

Finding Their Voices: How LEND Student Therapists Utilize Mand Training to Assist Young Children with Autism to Develop Language

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Background

- Manding, or requesting, is a critical step to effective communication.
- A child requests a desired object or action and is rewarded by receiving it; he or she will be more likely to continue manding.
- Manding is one of the first steps in developing more complex communication skills.

Our Program:

- Therapists at the intensive Autism Service Delivery Clinic strategically incorporate manding in a natural play environment.
- Goal is to motivate children to request desired items based on their preferences.
- Once successful, we involve parents to help generalize the mands to other settings.

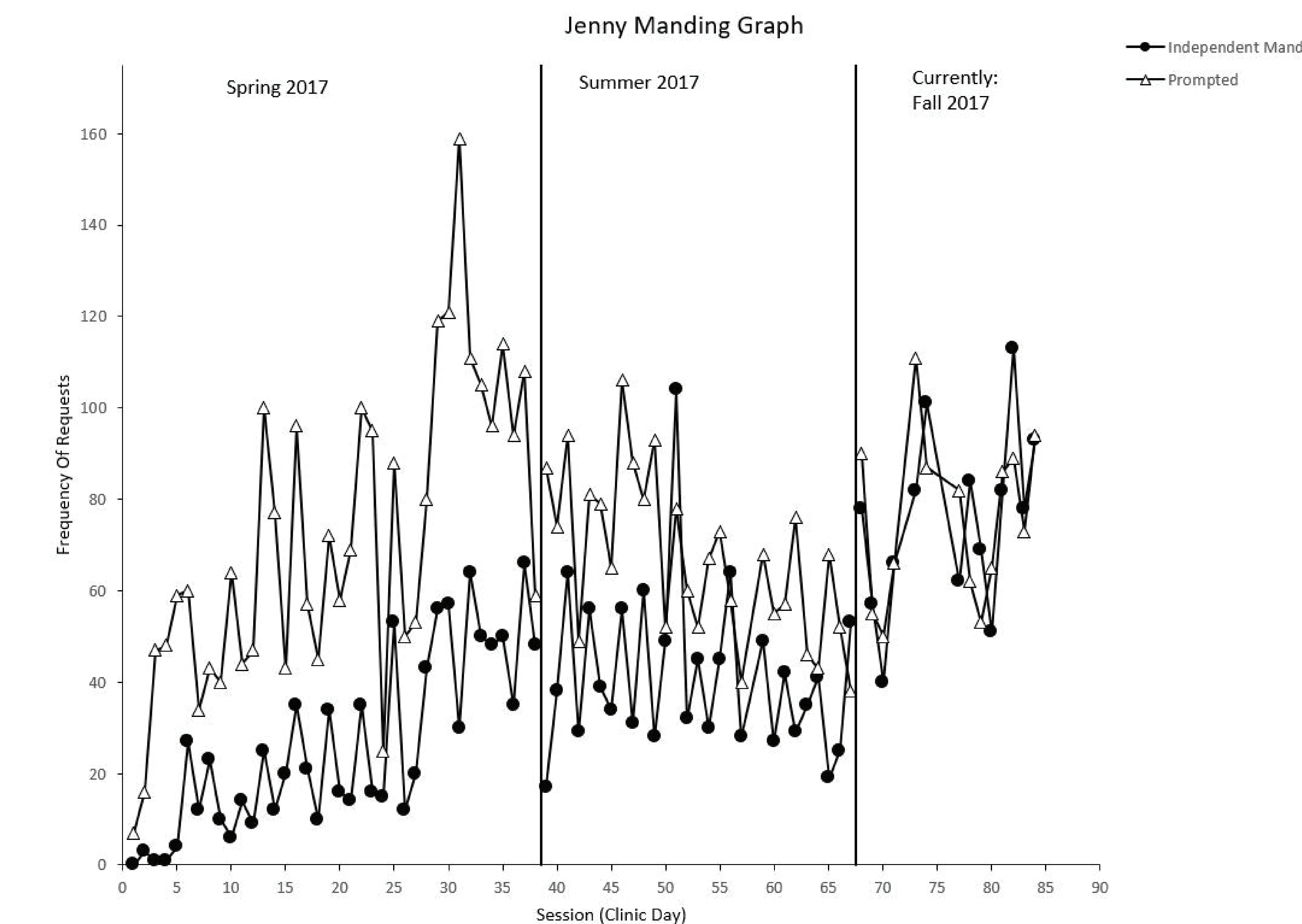
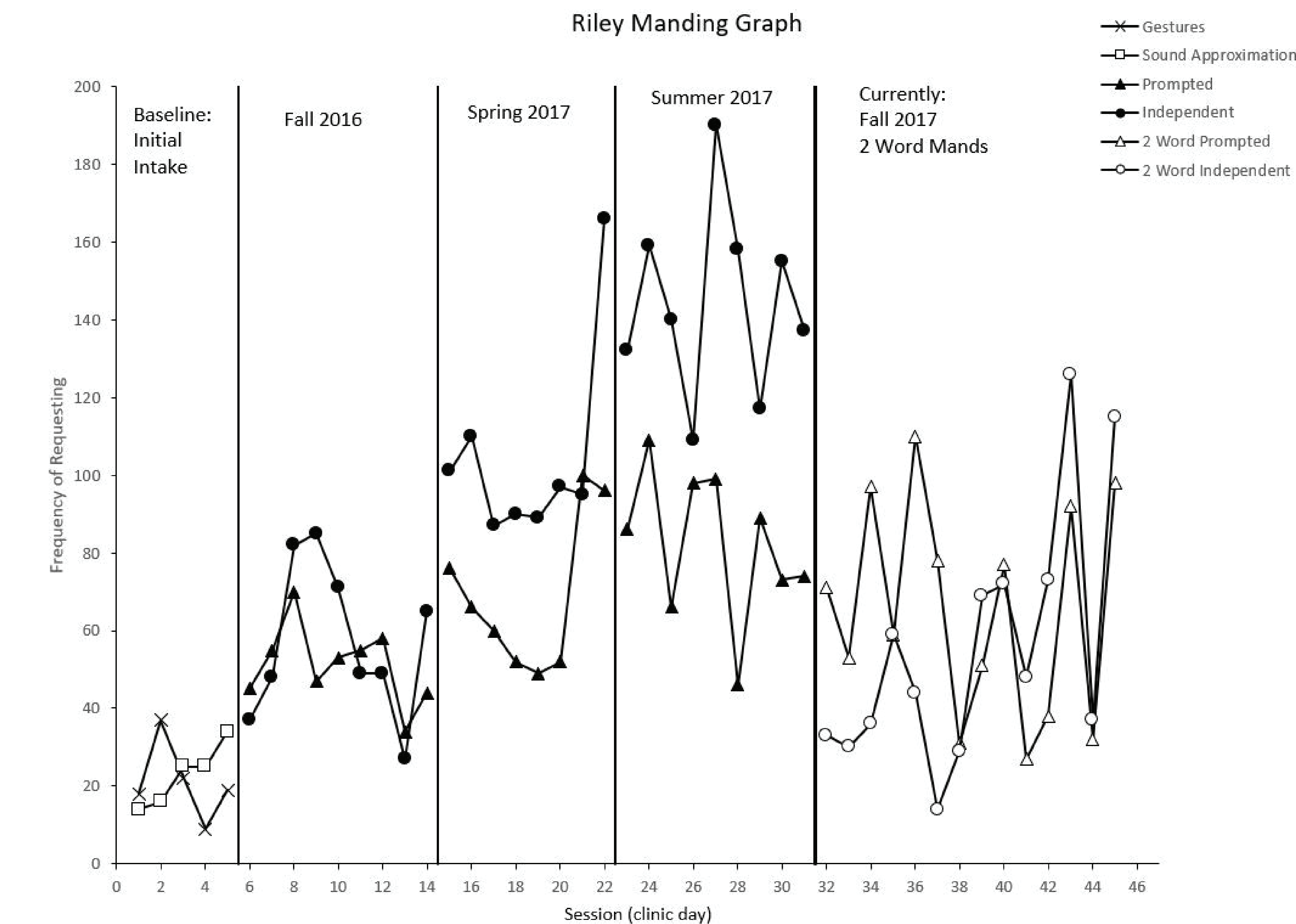
Objectives

- Use motivating operations to increase verbal communication.
- Contrive opportunities for practice of vocal manding.
- Manipulate environments for the use of new novel mands.



Methods or Description of the Program

- Mand training is an integral part of each child's beginning program based on individual assessments and current levels of echoing, requesting and initiating actions.
- Therapists determine each child's preferred items and develop strategy to limit access.
- When preferred item is identified in the environment, therapist provides a model prompt for the child to echo.
- When the child successfully echoes, he or she is immediately given the preferred item.
- Continued practice and nonspecific prompts such as "what do you need" are utilized to help the child mand independently.



Our Study:

- Riley: male, diagnosed with ASD, age 6, 2 years of intensive (20 hours a week) ABA therapy
- Jenny: female, ASD, age 4, 10 months of intensive ABA therapy
- VB-MAPP assessment baseline data was collected.
- An intervention was developed for therapists to follow in the natural environment play area.
- Riley averaged 51 prompted and 57 independent mands in fall 2016 and averaged 82 prompted and 144 independent in the summer of 2017.
 - As he expands his skills he is averaging 62 prompted and 56 independent two-word mands a day.
- Jenny averaged 29 prompted mands and 1 independent mand. After 10 months she now averages 85 prompted mands and 91 independent mands per day.

As children made progress and met mand goals previously necessary prompts were faded to less intrusive ones and the child was offered more opportunities for independent mands.



Findings/Results

We found:

- Contriving more situations for the children to request items produced more independent mands.
- Prompting in the beginning phases was higher but as children were reinforced for vocalizing their requests we saw independent requests rise.
- Children who had tacting skills or listener discriminatory skills were able to generalize objects they knew to mands without specific training.

Conclusions

- Encouraging vocalizations by setting up opportunities for the child to be motivated to communicate through specific prompting and echoing can help children with autism improve independent requesting skills.
- Children can then express what they want or need, and it helps their parents gain a greater understanding of their preferred activities, foods or toys. Being able to reinforce and respond to a child's request is essential in learning.

References

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