Swimming is one activity used by Clinical Services to promote social language skills. Social skills classes and parenting classes are among new treatment options offered by the CPD’s Clinical Service division for children on the autism spectrum and their parents.

The social skills class is for children in the age 5-12 range who have some verbal skills and can hold a conversation in a rudimentary way, said Exemplary Services director Sue Olsen. These children often fall into a service “black hole.”

“The ones who do have language skills don’t get school services, and insurance won’t pay, because they have language,” Olsen said. “They just don’t have good social communication skills.”

The small groups started in November, Olsen said, led by Up to 3 clinician and speech pathologist Jacqueline Guymon and occupational therapist Amy Henningson.

About 10 children are currently participating in the evidence-based curriculum. Children are placed in groups of two to five based on developmental skill level, rather than age. Parents also receive assignments to work on with their children at home.

“We figure out how to group the kids on equal ground in the way of social and expressive communication skills,” Olsen said.

In addition to the classes, children are invited to participate in community activities, such as bowling, swimming or a trip to the Jump Zone. If the children attend a class, they are eligible to go to the next activity.

“They learn to initiate conversations in small groups,” Olsen said. “Jackie and Amy go with them to support them in practicing their skills or correcting behavior.”

A five-session punch card costs $60 and is good for two months, said Olsen. There are 15 to 20 opportunities to attend small group sessions or activities during that time frame. Individual sessions cost $15 each.

A parent education class called The ABCs of Behavior is being led by Up to 3 clinician Janel Preston. Parents receive a workbook and other reading materials and also complete homework assignments. Each lesson could stand alone, Olsen said, but they do build on each other.

In March or April, Olsen said, the goals is to start sessions for children who are non-verbal or don’t have conversation-level skills.

For more information on any of these classes, contact Up to 3 at 435-797-2043.