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Educators Demystify Autism Through Customizable Online Professional Development Programming

AutismPro Workshops helps educators apply techniques and research to real-world situations

FREDERICTON, NEW BRUNSWICK (April 29, 2009) – *AutismPro*, a 21st century response to educating students with autism, features an online professional development component that provides a cost-effective way to train educators and support staff to teach students with autism. The component, *AutismPro Workshops*, enables educators to learn techniques specifically related to their students' needs, increasing educator effectiveness when working with students with autism.

Featuring up to 45 hours of online content, including the most commonly used concepts and strategies in the field of autism intervention, *AutismPro Workshops* is a comprehensive, yet flexible professional development program in which educators learn a range of evidence-based strategies that can be applied to real-world school situations. Educators can easily digest and apply fundamental concepts and techniques through easy-to-read instruction, video demonstrations and case examples from across the spectrum.

Helping to boost confidence through validation and troubleshooting, *AutismPro Workshops* is useful for the entire staff, especially for teachers who have not worked with students with autism in their classrooms before.

“A recent National Staff Development Council study revealed that teachers say that much of the professional development available to them is not used,” said Kevin Custer, CEO of Virtual Expert Clinics, Inc., provider of *AutismPro*. “Professional development opportunities are often presented in structured online or in-person formats, both of which require pre-scheduled time and significant district funding. With *AutismPro Workshops*, educators can review the videos, search for ideas and techniques, and learn about autism in general when they have time, at their own pace, and put the learning to use in the classroom the same day.”

AutismPro Workshops demystifies autism by providing examples of real-life scenarios that can be duplicated in the classroom. As an example, when dealing with undesirable behaviors, the appropriate response depends on the reason for the behavior and the support strategy the educator has chosen to address the situation. For instance, a student whose anxiety leads to frequent challenging behaviors may be scheduled to do a Calming Activity (e.g., using a squeeze

ball) before or during situations that are stressful for him such as completing an assignment or walking along crowded hallways.

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act provides unique opportunities for school districts to invest in innovative tools, and *AutismPro Workshops* can be used to address ongoing challenges and improve outcomes for students with autism. The solution offers professional development that allows educators and teaching assistants to become more comfortable with teaching students with autism. Through consistent expert-authored training district-wide, these critical resources will ensure job retention and lower turnover rates, alleviating these serious problems for administrators.

This May, Virtual Expert Clinics will host a special Web Seminar highlighting the use of *AutismPro Workshops* as a professional development tool in real schools and districts. The Web Seminar will take place on May 13, 2009, at 1:00 p.m. ET. To register for this upcoming Web Seminar, visit www.AutismPro.com/webseminars.

Eligible for IDEA funds and recently endorsed by the Council of Administrators of Special Education (CASE), *AutismPro* is designed to help educators and administrators improve learning experiences for students with autism through the effective use of technology. Strengthening the effectiveness of a dedicated educator, it provides the means for general education teachers to learn about autism, and to embrace proven methodologies that help students with autism learn successfully in the classroom. Members of a professional advisory board, including Dr. Kathleen Quill of the Autism Institute, Dr. Cathy Pratt of the Autism Society of America, and Dr. Brenda Smith Myles, assisted in the development and review of *AutismPro*.

AutismPro Workshops is available for as little as \$75 per teacher for district implementations. For more information about *AutismPro*, visit www.AutismPro.com.

About Virtual Expert Clinics, Inc.

Virtual Expert Clinics, provider of a 21st century response to educating students with autism, works with school districts, early intervention providers, and governments to supplement quality programs. The company's flagship product, *AutismPro*, allows administrators to build capacity and helps educators to improve outcomes. Virtual Expert Clinics has offices in Fredericton, New Brunswick and Denver, Colorado. For more information, visit <http://www.AutismPro.com/Media> or phone 1-866-462-0991.

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