BACKGROUND
• Deficits in social skills are a hallmark feature among individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), with the friendships of youth with ASD differing from those of their neurotypical counterparts (Bauminger, Solomon & Rogers, 2010).
• Adolescents with ASD often have more impaired friendship quality than their neurotypical peers, and their friendships may also be more prone to conflict (Bauminger & Kasari, 2009).
• The Program for Education and Enrichment of Relational Skills (PEERS®), a parent-mediated, evidence-based group social skills intervention assists in developing and maintaining friendships for middle school and high school youth with ASD.
• Previous research investigating the efficacy of PEERS reveals significant improvements in friendship quality post-treatment (Laugeson et al., 2009; Laugeson et al., 2012); however, the relationship between friendship quality and degree of conflict during social interactions post-treatment has yet to be examined.

OBJECTIVES
• This study examines the relationship between friendship quality and peer conflict during social interactions following participation in a school-based PEERS intervention.

METHODS
PARTICIPANTS
• 146 middle and high school students participated in a larger treatment outcome study investigating the effectiveness of a teacher-facilitated, parent-assisted PEERS curriculum in a non-public school setting.
• Adolescent participants were previously diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.
• Social Responsiveness Scale (SRS; Constantino, 2005) Total Score: M = 76.17 SD = 14.55
• Age:11-18 years (M = 15.1; SD = .55)
• Gender: 16% Female (n = 24); 84% Male (n = 122)
• Ethnicity: 60% Caucasian (n=87); 18% Latino/Hispanic (n = 26); 8% African American (n = 12); 4% Asian American (n = 5); 2% Middle Eastern (n = 2); 1% Native American (n = 1); 7% Other (n = 10)

MEASURES
ADOLESCENT MEASURES:
• Friendship Qualities Scale (FQS; Bukowski, Hoza, & Bolvin, 1994)
• Assesses level of adolescent-reported overall friendship quality in close friendships
• Quality of Socialization Questionnaire-Adolescent (QSO-A; Frankel & Mintz, 2008)
• Measures peer conflict during get-togethers

PARENT MEASURES:
• Quality of Socialization Questionnaire-Parent (QSO-P; Frankel & Mintz, 2008)
• Measures parent perceptions of teen’s peer conflict during get-togethers

RESULTS
• Results reveal that higher adolescent-reported overall friendship quality on the FQS predicts less conflict on the adolescent QSO (<.001), particularly in the areas of Companionship (<.01), Helpfulness (<.05), Closeness (<.05), Security (<.05), and Decreased Conflict (<.05).
• Higher adolescent-reported conflict on the FQS also predicts more conflict on the adolescent QSO and the parent QSO.

DISCUSSION
• Results suggest that greater friendship quality is related to decreased peer conflict during social interactions following participation in the 14-week PEERS School-Based Curriculum.

REFERENCES

CONTACT INFORMATION
Melissa Wasserman
Senior Research Assistant
The Help Group-UCLA Autism Research Alliance
(818) 778-7133
alliance@thehelpgroup.org

Or visit the PEERS website at www.semif.ucla.edu/peers

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS
The authors would like to thank the dedicated teachers, staff and families at The Help Group for their support of this research.