

August 2019

PARENT NEWSLETTER

From the Autism Spectrum Disorder Department at Easterseals Joliet Region

Visit our [website](#) or find us on [Facebook](#)

What's Going On At Easterseals....

2019-2020 School Year Social Skills Groups

During the school year Easterseals runs social skills groups for children with Autism. Each group is a 6-8 week session that meets once per week, and every session targets a different age group and set of skills. Groups are the right fit for children who have made progress with individual therapy and are ready to start practicing those skills in a small group setting that has a ratio of one adult to three children. If you would like to put your child on the waiting list so you will be contacted when there is a group for their age; or if you are interested in more information about social skills groups for the 2019-2020 school year you can contact Laura Gardner at 815-927-5466 or lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com.

Here is the schedule for the 2019-2020 school year:

Fall Session (8 weeks):

- 4th and 5th graders meets Wednesdays 5:00 – 6:00 9/11/19 – 10/30/19
- Early Childhood (3 to 5 years old) meets Fridays 9:00 – 10:00 9/6/19 – 10/25/19
- Early Childhood (3 to 5 years old) meets Wednesdays 1:00 – 2:00 9/11/19 – 10/30/19

Winter Session I (6 weeks – no group the week of Thanksgiving):

- High Schoolers meets Thursday 3:00 – 4:00 11/7/19 – 12/19/19
- 6th – 8th graders meets Wednesdays 5:00 – 6:00 11/6/19 – 12/18/19

Winter Session II (8 weeks):

- 2nd and 3rd graders meet Wednesdays 5:00 – 6:00 1/8/20 – 2/26/20
- Potential for second group based upon interest

Spring Session (8 weeks):

- Kindergarten and 1st graders meet Wednesdays 5:00 – 6:00 3/11/20 - 4/29/20

Social Skills Group: 4th and 5th graders

Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders sometimes have difficulty applying the social skills they have learned through therapy in a variety of social settings. They may benefit from Social Skills Group to specifically practice applying skills with other kids their age. In this group we can build on strengths they already have and develop more advanced skills. We will incorporate activities they encounter in their everyday world, like working in a group on a school project, understanding complex friendships, bringing up concerns with others, managing their emotions and resolving conflict. We will also facilitate friendship building activities within the group and target skills requested by the group. The group is run by behavioral therapists from our Autism Department, and includes a variety of visuals, sensory supports and positive behavioral techniques to help children be successful within the group. Parents are provided with a weekly handout on the activities, an explanation of skills targeted and ideas on how to carry those skills over at home. This group is the right fit for children who have made progress with individual therapy and are ready to start practicing those skills in a group setting with a 1:3 ratio.

WHEN: Every Wednesday 5PM-6PM from September 11th through October 30th

The group is 8 weeks long and meets once a week. The cost of the entire session is \$150, due at the first meeting. If interested please contact Laura Gardner, LCSW at 815-927-5466 or lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com

Social Skills Group: Early Childhood (3 to 5 y.o.)

Young children with Autism can have difficulty in group settings with peers, including difficulty attending to group activities, participating in reciprocal (back and forth) play, building friendships and knowing how to ask for help with resolving conflicts. They may benefit from Social Skills Group to specifically practice skills they have learned through individual therapy, and applying those skills in a group with other kids their age. The group is run by behavioral therapists from our Autism Department, and includes a variety of visuals, sensory supports and positive behavioral techniques to help children be successful within the group. Parents are provided with a weekly handout on the activities, an explanation of skills targeted and ideas on how to carry those skills over at home. This group is the right fit for children who have made progress with individual therapy and are ready to start practicing those skills in a group setting with a 1:3 ratio.

- **AM group meets Fridays 9:00 – 10:00 starting 9/6/19 through 10/25/19**
- **PM group meets Wednesdays 1:00 – 2:00 starting 9/11/19 through 10/30/19**

Each of the groups is 8 weeks long and meets once a week. The cost of the entire session is \$150, due at the first meeting. If interested please contact Laura Gardner, LCSW at 815-927-5466 or lgardner@joliet.easterseals.com



Grandparent & Extended Family Autism Workshop

Are you a Grandparent, Aunt, Uncle or friend to a child with Autism? If so, you might have a lot of questions. On **Thursday October 3rd from 5:00 – 7:30** Easterseals will be hosting a Grandparent and Extended Family Workshop, where Autism professionals will present basic information about Autism, give tips on how to support your loved ones and answer all of your questions. The cost is \$10 per family, paid at the workshop.

Registration is required. To register or if you have any questions, call Valerie Lentz at 815-927-5465.



Parents Raising Children with ASDs

Our parent support group continues to meet the second Wednesday of every month from 6:00pm – 7:30pm. This program is a wonderful way to meet other parents, get information, and get connected to resources in your community. This month we will meet on **Wednesday, August 14th**. Valerie Lentz will be the facilitator again this month, and Laura Gardner will return in September. As always, childcare will be provided for those who sign up ahead of time by Easterseals staff. Both the group and childcare are free of charge. Please call Valerie Lentz with any questions or to register for childcare at 815-927-5465.

Grupo de Apoyo Para Padres de Familias que Hablan Espanol (Support Group for Spanish Speaking Parents)

This is a very well attended parent support group for families that have children with Autism and would like to meet other parents, get information and stay connected to community resources. The group is led by a social worker from our Autism Department and a translator from our parent education program. Group meets **the first Friday of every month from 9:30 – 10:30 a.m.** **The next meeting will be on Friday September 6th.** This group is open to all parents, and children are welcome to attend with their parents. Please contact Blanca with questions at 815-927-5494.

Family Center for Autism Resources

Don't forget about our amazing lending library which is full of books, articles, games, and therapy tools. We have recently refreshed our resources with some new release books and we have titles on topics ranging from understanding ASD, biographies, sensory processing disorders, comparing treatment approaches, parenting strategies, anxiety, sibling support, social skills, and more. We also have books on many other special needs and typical development. The library is free to use and open to the public. Please call us today to set up a time to explore our library and consult with one of our staff! Call Valerie Lentz at 815-927-5465

What's going on in Your Community...

Workshops & Resource Fairs

Autism's Got Talent and Resource Fair

Come join us for a family fun event! There will be activity stations, face painting, balloon art and a photobooth. Meet with some of the local businesses. There will be raffle drawings and refreshments for purchase.

Witness the talent of those who are on the Autism spectrum as they showcase their skills on stage. Also witness the magic and grand illusion of Chicagoland's favorite magician The Amazing Christopher George! The act will feature grand scale magic illusions. Be amazed as an audience member gets sawed in half and one lucky audience member will magically disappear!

All proceeds will go to support families by purchasing medical insurance for children with Autism.

Saturday, September 21, 2019

Admission: Pay what you can All donations are welcomed!

Location: Parkwood Elementary, 2150 Laurel Avenue Hanover Park, Illinois

From 1:00pm — 4:00pm

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/autisms-got-talent-and-resource-fair-tickets-66435234575>

Recreational & Social Opportunities

Sensory Garden Playground

Play Day **August 17th 10am-12pm free of cost**

The Sensory Garden Playground is a combination of sensory-integrated playground equipment and amenities along with gardening areas.

2751 Navistar Drive, Lisle, IL 6053

Recurring Monthly Events

These events are going on every month out in your community. Please contact them directly for more information!

Exploration Station Special Needs Nights

Exploration Station is a wonderful children's museum in Bourbonnais. They host a special needs night on the **First Sunday of every month from 11am-12:30pm**. The staff at Exploration Station has taken special care to adapt the environment and provide an opportunity for children with special needs to

explore their exhibits so they can learn through hands on interaction. The museum is only open to families with special needs children during this time, which provides a safe and accepting environment. The fee is \$2.50 for residents and \$3.50 for non-residents. Exploration Station is located at Perry Farm Park on 459 N Kennedy Drive in Bourbonnais. Pre-registration is required. Call 815-933-9905 ext. 3 for more information or visit them online at https://www.btpd.org/es_about_us.php

Sensory Friendly Films at AMC

AMC has EXPANDED their Sensory Friendly Film program to include some evening hours with films geared towards an older crowd! The auditoriums dedicated to the program have their lights up, the sound turned down and audience members are invited to get up and dance, walk, shout or sing! They will now be on the **second and fourth Tuesday at 7pm AND second and fourth Saturday at 10 am every month.** Go to

<http://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films> for more information and to find a nearby theater that is participating in this great program!



DuPage Children's Museum Special Needs Nights

Did you know that the DuPage Children's Museum has a dedicated night for families of children with special needs? They do! It is the **third Thursday of every month from 5pm-7pm.** It is a time designated for the families of children with special needs to enjoy the museum in an inclusive, typically quieter, less crowded atmosphere. They have a creativity drop-in studio that implements sensory-based activities with a different theme every week along with purposeful play with peers, adaptive equipment, and guides to help parents use the exhibits for therapeutic benefit. Admission is \$11 per person, ages 1-59, and \$10 for anyone over 60. For more information go to their website at <http://dupagechildrens.org/>

Sensory Story Times

Fountaindale Public Library (in Bolingbrook on Briarcliff) offers a **FREE** drop-in Sensory Story time on the second Saturday of every month from 10:30 to 11:15 for children from 2 to 6 years old with a caregiver. This story time is geared "especially for children with sensory integration issues". Visit their calendar at <http://host7.evanced.info/fountaindale/evanced/eventcalendar.asp>

Sensory Sensitive Sundays at Chuck E. Cheese

CARD & Chuck E. Cheese's recently launched a national roll out of Sensory Sensitive Sundays across the United States! Sensory Sensitive Sundays occurs on the **first Sunday of every month 2 hours before the restaurant opens** to the general public. Along with less crowds and dimmed lighting, the music and animatronic show are turned off during this time with limited appearances by Chuck E. Please visit www.chuckecheese.com/sensory-sensitive-sundays for more information on Sensory Sensitive Sundays and to find all of the participating locations.

NAMI of Will-Grundy: Family Support Group

NAMI (National Alliance for Mental Illness) Family Support Group is a peer-led support group for family members, caregivers and loved ones of individuals living with mental illness. Families can gain insight from the challenges and successes of others facing similar circumstances. NAMI's Support Groups are unique because they follow a structured model, ensuring everyone has an opportunity to be heard and to get what they need. NAMI Will-Grundy offers a variety of locations and times for these free support groups. For more information visit <http://namiwillgrundy.org/familysupport/> or contact

NAMI Will-Grundy at (815) 731-9103 (call returned within 48 hours) or email info@namiwillgrundy.org.

Brookfield Zoo

Low-sensory room offers a quiet environment for children who may need a break from the potentially overstimulating environment of a day at the zoo. The room includes fidgets and other sensory-support materials, comfortable seating, blackout curtains, dimmable lights, and access to Wi-Fi. It is a safe and convenient place to deescalate before children and families return to their zoo visit. **Check if your local library offers free passes that can be checked out.** 8400 31st Street, Brookfield, IL 60513

Do you have an event coming up that would be of interest to families that have children with special needs?

We help to spread the word about events that are reasonably priced and promote awareness, inclusion, learning opportunities and fun for the special needs community! Please submit your events to vlentz@joliet.easterseals.com to be considered for our next newsletter

Articles of the Month

Establishing Good Sleep Hygiene

by Carin Lamm, MD Associate Clinical Professor of Pediatrics Diplomate American Academy of Sleep Medicine Director Pediatric Sleep Disorders Center Columbia University Medical Center

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/sleep>

Sleep problems are very common, reportedly as high as 80% in children with ASD. In typically developing children sleep problems and insufficient sleep can result in daytime sleepiness, learning problems and behavioral issues such as hyperactivity, inattentiveness and aggression. Recent research in children with ASD demonstrates that poor sleepers exhibit more problematic behavior than good sleepers.

Fortunately, there are several ways parents can improve a child's sleep.

Establishing good sleep hygiene by addressing the following domains is a good first step.

1. Sleep environment: the bedroom should be dark, quiet and cool. As children with ASD might be particularly sensitive to noises and/or have sensory issues, the environment should be adapted to make sure your child is as comfortable as possible.
2. Bedtime routine: the routine should be predictable, relatively short (20 - 30 minutes) and include relaxing activities such as reading or listening to quiet music. Avoid the use of electronics close to bedtime such as TV, computer, video games etc. that can be stimulating making it difficult for your child to fall asleep.
3. Sleep\wake schedule: the schedule should be regular with not much of a difference between the weekday and weekend schedule.
4. Teach your child to fall asleep alone: It is important that your child learn the skill of falling asleep without a parent present. All children

and adults wake briefly during the night but quickly put themselves back to sleep by reestablishing associations used at bedtime. So if your child needs a parent present to fall asleep at bedtime, he might need a parent to help him fall back asleep during the normal awakenings.

5. Exercise: Daytime exercise can make it easier to fall asleep and children who exercise tend to have deeper sleep. Avoid allowing your child to exercise too close to bedtime as it can make it difficult for him to fall asleep.
6. Avoid caffeine particularly close to bedtime, which can be alerting making it difficult for your child to fall asleep. Caffeine is found not only in coffee, but also in tea, chocolate and some sodas.
7. Naps are helpful for preschool children, but should not be taken late in the afternoon as they can interfere with bedtime.

It is important to address medical or psychiatric issues that potentially interfere with sleep. Your child's medications might need adjustment if they affect his sleep. If your child suffers from a sleep disorder such as sleep apnea, sleep walking, sleep terrors, restless legs syndrome, he may need a referral to a sleep specialist. Some children with persistent insomnia will need further behavioral or pharmacological treatment to improve their sleep.

In summary, although sleep problems are common in children with ASD they often can be helped. Better sleep for these children can potentially improve their daytime functioning as well as the sleep of family members.

10 things parents can do to help their child with autism

This is a post by Kimberlee Rutan McCafferty, mother to two sons on the autism spectrum and an Autism Family Partner at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). Kim is also the author of a blog about her two children with autism, at autismmommytherapist.wordpress.com

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/10-things-parents-can-do-help-their-child-autism>

It seems impossible, but somehow you've crossed everything off your initial to-do list, and your son or daughter is set. Maybe he is now firmly ensconced in an Early Intervention program, and you've already booked the eight million school evaluations required to get him into a pre-school program. Perhaps your daughter is older and has just entered a classroom, spent a few weeks there and is doing well. You've dotted your I's and crossed your T's, and for once there's no phone call to make, no appointment to schedule. You've gotten the help your child needs.

And perhaps as you're enjoying a latte (which I hope you are, you deserve it), you wonder what's next.

First of all, make sure you savor the moment. Take the time to celebrate your successful navigation of your state's Early Intervention system or your school district's IEP team, and give yourself about twenty hugs and buy yourself a little something fun.

Then take a deep breath, gird your loins, and move on to the next phase of your life with an autistic child.

I remember being at that phase, with my eldest son who is severely autistic being enrolled at three-and-a-half in a full day pre-school program and pregnant with my second child. While part of me wanted desperately to sit in bed all day and watch "Sex and the City" re-runs, I knew there was still a

lot to do that I'd put off while trying to get the appropriate services for my child and dealing with our move to a new state. Here are ten things I did (or wish I'd done) after the ink dried on my son's IEP.

1. No matter how exhausted you are, get your child out in the community. It was a struggle with us with Justin (I have the tiny little bite marks on my body to prove it) but getting him out so he could have a repertoire of leisure activities was crucial to his happiness and to our family's. It set him up for a lifetime of being able to try different things, which will set him in good stead when I'm no longer here to take his place. Yes, I'm always planning.
2. If you haven't already done so, join a parent group and/or your school district's special education PTA. You will make invaluable connections at both. Try to find parents of kids with your kid's level of autism as you're making friends. These people will be a wealth of information for you and a lifeline.
3. If you can afford it, hire an advocate to check out your child's school program. A fresh set of eyes may see areas that need to improve, or may reassure you that they are doing all they can for your son or daughter. It's always good to know one in case you need an advocate at an IEP meeting. If you've already met you won't be scrambling to find one.
4. If possible, volunteer at school functions or offer to be a class mom. This is a great way to get to know your child's teacher and your school's administrators better. You may also make friends with other parents too.
5. No matter how difficult your child can be, take any offer of babysitting you can and get out. You need a night off from autism once in a while. Even if it's for a few hours, a break will help.
6. Now that your child's program is set tackle the big issues one at a time- perhaps it's sleeping, or eating, or potty training. If your child is in a private school there may be a BCBA on staff who can help you. If

not and you can afford it, consider hiring a BCBA from an agency. Pick an issue and prioritize.

7. Educate your friends and family as to what's going on in your household. Perhaps you've been too tired up to this point to talk to people not in the "tribe" about what raising an autistic child is really like. It's time to tell them and ask for the support you need, even if it's just an ear to listen. My husband and I kept too much to ourselves, and if I could go back in time I'd be more open with everyone in our lives.
8. Make those doctor appointments for yourself that you've been putting off. Just do it.
9. Get involved in an autism walk in your community. It is so powerful to meet so many families like (and unlike) yours. It will give you strength.
10. I can't stress this one enough- take care of yourself, not just your kid. Autism is a marathon, not a sprint. You owe it to yourself and your child to be whole, healthy, and happy. Do whatever it takes to get there.

McAlister's Deli gave me a chance and a new outlook on life

This post is by Amanda Roberts, she is a 20-year-old woman on the autism spectrum. She currently works at McAlister's Deli. [McAlister's is an Autism Speaks World Autism Month partner.](https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/mcalisters-deli-gave-me-chance-and-new-outlook-life)

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/mcalisters-deli-gave-me-chance-and-new-outlook-life>

When I was diagnosed with autism, I was told that I was intellectually impaired, would never be able to be included with neurotypical kids and I would never be trainable. My mom did not accept that autism diagnosis. Instead, she encouraged me by keeping me mainstream through most of my education.

Once I graduated high school my mom still expected me to work. Through [Path Forward Kentucky](#)'s supported employment program I have had a job at McAlister's Deli for 10 months. The supported employment program is where I met with a job coach and did a personal-centered employment plan to figure out which jobs would be best for me.

I work 13-16 hours a week at McAlister's 4-5 days a week. My job tasks include bussing tables, getting people refills, carrying out food, sweeping and cleaning bathrooms. I have been so blessed that I have the ability to work to show people that even though I have autism I still have the potential to work and I am not different. God has been on my side the past 20 years, he showed me the way to a great job, I thank McAlister's Deli for giving me a job opportunity.

