

Autism Program Design Principles

What are Design Principles?

- Supports a holistic approach and keeps the user (parents) forward with developing materials at the heart of designing materials or services
- Distill everything heard during the research phase
- Helps the content strategist move


When to Use Design Principles

- Writing new content or editing existing content
- Providing service to families
- Developing policies or procedures
- Training staff or creating/updating job aides



Be a soft spot to land.

- Provide visual wayfinding (e.g. images, bread crumbs, headings, or links) to let them know that they’re in the right place. Tell users what to expect when they click on a link
- Use a “you-might-also-be-interested-in” approach – for example, if you’re interested in autism funding, you might also be interested in learning more about what autism is
- Share contact information – let parents know that there’s someone they can ask for help or just talk to. Don’t worry about using titles (i.e. Autism Information Services B.C. or Autism Funding Branch) – just mention that we’re here to help




From rookie to expert and back again.

Parents don’t know what they don’t know.

- Link to tools and support that can help (e.g. AIS can offer suggestions based on real-life scenarios, My Family Services can help expedite processes)
- Offer best practices, tips or suggestions (e.g. how to complete a process)
- Define different service options
- Provide clear expectations for their role and the tasks they need to complete, offering guidance wherever possible

Support service providers.


- Provide policy information and processes specific to their business practices
- Clearly communicate program requirements



Don’t mess with the routine.

Provide a repeatable approach for finding services or getting funding so that parents know what to do when their child’s needs change or when it’s time to renew their funding.

Arrange topics so that they line-up with the parent journey – that way, it’s easier for them to return to revisit certain topics when they’re ready.

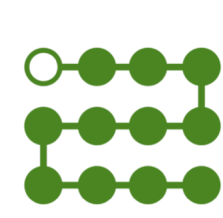


Trust me – we're here to help.

Provide transparency around funding decisions.

Explain best practices or provide tips to help get funding requests approved.


Boil things down to a need-to-know basis so that people feel equipped to take action or make decisions based on it.



Grow with families.

Give parents information and tools to help them with planning and decision-making. Share expertise by telling them what to plan for or what to anticipate. Here are a few of examples:


- Tell them that there’s often a wait for diagnosis – tell them what they can do while they wait
- Explain why funding is reduced for school-aged children – help them prepare for this transition
- Outline the different roles of professionals on the RASP and how they can offer support



Meet parents where they are.

Create content that’s accessible and easy to understand by:


- Using plain language – don’t use several words if only a few will do
- Presenting info in “bite-sized” pieces – use step-by-step instructions where possible
- Defining terms, even if we think people should know what they mean
- Keep things basic, not scientific
- Avoid duplicating or repeating info
- Add links to forms and resources within the topic/task that they’re related to
- Provide contact info to ask for help



Timing is everything.

Tell parents and service providers how long they can expect something to take.

Provide tips to help speed things up – for example, how to fill out forms or how to use My Family Services (e.g. if you submit your form using My Family Services, the response time is two or three business days).



Support for school & transitions.

Explain why funding changes when a child starts school.

Help parents prepare by explaining what their options are and connecting them to information about how to plan for a successful transition.