

# Exploring various disabilities experienced by adolescents in Connecticut

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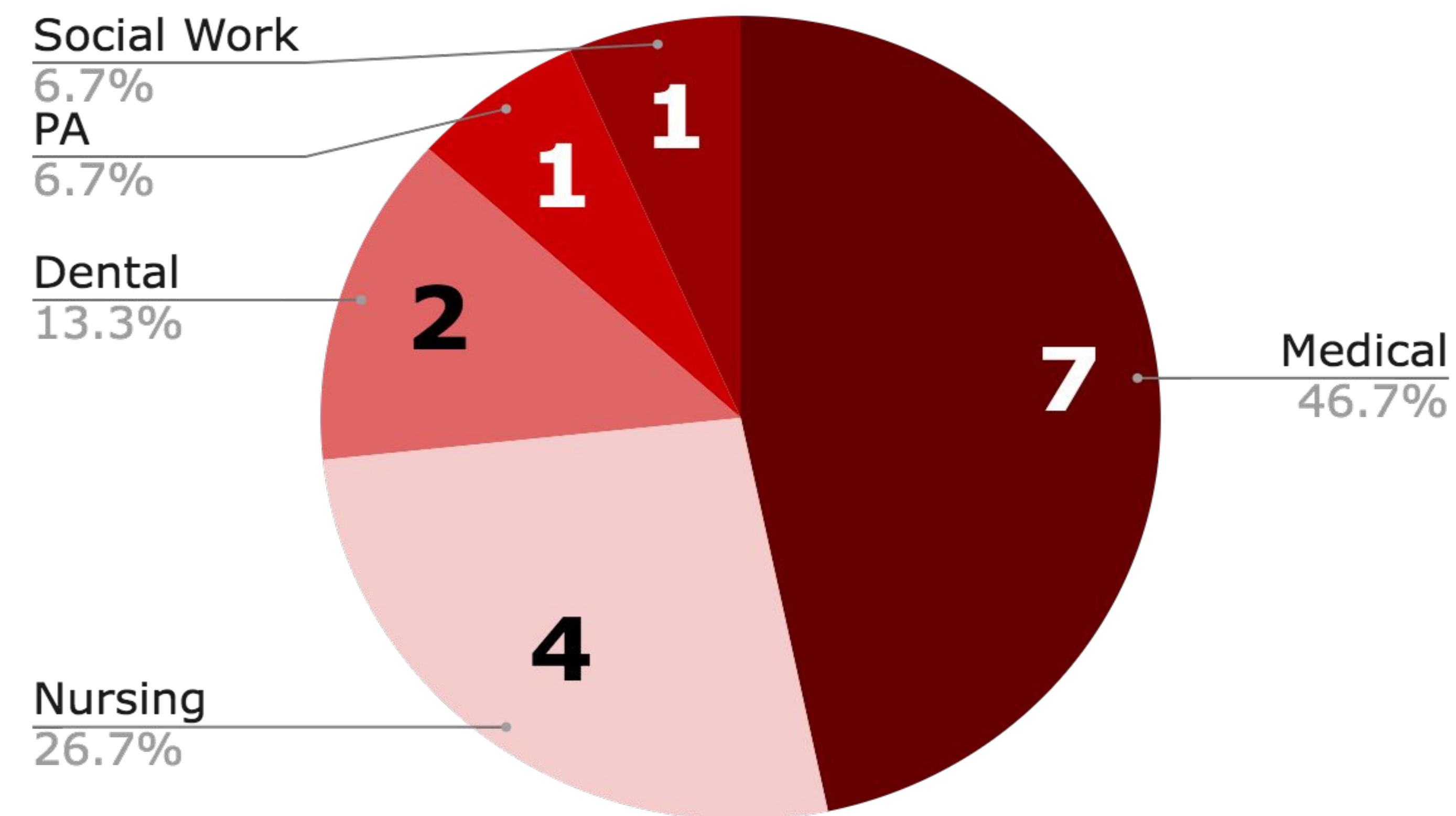
## What is the Adolescent IG?

The Adolescent Interest Group (IG) is one of seven UST/AHEC - student-led **interdisciplinary** groups, composed of students who want to work with adolescents. We worked as a **team** with assigned **roles** to learn more about adolescents with disabilities and how we, as future health professionals, can effectively care for this population.



Fig. 1 Co-Leads. Co-leads in the Sim center.

**Adolescent IG Poster 2023:**  
*Exploring Means for Early Adolescence Health Interventions within Connecticut*



## Why is adolescent health important?

- In 2019, there were **~42 million** adolescents between the ages of 10 and 19 in the US (**12.8%** of the total population).<sup>1</sup>
- Promoting healthy behaviors and preventative health practices during adolescence is an investment in the health of the future population.
- We as future health care professionals must have the skill set to care for this vulnerable population and to address health barriers adolescents may face, one being having a disability.<sup>3</sup>



## What disabilities affect adolescents?

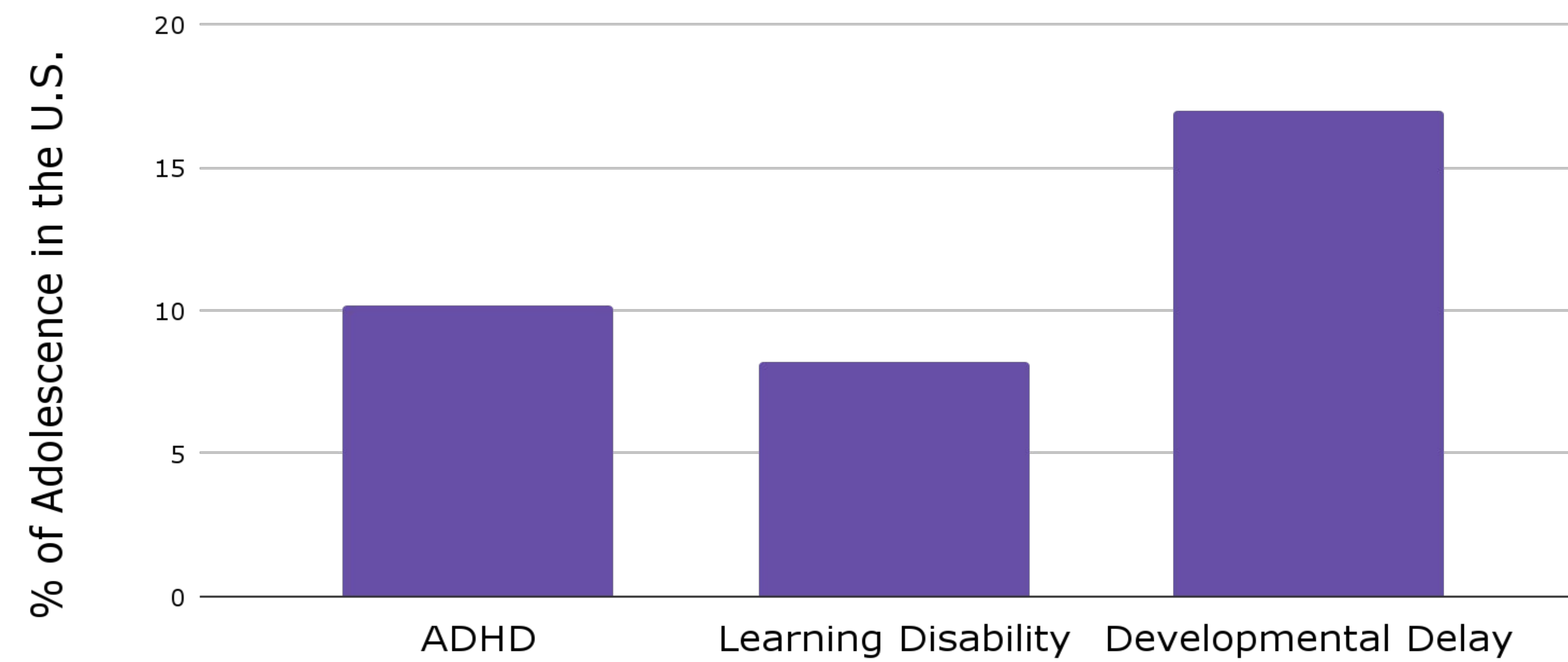


Fig. 2 Disability prevalence among Adolescents. Estimated percentage of adolescents, ages 3 to 17, in the United States.<sup>4,5</sup>

Having a disability can create a health barrier, leading to inadequate preventative screenings and care, which can negatively impact adolescents, their adulthood, and the population's health.

## What is our group's goal?

To explore various disabilities experienced by adolescents through student-led, interdisciplinary discussions with experts in the field, and to identify ways in which we can best care for those with a disability, potentially eliminating disability as a health barrier.

## How did we explore our goal?



## What did we learn?

**Stacy Lalor, LCSW, LICSW** - interdisciplinary discussion of common neurodivergence disorders seen in adolescents and disparities faced when accessing resources in and out of the school system.

**Simulation of sensory overload** →



## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act:

- Requires public schools to provide special education services to those with a disability
- IDEA covers 13 disability categories



## Pathways-Senderos:

- **Heather Mills** - Executive Director of Greater New Britain Teen Pregnancy Prevention
- Community-based after school program aimed at preventing teen pregnancy via long-term, comprehensive, holistic services, assuring high school graduation and promoting self-sufficiency



## Caring for patients with Autism or Sensory Concerns:

**Robert Keder, MD** - Developmental-Behavioral Pediatrician with expertise in autism spectrum disorder and developmental delays.

### Tips for working with patients:

- Limit distractions in room such as medical equipment on the walls and loud-ticking clock. Toys can be used to assess development and for assistance with physical exam.

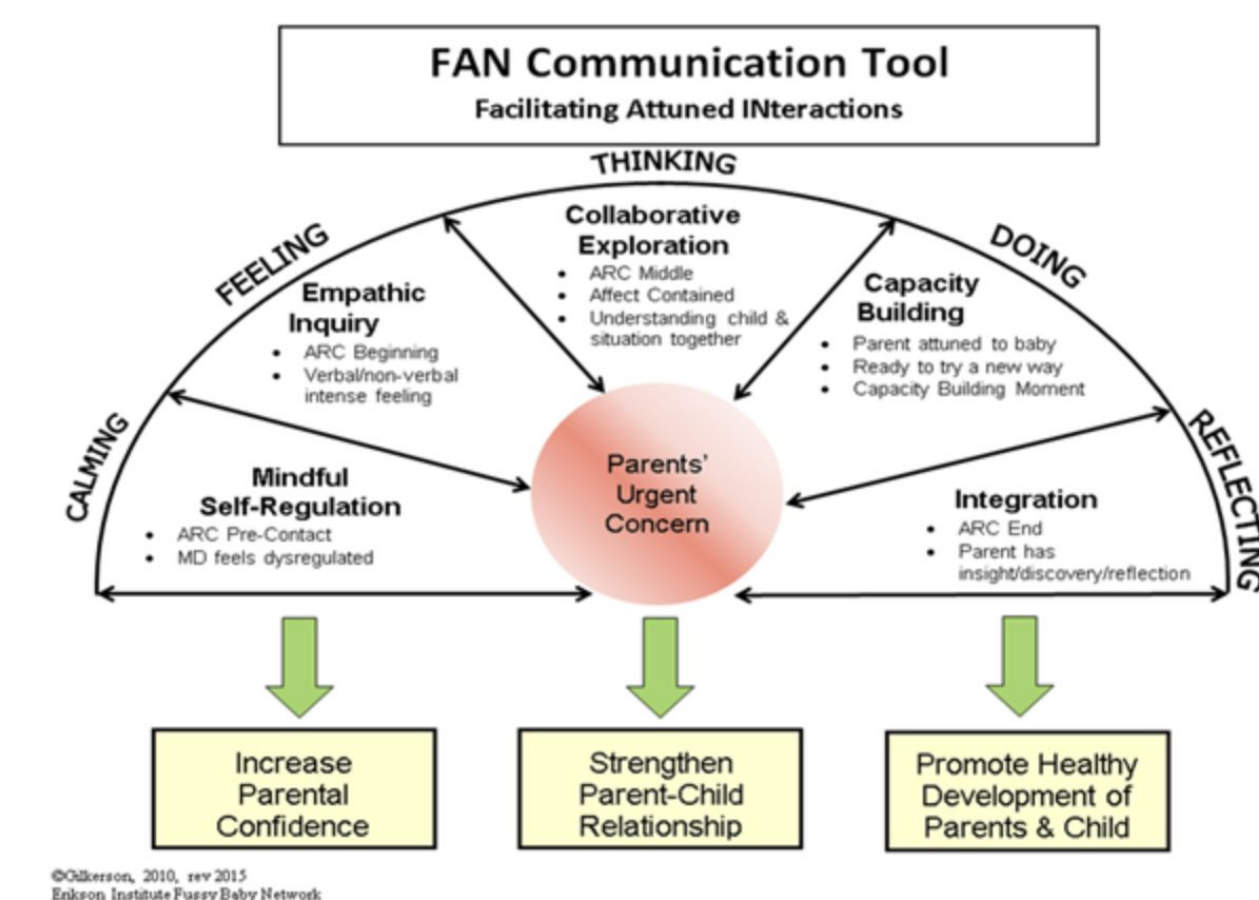
### Tips for working with parents of patients with developmental delays:

- Parents are "experts" in their children and can be a resource for providers
- The Facilitating Attuned Interactions (FAN) is a communication tool that professionals can use to create impactful relationships between parents and their child, fostering their development.

*Collaborated with PEDS IG -- both populations with developmental & behavioral conditions*



Fig. 3. Session with Dr. Keder. Adolescent and Peds IG in the Sim center.



## What are our takeaways?

- "Take time to find what works best for the child, such as communication styles, to obtain a good history."
- "My favorite part was hearing from different roles that interact with this population - social workers, community based leaders, and physicians. Each role brings a unique perspective such as communication techniques or online resources that they commonly use. However, I can see how they are all united in their passion for caring for youth with disabilities."
- "Adolescents with disabilities face unique struggles that may not be understood by their peers or even their healthcare team...connecting them with the right resources is super important for their long term health and overall wellbeing."

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## References

