

Children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) have a range of social, play, and communicative challenges that often require the intervention of a speech-language pathologist (SLP). With increased responsibility for meeting the needs of students with ASD, SLPs require a high level of awareness of assessment and intervention techniques that target the core deficit areas typically associated with the autism spectrum. Theory of Mind (ToM) is thought to be a core deficit area for children with ASD. ToM is the ability to reason about the thoughts of others, or essentially perspective take. Practitioners are encouraged to consider ToM in practice; however, they are wary of utilizing this construct due to a heavy reliance on more well known interventions and the complexity of interpreting results of ToM tests. This study sought to further examine the attitudes, perceptions and practice patterns of SLPs using ToM in practice with children with ASD. A mixed methods descriptive design was used, combining focus groups and a paper-based survey to gather data. Two focus group interviews were conducted with 10 SLPs who were currently employed in two school districts in the state of Vermont. Participants completed a paper-based survey that measured their training in ASD/ToM and their feelings of competency with ToM in practice. Results indicated that participants do not feel competent in their ability to assess and intervene for ToM (on a scale of 1-4, range= 2.4- 2.85) and 66% (n=6) of the participants “strongly agreed” that they would benefit from further training in ToM. A variety of common perspectives emerged from the focus group data, including a primary concern surrounding the static/inflexible nature of current ToM assessment and intervention options. Information gained from this study may be used to develop more dynamic ToM assessment and intervention options, along with developing effective service delivery models within and across schools.