Dan Hall
• Nancy Brady, University of Kansas
• Catherine Lord, Weill Cornell
• Helen Tager-Flusberg, Boston University
• Connie Kasari, UCLA
Assessment

- Core Areas of Development
  - Language
  - Social
  - Repetitive Behaviors

- Associated Concerns
  - Oral motor, medical history
  - Nonverbal cognition
  - Prelinguistic skills—imitation, intentional communication, play
Measures Tables

● = Well-suited for use with minimally verbal children
◆ = Use with some caution
○ = Unlikely to yield meaningful results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assessment Name</th>
<th>Variables Assessed</th>
<th>Age Range</th>
<th>Assessment Context</th>
<th>Citation</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language Use Inventory</td>
<td>Pragmatic language</td>
<td>18-47 months</td>
<td>Parent report</td>
<td>O’Neill, 2009</td>
<td>●</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test - IV</td>
<td>Receptive vocabulary</td>
<td>2:6 – 90 years</td>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td>Dunn &amp; Dunn, 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool Language Scales-5</td>
<td>Auditory comprehension</td>
<td>Birth- 7:11</td>
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<td>Zimmerman et al., 2011</td>
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<tr>
<td>Reynell Developmental Language Scales -III</td>
<td>Verbal comprehension</td>
<td>1-6 years</td>
<td>Standardized</td>
<td>Edwards et al., 1999</td>
<td>●</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Kasari, Brady, Lord, Tager-Flusberg (2013) Assessing minimal verbal children with ASD,
Recommendations/Future Research

• Assessments need to determine children’s actual ability at a point in time
• Need to have validity data for use with minimally verbal school aged population
• Likely a combination of standardized and experimental assessments

• Future goals…..
• Novel assessments that can yield meaningful results for this population
• Measures that can be implemented easily and applied widely