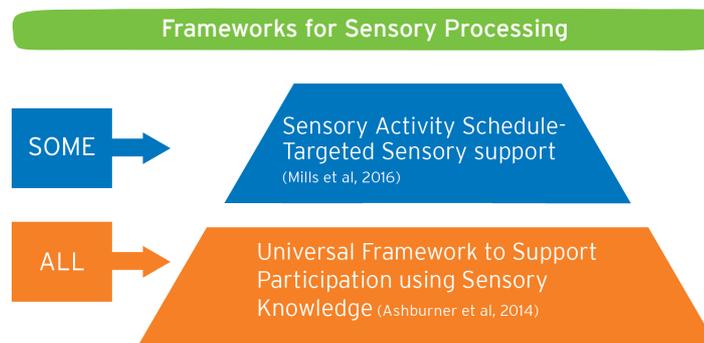


## Aspect Practice Sensory Form Instruction Sheet

This form can be used collaboratively by parents/carers, service providers and people on the spectrum when sensory challenges cause problems with a person's participation in everyday activities. This form is a user friendly tool enabling the development of a 'Sensory Plan' to assist with these difficulties. An occupational therapist with experience in autism and sensory processing may be able to support you in completing this form.

### Why Develop a Sensory Plan?



Before developing an individual sensory plan, it is important to consider universal best practice autism supports (the green zone), which includes setting up an autism friendly environment matched to a person's needs. Considering a person's quality of life and wellbeing as well as providing universal supports, can reduce sensory challenges. Stress and anxiety can exacerbate sensory challenges.

If sensory processing difficulties are still causing concern for the person, the Sensory Form can be used to develop a plan to address these concerns and come up with practical support strategies.

### What is an Individual Sensory Plan?

An individual Sensory Plan is a collaboratively developed plan which considers a person's sensory style and how this relates to participation and barriers to participation in everyday life. The plan then considers the person's 'sensory style' and uses this information to identify what the person's sensory needs are.

The bottom part of the form outlines strategies which may assist a person to cope with sensory challenges in the environment including environmental changes, the opportunity for extra sensory activities, teaching coping strategies, logistical considerations and a review date.

### Writing the Plan:

Before you begin, write the person's name, the date and members of a person's team you may consult in writing the plan. Then move through the form from top to bottom. If possible seek the person's consent for your involvement.

### Step 1:

Consider the person's sensory style in the sensory processing areas on the form. These include visual, sound, touch, oral sensory, smell/taste, vestibular and proprioception. Try to describe what sensory behaviours you see within these areas e.g. sound = 'puts hands over ears when the environment is noisy'.

### Step 2:

Reflect on the person's problems with participation in activities within their everyday life. Describe how the sensory issues described impact a person's engagement in everyday activities e.g. auditory sensitivity results in the person struggling to participate in the classroom, impacting learning. Choose the sensory issue which is the most problematic for the person and focus on this. If the issues described do not impact participation, there is no need for intervention. Many sensory behaviours are fun or functional and should not be the subject of intervention.

### Step 3:

This is an important step to ensure the problem is really sensory in nature. Check that the issue is not caused by a lack of understanding, or a need to seek attention. There may be other issues such as medical conditions to consider. If you are sure the issue is sensory, then proceed to the next step.

### Step 4:

Decide which sensory style or styles fits the person and their sensory issue. There are four basic sensory styles to consider as described by Winnie Dunn (2014) with descriptions written on the back of the form. These 'sensory styles' describe whether a person might be over or under responding in any area of sensory processing and whether they adopt passive or active behavioural strategies. Remember, a person may fit more than one sensory style.

### Step 5:

Before attempting any sensory strategies, ensure that good autism practice is in place.

### Step 6:

Develop proactive strategies to help prevent sensory problems before they occur. Think about changes you might want to make to the environment or sensory activities the person may wish to engage in (matched to assessment of their sensory needs). Consider providing sensory input on a planned activity schedule or before situations when it might be needed, such as school work.

### Step 7:

Think about what the person may need to learn for the future to manage their own sensory needs as much as they can. E.g. cognitive, behavioural coping strategies, headphones, going to a quieter area.

### Step 8:

Consider the logistics of when, where and how sensory strategies will be implemented. This means developing a practical plan for who, when, when and how strategies will be implemented. You may want to use a checklist to help you get strategies going and keep them going.

### Step 9:

Plan a review date for your sensory plan. Typically this is 1 to 3 months.

#### References:

- Ashburner, J. K., Rodger, S. A., Ziviani, J. M., & Hinder, E. A. (2014). Optimizing participation of children with autism spectrum disorder experiencing sensory challenges: A clinical reasoning framework. *Canadian Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 81(1), 29-38.
- Dunn, W. (2014). *Sensory Profile 2*. Bloomington, MN: Pearson Psychcorp.
- Mills, C., Chapparo, C., & Hinitt, J. (2016). The impact of an in-class sensory activity schedule on task performance of children with autism and intellectual disability: A pilot study. *British Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 79(9), 530-539. doi:10.1177/0308022616639989.