

## **The Benefits of TagTeach and Animal Assisted Therapy for Children Living with Autism Spectrum Disorders (Service Delivery).** KATE NICOLL (Soul Friends, Inc) and Cindy Trifone (Soul Friends, Inc)

**Abstract:** A new program, Come Follow Me! has shown great success in the integration of Animal Assisted Interventions and TagTeach for children living with developmental struggles. Research has commented on the motivating factor of animals in treatment, as well as the ability of these interactions to assist with learning about appropriate touching and boundaries, improve communication and reduce isolation (Chandler, 2001). Come Follow Me! is a six session program of social skills development and dog training for children living with social, emotional, and physical challenges. The incorporation of clicker training, TagTeach for human interactions has shown encouraging results in improving attention and eye contact. Emotional support may be enhanced by even brief interactions with animals (Collins & McNicholas, 1998). Interactions with animals have been thought to be able to increase focus of attention and to be agents of de-arousal (Kruger et al, 2004). This poster will explore the impact of animal assisted interventions and TagTeach on attention and eye contact for children living with Autism Spectrum disorders.