

The ALL ABOARD NEWS



A Quarterly Publication from the Advisory Board on Autism and Related Disorders

Volume XIII— Issue 2

Spring 2009

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PRESENTS:

The Clash Between Zero Tolerance and Autism in Schools and in the Criminal Justice System

Presented by Arthur D. Feldman, Esq. and Rebecca Klaw, MS, MEd.

Duquesne University
Bayer Learning Center, Pappert Lecture Hall
600 Forbes Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15282

Saturday, May 16, 2009
8:30 a.m. – Noon

Recommended audiences include parents and extended families of children and adults with an autism spectrum disorder, regular and special education teachers, para-professional support staff, guidance counselors, social workers, clinicians, advocates, attorneys, psychologists and all those desiring knowledge about ASD.

Learning objectives:

- Participants will become familiar with the manifestations of autism and how this must be considered by everyone when a student with ASD fails to follow the school's code of conduct.
- Participants will learn at least one proactive approach and one reactive approach to protecting students with ASD who might at some point in their school career violate Zero Tolerance.
- Participants will understand the required elements of knowledge and intent behind the definition of common crimes in Pennsylvania's Crime Code and how this knowledge and intent might be completely different for those with ASD.
- Participants will learn new ways to advocate for those with autism who are caught in the criminal justice system.

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Chairman's Message

Dear Friends,

Our 8th Annual Spring conference "Integrative Biomedical Treatment Options for Children & Adults with ASD" was a huge success. Thank you to Dr. Faber and Dr. Bock for providing informative presentations on the state of biomedical thinking and treatments for individuals with ASD.

April is Autism Awareness Month. For ABOARD, every month is an opportunity for us to raise awareness, educate parents and professionals and maximize the potential and possibility for your loved ones. As parents, everyday is an opportunity for us to enjoy the special gifts of our children.

Some of the events this quarter include the "The 1st Annual Adult Autism Awareness Day" being held on Saturday, April 18, 2009 at the University of Pittsburgh, William Pitt Union. The purpose of this event is to create awareness of our Adult Autism community, demonstrate the importance of transition planning, promote inclusiveness through education, and improve social and employment outcomes for adults with autism.

We are also hosting a conference with Rebecca Klaw and Arthur Feldman, "The Clash between Zero Tolerance and Autism in

Schools and in the Criminal Justice System" at Duquesne University on May 16, 2009. We will learn proactive and reactive approaches to protecting students with ASD who might at some point violate the school code (Zero Tolerance). Participants will also learn new ways to advocate for those with ASD who are caught in the criminal justice system.

In May, ABOARD will again be a part of Walk for a Healthy Community presented by Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield. For more information please go to www.walkforahealthycommunity.org and pick ABOARD. 100% of all the proceeds ABOARD supporters collect will go to continuing our mission of providing education, advocacy and support to parents and professionals living and working with ASD. Join us for this fun and worthwhile Pittsburgh event.

We have made it through another winter. Enjoy the opportunities to learn more during Autism Awareness Month. Enjoy being outdoors with your family again. And THANK YOU for supporting ABOARD! We will continue to be there for you when questions arise or you just need a listening ear.

Sincerely,

Elliot Frank, Chairperson

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***What is the
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Advisory
Council (PAC)?***

***ABOARD's
Professional
Advisory
Council is
comprised of
a group of
professional
individuals
that work in
the autism
community.
This council
helps promote
resources,
information
and latest
technology/
trends to help
those with
autism while
providing
guidance and
support to
ABOARD.***

The Advisory Board on Autism & Related Disorders (ABOARD)

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WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT HOW SCHOOLS ADDRESS BEHAVIOR ISSUES

Many parents of special needs children are not familiar with how special education law addresses treatment of behavior issues in school. We may hear terms like "behavior plans" or "manifestation hearing" but are not quite sure what these terms mean or how they are implemented in the school setting. In this article, we will learn about some of the terminology used in regulations governing schools and behavioral issues, what process schools are supposed to follow in dealing with such issues, and what protections are provided to special education students going through this process.

First, let's take a look at some of the terminology used in regulations outlining procedures used by schools in dealing with discipline or behavior issues.

(1) Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) - process by which facts are gathered from various sources regarding the child's behavior and circumstances surrounding the behavior

(2) Positive Behavioral Support Plan (PSBP) - a plan developed by the IEP team designed to improve or eliminate behaviors in children that significantly impact their learning or that of others

(3) Positive Behavioral Interventions - strategies characterized by approval or acceptance designed to teach new behaviors

(4) Function - the purpose or reason for the child's behavior

(5) Manifestation Hearing - a hearing held to determine whether or not child's behavior was caused by the child's disability

(6) Antecedent - circumstances surrounding the problem behavior

(7) Aversive Techniques - activities designed to establish a negative association with a certain behavior

(8) Hypothesis - an educated guess as to reasons for child's problem behavior

There are two distinct situations where schools will conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment or FBA.

The first situation is when a student is facing a disciplinary change of placement

The other situation where a school must conduct an FBA is when the IEP team has acknowledged that the student exhibits behaviors that significantly impede his/her learning or that of others.

There are two distinct situations where schools will conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment or FBA. The first situation is when a student is facing a disciplinary change of placement. In Pennsylvania this occurs when a child with a disability is removed for:

- * More than 10 consecutive school days, OR
- * More than 15 cumulative school days in a school year, OR

- * When school days 11 - 15 constitute a pattern of exclusion, OR
- * Even one school day for students with mental retardation
- * Up to 45 school days to an interim alternative educational setting for violations involving drugs, weapons, or a serious bodily injury.

Before a change of placement can occur, a manifestation hearing must be held to determine whether or not the problem behavior was a manifestation of the student's disability. If it is determined that the behavior is such a manifestation, then the school district must EITHER conduct an FBA and develop a Positive Behavior Support Plan (PSBP) OR review and modify the existing PSBP to prevent recurrence of the behavior. The student is then returned to his original placement except in special circumstances where the behavior involved weapons, illegal drugs or serious bodily harm.

The other situation where a school must conduct an FBA is when the IEP team has acknowledged that the student exhibits behaviors that significantly impede his/her learning or that of others. This is indicated by checking the "YES" box on the student's IEP in the section entitled "Special Considerations the IEP Team Must Consider Before Developing the IEP." The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act regulations state:

The IEP team shall, in the case of a child whose behavior impedes his or her learning or that of others, consider, where appropriate, strategies including positive behavioral interventions, strategies, and supports that address that behavior.

34 C.F.R. 360.346(a)(2)(i). School per-

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW — CONTINUED

sonnel should then conduct a Functional Behavior Assessment, which will result in a Positive Behavior Support Plan. The purpose of this plan is to design interventions with the goal to reduce or eliminate problem behaviors, and to have a plan in place to support the student when s/he is experiencing difficulties and/or is unable to control behavior. This plan then becomes part of the student's IEP.

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A Functional Behavior Assessment may be conducted in slightly different manners but basically consists of three components:

STEP ONE: INTERVIEW. The IEP team, including persons who have observed the behavior of the student in a variety of settings and conditions, completes the interview questions

focusing on antecedents, behaviors, and consequences

STEP TWO: DIRECT OBSERVATION. Data is collected through direct observation in student's natural environment. This data supports or refutes the interview information.

STEP THREE: SUMMARY. The IEP team summarizes the interview information and observation data and forms a hypothesis identifying the function the behavior is serving for the student. The IEP team then uses this information to develop a Positive Behavior Support Plan. The team will continue to monitor the student's behavior to measure progress and revise PBSP as necessary.

It is of great importance to keep in mind that it is the IEP TEAM who gathers data and develops the Positive Behavior Support Plan. The PARENT is part of the IEP TEAM so should participate in the gathering of data and development of the plan.

It is also important to note the protections built into the regulations and procedures for the student. Note that the plan developed by the IEP team to address behaviors must contain POSITIVE behavior supports. The regulations state clearly that:

Positive, rather than negative, measures must form the basis of behavior support programs to ensure that all students and eligible young children shall be free from demeaning treatment, the use of aversive techniques and the unreasonable use of restraints The use of restraints is considered a measure of last resort only to be used after other less re-

strictive measure, including de-escalation techniques, in accord with subsection (c)(2).

Positive, rather than negative, measures must form the basis of behavior support programs to ensure that all students and eligible young children shall be free from demeaning treatment, the use of aversive techniques and the unreasonable use of restraints The use of restraints is considered a measure of last resort only to be used after other less restrictive measure, including de-escalation techniques, in accord with subsection (c)(2).

It is also important to note that if a child with a disability undergoes a change of placement for disciplinary reasons, s/he is still entitled to receive educational services either in the home or in an alternate educational setting. This right is to ensure that the student is able to receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) as guaranteed by IDEA.

By Donna Morris

Donna Morris is an education advocate/attorney practicing in Western Pennsylvania. She can be reached at 412-576-7441 or at donnajl742@comcast.net.



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Sarah McAuliffe-Bellin, M.Ed., Study Coordinator, at 412-235-5447
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Who is Eligible to Participate?

Children must...

- Have symptoms or a diagnosis of Autistic Disorder, Asperger's Disorder or Pervasive Developmental Disorder (PDD)
- Have symptoms such as over-activity, inattention, and impulsivity
- Be between 5 and 13 years of age
- Not be on medication or be on medications that are not working well

Supporting students with High Functioning Autism and Asperger's in Higher Education; The AHEAD Model

save the date for the 1st annual

ADULT • AUTISM awareness day



Saturday, April 18, 2009
University of Pittsburgh
Lower Lounge, William Pitt Union
9am-1pm

Act 48 Credit Available | Lunch Included
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AHEAD (Achieving in Higher Education with Autism/Developmental Disabilities) is a private, community organization that provides support for college students with Learning Disabilities, High-Functioning Autism (HFA), Asperger's Syndrome (AS), Non-Verbal Learning Disorder (NVLD) and Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD). Originally developed in cooperation with Equal Opportunity Services of Carnegie Mellon University in 2002, AHEAD is specifically designed to support students with impairments in social, communication, and organizational skills by assisting them to develop individualized strategies to manage their college careers with maximum independence. AHEAD's mission is to establish and maintain best practices of support in a manner that respects students as adults, complements the traditional college accommodations plan, and maximizes use of existing campus resources while maintaining the integrity of campus culture and academic integrity. Program fees vary depending upon location and range from \$4200-\$5700 per semester. In keeping with AHEAD's mission to maintain the financial accessibility of this support, there are many ways that we assist families in reducing the out of pocket cost. AHEAD is currently located in Pittsburgh, Albany, DC, Miami, Long Island, Baltimore, College Park MD, and Bakersfield CA.

The AHEAD Model of support can be applied within any campus environment and is tailored to meet the unique needs of each student. It is the most comprehensive and effective private support structure available for students with HFA/AS, NVLD, LD, and ADD who want to attend college but may flounder in the absence of the support made available to them through high school. That said, AHEAD's effectiveness is predicated on two factors: that its students are willing participants in the program and are able to function with relative independence on a college campus. Students who have difficulty navigating the physical campus or waking up to attend class, for example, may benefit from more comprehensive support than that provided through AHEAD.

The AHEAD Model of Support Involves Four Core Elements:

1. AHEAD Professional Staff Involvement
2. Development of Campus and Community Support Network
3. Utilization of Campus Resources
4. Peer Mentoring

The AHEAD Model—Continued

1. Professional Staff Involvement

AHEADD's professional staff work alongside each student during twice-weekly, individual meetings to address personal and academic goals established at the beginning of each semester, increase academic accountability and ensure that the student is content with his/her overall quality of life. These meetings are also aimed toward assisting students to develop individualized strategies for managing various aspects of their college careers, including:

- self-advocacy
- faculty and classroom communication
- time management and organizational skills
- opportunities for social interaction and development of social skills
- utilization of campus and community resources

These meetings may last from 30 minutes to an hour or more depending upon the needs of the student on that particular day. Each meeting begins with discussion of upcoming academic obligations and insuring that those obligations have been entered into the student's weekly responsibilities and problem-solve for in completed work or unmet obligations. During these meetings, AHEADD staff also assist students in drafting important communication with faculty, peers and peer mentors and, of equal importance, help students to identify and connect with appropriate campus resources.

After the academic component of the meeting is completed, staff facilitate conversation and problem solving which is focused on larger, quality of life issues such as campus involvement, roommate relations, completion of activities of daily living (i.e. hygiene and diet), getting a job, etc. As the student and AHEADD staff develop rapport, this aspect of each meeting be-

comes increasingly meaningful and productive.

2. Development of Campus and Community Support Network Outside of the twice-weekly meetings, staff regularly liaise with Disability Resource Services regarding development and implementation of accommodations, as well as with each student's faculty and related professionals. The objectives and benefits of these interactions include:

- developing awareness within the campus and community network of support
- ensuring that all team members are aligned in their perception of the student's needs and performance
- problem solving when there is a disconnect between the student and professor's perception of his/her performance
- providing a consistent message from all team members to the student

3. Utilization of Campus Resources

While AHEADD's professional staff provide particular expertise in supporting students with Learning Disabilities, HFA/AS, NVLD and ADD, it is important to engage 'natural supports' through existing campus resources which provide essential expertise in the following areas:

- Disabilities Resources
- Student Health and local medical professionals
- Counseling and Psychological Services
- Academic Development/Learning Center for content tutoring and writing assistance
- Academic Advisors and Faculty Mentors
- Extracurricular activities and Clubs
- Career Counseling
- Work-study programs

4. Peer Mentoring Program

This is comprised of 'typical' students who

volunteer their time to provide (empathetic) social opportunity and outlet for students enrolled in AHEADD. The Mentors also contribute valuable insight into challenges that our students may be facing during social situations which AHEADD's staff can then incorporate into discussions during the twice-weekly meetings.

Our Peer Mentors enter into the program through a comprehensive orientation program and are then paired with an AHEADD student. The mentors and students make arrangements to socialize independent of staff involvement and aim to get together at least once every week or two. AHEADD also hosts a monthly 'large group' mentoring activity during which all of the Mentors, AHEADD students and staff are invited to join in various events around town, including dinners, bowling, pot luck and board game parties, as well as picnics and athletic games.

Peer Mentors are asked to participate in two 'decompression' meetings over the course of each semester during which AHEADD staff provide professional guidance in response to any challenges the Mentors are experiencing.

By Carolyn Komich Hare, Executive Director, Achieving in Higher Education with Autism/ Developmental Disabilities

"I have known of initiatives from within the college/university, but to have a model that you can take anywhere is revolutionary--or maybe it's "evolutionary."

—Dr. Monica Andrews, EdD



April Autism Awareness Month

The FBR Foundation Presents: FREE Autism Awareness Night 2009

This annual event, hosted this year on April 2, 2009 (International Autism Awareness Day), features Dr. Diane Williams from 6:30pm-9pm at the Holiday Inn, North Hills (4859 McKnight Road, Pittsburgh, PA 15237). A co-director of the University of Pittsburgh's Center for Excellence in Autism Research and an Assistant Professor at Duquesne University, Dr. Williams will present "Developing Language in Children with Autism - Insights from Neuroscience." Light refreshments and exhibitors will be available. A limited number of exhibitor space and multiple sponsorship opportunities are still available. Free respite care for families is available (limit 50 children) as well. For more information or to RSVP, contact autismservices@familybehavioralresources.com or 724-861-4700/1-866-4-FBR-ASD. To discuss exhibitor space or sponsorship, please contact Mary Ellen Greacen at megreacen@familybehavioralresources.com.

The Hope Learning Center Presents Carol Kranowitz, author of *The Out of Sync Child*

The Hope Learning Center is proud to present an all day conference featuring Carol Kranowitz, author of *The Out of Sync Child* on Friday, April 3, 2009. Ms Kranowitz has written many articles on sensory processing, child development, and preschool curricula for magazines such as *Parenting*, *Sesame Street Magazine*, *Child Care Information Exchange*, and *Family Circle*. The presentation will focus on Understanding Sensory Processing Disorders. For additional information and to register, please call 724.933.HOPE or visit our website at www.thehopelearningcenter.com

Dual Diagnosis: Autism and Mental Retardation

Allegheny County Office of Mental Retardation / Developmental Disabilities invites you to attend a workshop designed for individuals and their families and caregivers. Dual Diagnosis: Autism and Mental Retardation will be held on Saturday, April 4th from 9:00 am until 3:00 pm at CCAC Boyce Campus and will feature presentations by APS Healthcare; PA Office of Developmental Programs' Bureau of Autism Services; and Joe & Marilyn Henn, parents of an adult daughter with autism, who will share their inspirational story. For more information, please contact Tamara Siegert at 412-253-1596 or tsiegert@alleghenycounty.us

"Demystifying Autism: An Inside-Out Perspective" with William Stillman

Youth Advocate Programs is sponsoring a workshop with William Stillman, nationally-known autism speaker and author, on April 9, 2009 at the Meadville Elks Club in Meadville, PA. As a person with Asperger's Syndrome, Mr. Stillman provides a non-clinical, humanistic view of autism from the perspective of those who experience it. For more information visit Mr. Stillman's website at www.williamstillman.com or contact Patti Lesh at 814-337-8323 or PLesh@yapinc.org. You can view the brochure at www.yapinc.org by clicking on the photo of William Stillman labeled workshop. We hope to see you there!

The Children's Institute Presents:

Funding and Resources for Children with Special health Care Needs

Thursday, April 16, 2009 7-8:30 p.m. at The Children's Institute Multi Purpose Room, 1405 Shady Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15217 Presented by Joseph L. Romano, Esq., a nationally recognized attorney/advocate. Program Overview: Health Insurance: How To Identify Coverage, Appealing a Denial of Benefits, Letters of Medical Necessity and Extra-Contractual Benefits, Coordination and Maximizing Service for Children with Complex Medical Needs, and planning for the Future—What Every Parent Needs to Know about Wills and Estate Planning. RSVP by April 9, call 412-420-2272. There is no charge for this program. Refreshments will be provided.

Conferences and Events Listing



Pressley Ridge Presents Navigating the Shoals of Transition: Students on the Autism Spectrum

Join Pressley Ridge Friday Forum on Friday, April 17, 2009 at 8:30-10:30 am for a discussion with Susan Lautenbacher, Pressley Ridge Director of Autism & Developmental Disabilities Program at Pressley Ridge, - Stayton Square, 2611 Stayton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15212 . 8:30-9:00 Breakfast & Networking - 9:00-10:30 Presentation and Q&A Session RSVP by April 13, 2009 to Amy Giese at 412-872-9406 or agiese@pressleyridge.org. Register at www.pressleyridge.org/fridayforum.

ASA Greater Phila. Chapter presents 10th Annual Autism Awareness Day

A fun filled day at the Philadelphia Zoo for the Autism Community as well as family and friends as we promote Autism Awareness to the general community. The day's events include entertainment of Puppet shows, Magic, Juggling, Music, Face Painting, Games Children's characters and much more! Resource and Information tables will be available. Date of the event is Sunday, April 19, 2009. Tickets are discounted at \$10 for Zoo Admission. The time of the event runs 11am to 4pm. (Zoo gates open at 9:30am) Visit our website www.asaphilly.org for more details or contact Anna Filmyer 215-884.0844 or Anacan@comcast.net for information.

"Positive Parenting" presented by Deborah Gilman, PhD,

"Positive Parenting" presented by Deborah Gilman, PhD, licensed psychologist and Victoria Moore, PsyD., postdoctoral fellow, The Watson Institute. In this workshop parents will learn the difference between discipline and punishment, age-appropriate expectations and options when children test limits. The workshop provides parents with specific direction to help create an environment in the home that will properly direct and strengthen behavior. Friday, April 24, 2009 from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m. at The Watson Institute, 301 Camp Meeting Rd., Sewickley, PA 15143. Cost is \$55 per person and includes lunch. Call 412-749-2889 to register.

4th Annual Autism Alliance of Chester County Conference

April 29th and April 30th, 2009 from 8:00 to 4:00. Location, Chester County Intermediate Unit. Day One of the conference will feature researchers from the newly established Center for Autism Research (CAR) at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia and the University of Pennsylvania. CAR is using cutting-edge research technology to study why and how children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) differ from one another and how those differences translate into developmental courses and different treatment needs. Day two "Creating Agreement" is an educational and training opportunity designed to focus participants' understanding of, and skill development in, the areas of conflict, effective communication, collaboration and problem solving. The aim is for appropriate and successful outcomes at the local level. Registration: www.autismallianceofchestercounty.org or e-mail autismalliance@mac.com or <https://www.mylearningplan.com/WebReg/ActivityProfile.asp?D=10227&i=554643&h=1>

Roadside Party for Autism Awareness to benefit ABOARD!

Liberty Tax Service joins the fight to help raise awareness on Autism! On April 3, 2009, Liberty Tax Service located on Route 30 in Bedford Pennsylvania will be hosting its first ever Autism Awareness Roadside Party to benefit ABOARD. ABOARD (Advisory Board on Autism and Related Disorders) has generously donated several items for our raffle including a 3 piece luggage set, 4 tickets to Idlewild, and much more by many local companies. Come join us for food and fun for the entire family all day long, while we raise public awareness on Autism! This is a rain or shine event! If you would like more information please contact: Liberty Tax Service, Angela Fabian, 2761 Teaberry Road, Bedford, PA 15522, (814) 623-3833 or afabian@localnet.com

**To those who give
so much and ask so
little, our heartfelt
thanks.**

We join all of our friends in the community in expressing our deep appreciation for all you've done.

Thank you to ABOARD. Their great efforts have touched the lives of so many in the community.





We don't
expect
kids to learn
the way we teach.
We teach
the way kids
learn.

Visit us for an OPEN HOUSE in:

Monroeville: March 18, 2009
10:00 - 2:00 and 3:30 - 6:30

Berwick: March 25, 2009
10:00 - 2:00 and 3:30 - 6:30



Milestones Achievement Centers of America, Inc.

Every child is unique. Some children with serious and/or complex educational and behavioral challenges need a school that can implement an individualized program integrating all supports needed to attain a better life, including returning to the child's home school district. Milestones Achievement Centers are the answer.

- Pennsylvania Department of Education licensed private school for students with developmental disorders, including autism spectrum disorders
- Class size is small, with a maximum of 8 students per class.
- Classroom teachers are certified in special education and have experience with students with developmental disorders. Most paraprofessionals have a minimum of a Bachelor's Degree and experience in the field.

Supports
Available:

- Applied Behavioral Analysis
- Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy
- Behavior Support Staff
- Nursing Services
- Physical Therapy
- Special Education

Visit our schools:

Allentown - 610.973.0970
Berwick - 570.752.5002
Dubois - 814.37.5387

Harrisburg - 717.901.9906
Indiana - 724.463.9841
Monroeville - 412.373.5235

Reading - 610.396.3672
Wyoming - 570.714.2350
York - 717.767.8902

Pittsburgh Early Autism Study

Our Goal

Understand the earliest indicators of autism spectrum disorders (ASD)

What We Now Know

Family videotapes of children later diagnosed with ASD suggest that diagnostic signs may emerge within the first year of life

What We Will Do

Study infants who have an older brother or sister already diagnosed with ASD

Look for infant behaviors that predict a later ASD diagnosis

Benefits

Screens and assessments of autism symptoms between 18 and 48 months at no cost

How You Can Help

Participate with your infant in one or both of the projects on the reverse side. Compensation is available for participants.

How Babies Develop Intellectually

(directed by Dr. Mark Strauss)

Where: Infant & Toddler Development Center, University of Pittsburgh (free parking provided)

When: Infants are seen at 6, 11, 16, 24, 36 and 48 months of age

What: Babies watch pictures and movies (e.g. Mr. Rogers Neighborhood) while we record how they look at them

Infants who do not have a sibling with autism are also welcome in this research study

Website: www.pitt.edu/~infants
Email: infants@pitt.edu

How Babies Communicate

(directed by Dr. Jana Iverson)

Where: In your own home at a time convenient for you

When: Monthly while babies are between 5 and 14 months, then again at 18, 24, and 36 months

What: Trained staff visit your home for about an hour and observe infants during everyday activities and playtime with you

Website: www.pitt.edu/~icl
Email: icl@pitt.edu

Pitt Early
Autism
Study
Supported by the National
Institute of Health



1-866-647-3436 or
autismrecruiter@upmc.edu

Wesley Spectrum Family and Child Development Center Specializing in the Treatment of Children with Autism and other Development Disabilities



BHRS IN-HOME SERVICES (WRAPAROUND) using Applied Behavioral Analysis (Verbal Behavior) and Relational Therapy for treatment.

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PRIVATE ACADEMIC SCHOOL: K-3 Elementary Center that includes speech, language, music and occupational therapy on site.

THERAPEUTIC CREATIVE ARTS: music, movement and art groups, instrument instruction and programs focusing on expressive arts.

ALSO OFFERING: parent support groups, sibshops for families, trainings for groups and school consultations.

Visit www.wesleyspectrum.org for career opportunities.



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412-573-0141

South Center
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Canonsburg, PA
724-820-1590

Butler Center
371 North Main St.
Butler, PA
724-841-0910

Facing Challenges

Growing up was hard for me as I had many challenges to face. I was different than others it seemed from the word go. I was very aware of my differences. I lacked social skills and had passions that my peers did not share. Although I was very aware of my differences, I was unaware I had Asperger's Syndrome.

My mother worked very diligently with me on learning social skills. I looked at shoes when I spoke to people instead of their face. My mom taught me to look people in the face and even in between their eyes if it was uncomfortable to look them directly in the eyes.

I also had fixations that my peers did not have. At the age of four, I was fixated on the band Kiss. At the age of 7, I watched a show on the great white shark and decided to become a marine biologist. Sharks became my passion. I can and still can tell you more about sharks than you would ever want to know.

Life changed for me at the age of 8 when my father entered the military. Moving made me realize just how different I was. I also began dealing with some frightening new differences. I began to experience extreme highs and lows in mood. I contemplated and even attempted suicide at that young age. I hid how I felt from everyone, a pattern that continued for many years.

I did well in school and excelled at academics. At the age of 15, I entered college determined to begin pursuing my dream of being a marine biologist. I began to take science courses but quickly realized that the reality was very different from what I dreamed it would

be. This set me off on another leg of my journey, which was this: what would I be when I grew up? I transferred to complete work on my BA after completing my AA. I took a religion course as a school requirement and said to myself "Wow. This was neat". I made religion my minor and began taking more courses.

My religion course led to a campus job in the religion department. It was in working for the professors that I first experienced the call of God to a life of service. Though I felt a call, I did not know what to do with it so I figured I would become a pastor. After all, the church needed ministers. I was a pastor's daughter so I knew what I was getting into.

It was during this time that my health really began to deteriorate. I received the first of my diagnoses, Bi-polar Disorder. I transferred to be closer to home. I realized that, as my health had suffered, so had my faith. I needed to focus on getting me physically, mentally, and spiritually healthy before I could continue any discernment process on ministry.

It was Ash Wednesday of 1999, that I first met Lyla Klee. Lyla is an Associate in Ministry, then at Messiah Lutheran Church in Alexandria, VA. Lyla became my spiritual mentor and urged me to explore my feelings of the call of God. I threw myself into my new congregation and even went onto church council.

It was during this period that I first became aware of the deaconess community. Maybe this was the direction that God was calling me instead of being a pastor. I talked with the community and attended a discernment weekend. That

weekend was invaluable to me. I learned my spiritual gifts and left with a greater sense of the direction God was calling me into; Word, Service, and Community.

I kept moving as my Father was assigned to various places while working on getting well mentally, physically, and spiritually. One place we were led was Hawaii. I had a psychiatrist that pronounced me med stabilized and med compliant. Something still was not quite right. The doctor asked my Mother and I questions about my growing up. This led to the diagnosis of Asperger's Syndrome.

It was during this time I began to substitute teach. I fell in love with teaching. I began to pursue a teaching degree. Within two weeks of starting this particular part of my journey I was signed up, had financial aid, and began classes within a month. I was also able to find a full time teaching job at Waipahu High School teaching Special Education, the field I had chosen to go into. I knew that deaconesses often have other careers to aid in their ministry so I decided to focus on that.

Over the next eighteen months I taught full time and went to school on Fridays. I worked hard and was very proud of my 3.94 GPA when I received my teaching degree. My dad received orders to move yet again, this time to IL. After much prayer and deliberation, I decided to move back with them to IL. Unfortunately with the high cost of living in Hawaii and the low teacher pay I could not see how I could make ends meet. Besides, since the Army had paid to move to move me to Hawaii, they would also

pay to move me back to the mainland.

I threw myself into getting my Illinois teaching certificate and finding a job. After many months of searching, I found a job at Prophetstown High School for the fall of 2005. I began team teaching but was not very happy as something was missing. In February, I was called into the principal's office and told I my contract was not being renewed for next year. I was given the option of resigning and I chose to do this. I was devastated. I had looked so hard last spring for a job only to be back in the same position again.

My mom has a saying that when a door closes God always opens a window. I began to pray in my search for a new job. As I began exploring options, I began to think about what my dream job would be like. I realized that my dream was to teach Special Education in a Christian setting.

As I was checking email the thought crossed my mind, maybe now is the time to explore becoming a deaconess again. So with fear and great trepidation, I began the process that led me to Seminary. In Seminary, for the first time in my life I failed both a test and a course. I failed a History exam but managed to pass the course with a C-. I worked hard to bring up my grade and did everything possible to ensure I passed. It was a huge blow to someone who has always prided herself on rigorous academic abilities. Then in the spring semester I took Systematic Theology. I struggled with it all semester and in the end did not pass. This was even more of a blow than failing the test had been. I was completely devastated and began questioning God's call for my life.

By Sr. Elizabeth Conway

Kids Korner

Hi, my name is Kathleen, I am nine years old and I have OCD. My mom figured out I had OCD when I was six, she knew what was happening since my older sister Bridget also has it. When I was six I had a lot of weird habits. Some of them I don't even like to talk about now. The main habit, that I don't mind telling you about was that I would say 'I think' before everything I said! I mean everything. At first it seemed funny but then I couldn't stop saying it no matter what. I also did a lot of checking, like the bathroom spigots and lights and doors. I would worry about all of these things all the time. Many times I would have to sit with my mom at night on the couch and try to get my mind from racing about my worries.

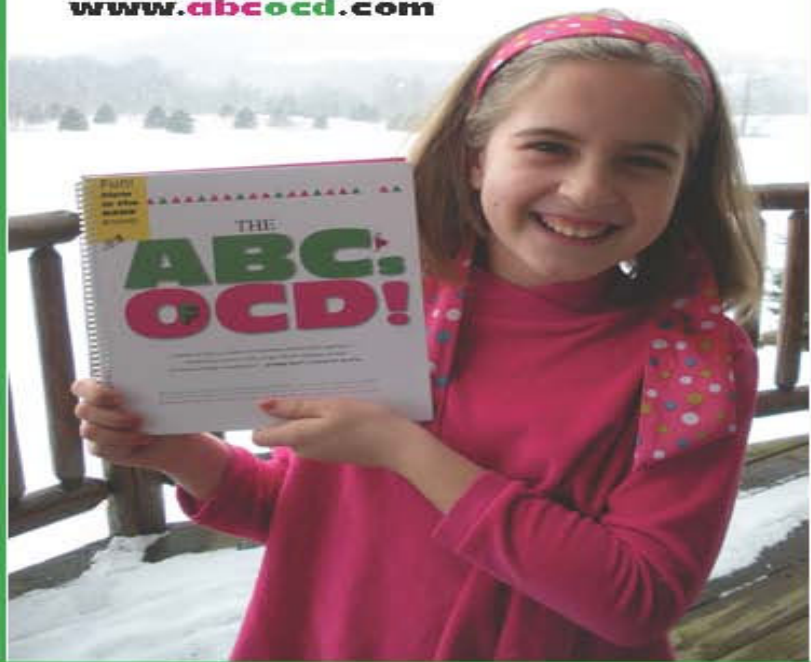
My mom found a nice doctor that helps other kids with OCD and we started to meet at her office in town. She showed me ways to start to boss back my worries. We even named the 'worry' a funny name so that when I had it, I could say the funny name to take my mind off of it. After practicing this a lot, my worries would kind of go away.


Another thing I love to do to keep my mind off of my worries is write and draw and do art. When I was eight I wrote a book with the letters of the alphabet about my OCD. I really liked working on something and my mom said this might be able to help other kids with OCD. When I do my writing and art I don't worry about things so much. My mom helped me put my words and my picture of my 'Boss Back' guy on the computer so we could make a book. We named him 'Boss-Bax' and I made a big group of them so we added them to the book.

My book is called *The ABC's of OCD*. It starts with 'A is for always doing it AGAIN'. I like glow-in-the-dark so we have that on the edges of the book to make it more fun to have.


Now that I am nine, my OCD has gotten much better. I am very glad that I went to the OCD doctor to learn how to tell my habits to go away. Sometimes they are still there but the habits don't bother me as much. I like to say 'Life will be OK', that's in my book too!

www.abcoed.com






Pace School, a placement option for school districts in Allegheny and surrounding counties, serving kids K-9 with emotional challenges or autism





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With our 2-to-1 camper-to-staff ratio, we are able to ensure that your child has an outstanding experience, creating memories that last a lifetime.

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*Do you have questions or concerns about
the way your child plays, moves or talks?*

Our Program:

- Is open to Allegheny County children ages birth to 3-years
- Monitors your child's development
- Coordinates referrals to other agencies
- Answers your questions about how your child grows and learns
- Is offered in home and at no cost
- Actively involves parents and other caregivers
- Is confidential

Early Intervention in Pennsylvania is a system of services and supports designed to help families with children who have or who are at risk of developmental delays. In Allegheny County, coordination of services for children between birth to 3-years of age is provided by the Alliance for Infants and Toddlers, Inc.

Contact The Alliance to make an appointment

412.885.6000

FREE Special Care Planning Workshop
Saturday, May 2nd 2009
9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Location: ABOARD Office
Registration is required and limited to 50 seats!

What is Special Care Planning?

For parents of a loved one with special needs there may come a time, through sickness, disability or death, when you will not be able to provide care for them. For this reason, many families choose to go through the Special Care Planning process. This planning process involves a broad range of solutions and plans designed to help secure the future of loved ones with special needs.

Helen Sims and Clint Guyaux, Special Care Planners from the financial group of Guyaux Mandler Mah will be facilitating this workshop.

We will also be discussing the results of the Easter Seals' Living with Autism Study (made possible by Mass-Mutual Financial Group)

Topics that will be addressed during the workshop are as follows:

- Preservation of government benefits
- Person Centered Planning Process
- Future Care Strategy
- Letter of Intent
- Financial Strategy
- Medicaid/Medicare laws and regulations
- Social Security
- Trusts (special needs trusts)
- Guardianship/ Conservatorship
- Durable power of attorney for health care and asset management
- Tax (income, estate and gift) planning
- Housing and health care contracts
- Coordination of Beneficiary Designations.

This presentation is designed to be introductory in nature. Parents wishing to have their specific family situations discussed are welcome to schedule individual appointments as needed.

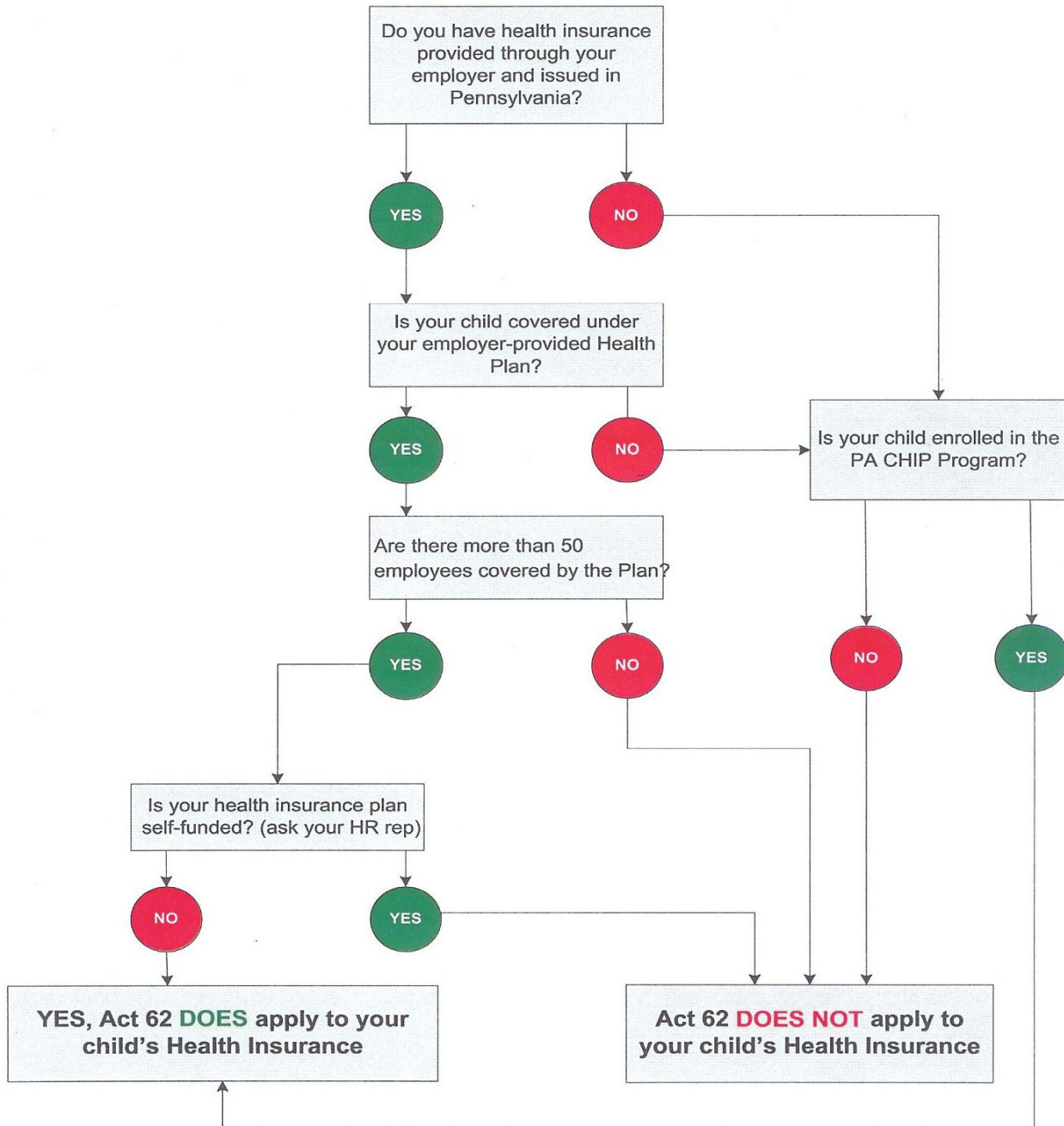
Please note that this program is endorsed by Easter Seals, as well as Exceptional Parent Magazine, a leading publication for families with special needs. We are a resource for education, support, and ongoing service to families with special care needs by providing a team of specialists who offer solutions that coordinate with the overall financial plan, and are consistent with the family's vision and values.



Registration on ABOARD website www.aboard.org
For additional information contact ABOARD 412.449.0165

Does the Autism Insurance Act (Act 62) apply to your child?

Chart provided by PA Health Law Project



Website for autism families : www.PAAutismInsurance.org

- Helpful Information
- Educational Sessions
- FAQs

Electronic mailbox for questions: ra-in-autism@stat.pa.us

Take advantage of the discounted rate while supporting ABOARD!!!



Idlewild Tickets - \$16.00

The normal gate price at Idlewild this year is \$28.95. Children 2 and under are free. We have 200 tickets available that will be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. Tickets are valid for any of the following dates:

May 25

June 5

June 9 – August 13: weekdays only

September 7

Tickets cannot be upgraded to weekend usage.

VOID after September 7, 2009.



Sandcastle Tickets - \$19.00

The normal gate price at Sandcastle this year is \$27.99. Children 2 and under are free. We have 500 tickets available that will be sold on a first-come, first-serve basis. Tickets are valid for any day in the 2009 season. Tickets will be mailed out late April early May.

Purchase directly at www.aboard.org

If you would like to purchase tickets with a check or for additional information, please contact ABOARD at 412-449-0165 or rwthomas@aboard.org

**MSA thanks ABOARD for helping people with autism
live life to the fullest.**



Although the world is full of **suffering**, it is full also of the **overcoming** of it. [Helen Keller]



1-800-969-7562 | www.MSASafetyWorks.com



Save the Date!

**Walk for a Healthy Community
presented by Highmark Blue
Cross Blue Shield and Support**

ABOARD

**Saturday, May 30, 2009
Heinz Field**

The Walk for a Healthy Community is a fundraiser that benefits 44 local health and human service agencies in Southwestern Pennsylvania, including ABOARD.

Highmark Blue Cross Blue Shield underwrites the cost of the walk so that 100 percent of the money raised by walkers goes directly to ABOARD.

Highlight Saturday, May 30, 2009 on your calendar and start gathering friends, family members, neighbors and co-workers to join you in walking to ensure a healthier community.

For more information and to register to walk for ABOARD click on: www.walkforahealthycommunity.org.





Advisory Board on
Autism and Related
Disorders

35 Wilson Street
Suite 100
Pittsburgh, PA 15223

Toll Free: 800-827-9385
Phone: 412-781-4116
Fax: 412-781-4122

We're on the web!
www.aboard.org

Our Core Principles

ABOARD believes that because there is considerable debate throughout the autism community regarding therapies, inclusion, autism cause, vaccine impact, and the potential effects of proposed legislation, our policy is to inform. We trust individuals to assimilate the information and make the best decision for their children, clients and students!

We believe that families are entitled to accurate and timely information, require emotional and practical support from other families grappling with comparable challenges, and often need advocacy assistance and training to maximize availability and utilization of treatment educational and vocational possibilities required by law.

Yes, I want to help ABOARD!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____

Phone (in case of questions): _____

Gift Amount & Payment Method

☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ \$500 Other \$ _____

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United Way of
Allegheny County
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Sign up for Facebook Causes to help ABOARD

If you are a member of Facebook and a supporter of ABOARD, then join our cause! By joining the ABOARD cause and inviting your Facebook friends, you are raising awareness about autism and all the things ABOARD does!

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m=16ba113e](http://apps.facebook.com/causes/228832/49465600?m=16ba113e)



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