

## **Therapeutic Early Autism Program (TEAP)**

### **Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

#### **What is TEAP?**

The Therapeutic Early Autism Program (TEAP) services young children between the ages of 2-5 years of age, diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. This intensive center-based preschool program runs for 12 months a year, Monday-Friday from 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM, utilizes applied behavior analysis to target a child's cognitive and language skills, self-care and adaptive behavior, and social-emotional development within a preschool routine. Although transportation is not always available, families can enroll in MATP (Medical Assistance Transportation Program) for reimbursement for travel. It is also possible to have transportation written into your child's IEP if they are at least 3 years old and live within the Pittsburgh Public school district. Pittsburgh Public would then provide transportation to and from TEAP on a van or minibus. The program is located at 2400 East Carson Street, Pittsburgh PA, 15203.

#### **How many classrooms do you have?**

TEAP is made up of three classrooms that provide varying levels of support to meet the needs of children across the autism spectrum. The two Individual ABA classroom provide 1:1 support for up to 4 children at a time and focus on early foundational skills such as joint attention, imitation, and emerging language skills. The Group ABA classroom has 4 staff for up to 7 children at a time and focuses on further developing functional communication skills and emerging social skills. The TEAP clinical team will work with the family to determine which classroom best fits the child's needs.

#### **How do you provide treatment to my child?**

The Therapeutic Early Autism Program (TEAP) provides care to children ages 2-5 years of age. The children follow an individualized program and receive one-on-one instruction through Applied Behavior Analysis, including Discrete Trial Training, Applied Verbal Behavior, and Natural Environment Teaching. Each individualized treatment program is designed to address a child's cognitive and language skills, self-care and adaptive behavior, and social-emotional development. Daily activities also include circle time, gross motor, playground activities, pretend play, early language arts, art and sensory activities, early cooperative play in small groups, self-help activities, mealtime (lunch and snack), and socialization activities (turn-taking, functional play skills).

#### **What would my child's day look like?**

Although we stick to a general schedule at TEAP, we also try to vary activities day to day to help children increase their flexibility around routines. Some things always stay the same (such as arrival, dismissal and lunch times), but we purposely vary the order of other activities. This helps children understand that it is okay if every day is not exactly the same. The children arrive in the classroom between 8:30-9 AM. Throughout a typical day, the children rotate through activities such as 1:1 intensive teaching sessions, fine motor activities, sensory activities, art, functional play sessions, social skills activities, gross motor time, music time, circle time, and story time. The children leave the classroom between 2-2:30 PM. The schedule and types of activities also vary between the classrooms, depending on the needs and skills of each group of children.

#### **Isn't a full 6-hour day too intensive for my young child?**

Although it is a long day, the children are engaged in fun, exciting activities throughout the day and are also given the opportunity to rest for an hour. If a child is having a difficult time remaining focused and compliant, clinicians may add sensory breaks into that child's schedule. For example, a child who is

having a difficult time may work at the table for 3 minutes and then be given a 2 minute break with a preferred toy. The goal would be to gradually increase the amount of time they are able to work before receiving a break. This prepares them for the time that they will eventually be expected to work in a typical preschool or kindergarten.

**Isn't it better to have my child in a typical developing early education center? Are there any neurotypical children at TEAP?**

Many children with autism have delayed language and social skills and may engage in some disruptive behaviors. This means that they might not be able to fully participate in a typical early education center. While at TEAP, clinicians will work with the child to increase skills and reduce or eliminate disruptive behaviors using applied behavior analytic methods. This will eventually allow the child to become more independent and the child may then be able to attend a typical preschool or kindergarten setting.

While there are no neurotypical children at TEAP, clinicians will work with you and your child to develop an individualized treatment plan to target social skills and functional play skills. Developing these skills can lead to future successes with peer interactions in other social settings. In addition, the social worker will work with your family to identify opportunities to interact with neurotypical peers in the community.

**Can I get community-based IBHS in addition to TEAP?**

Not usually, but it is possible. Having both TEAP and home/community services is only approved in specific situations in which the child's behaviors are severe enough to warrant both services. If the child does receive community-based services, the clinicians in the TEAP classroom will communicate with the community-based team to ensure that the child is receiving consistent treatment.

**Does TEAP provide transportation?**

TEAP does not provide transportation. However, through MATP, parents can be reimbursed for the mileage used to bring their child to and from TEAP. It is also possible to have transportation written into your child's IEP if your child is at least 3 years old and lives in the Pittsburgh Public school district. Pittsburgh Public would then provide transportation to and from TEAP on a van or minibus.

**Won't my child copy undesired behaviors that other children in the program might be showing?**

This is always a possibility in a group setting. However, each child will have an individualized behavior plan designed to reduce inappropriate behaviors and increase appropriate behaviors. This plan is consistently followed by all clinicians in the classroom and also shared with parents and caregivers.

**How long will my child stay in the program?**

This depends on the child and how they respond to interventions, the skills the child had before entering TEAP, the rate at which they acquire skills, and a variety of individual factors. When the child is ready to transition to a less restrictive placement or a different classroom within the program, TEAP clinicians will discuss this with parents, help them choose a new placement, and support them in the transition.

**It seems like there are a lot of extra meetings, how will I be sure that these meetings will be worth the time that I need to set aside?**

TEAP clinicians will do their best to work with parents to ensure meetings are at the times that work best with their schedule. We schedule meetings in advance, so parents/guardians have time to take off or make other arrangements. We find that parents enjoy meeting regularly with TEAP clinicians in order

to hear about the progress their child is making at TEAP and to discuss goals in the home and community settings. Parents and clinicians work together to set the agenda and goals for these meetings so that they will be a good use of families' time.

**Do I have to accept home visits?**

You do not have to accept home visits; however, we encourage family to participate because we believe working with families in the home leads to better communication and more progress for TEAP children.

**Is there a nurse on duty?**

No, we do not have a nurse on duty. TEAP clinicians do have an illness policy that is given to families during intake. Since TEAP is a therapeutic classroom, if a child has atypical behaviors (crying for long periods of time, falling asleep during treatment etc.) then families will be contacted to bring their child home. TEAP clinicians may also ask that parents either consult with their pediatrician or take their child to the pediatrician to make sure they are ready to come back to TEAP.

**Do you teach toilet training?**

Children do not have to be toilet trained to attend our program. If a child is ready to begin toilet training, we are able to work on this in the classroom, but it is always important that toilet training procedures are being implemented in the home as well.

**Are meals provided?**

Meals are not provided. Parents send their child with a packed lunch. TEAP has a kitchen area with a refrigerator, freezer, and microwave. Plates, cups, and utensils are provided. We do suggest sending a water bottle for your child as well that they can keep here.

**What if my child has special circumstances such as dietary restrictions?**

TEAP will work with all families to ensure dietary restrictions are met. TEAP does not provide food to children unless there are special events. In those cases, TEAP always contacts families to let them know and will make sure there are snacks available for those children who have dietary restrictions.

**Is my child too young or too old to attend TEAP?**

TEAP clinicians will determine eligibility based on the individual needs of your child. Decisions are also based on the children currently enrolled at TEAP. TEAP clinicians will work with families to determine if TEAP is the best placement for children or if we feel there are other options that are more appropriate.

**Can I come observe my child while he or she is at TEAP?**

Families are welcome to observe their child at TEAP. TEAP clinicians will also video record children who may have difficulties performing with parents present, so they can see what their child does throughout the day.

**How do you determine if TEAP is the best treatment option for my child?**

TEAP clinicians ask that families bring their child in when they observe the classroom, so TEAP clinicians can interact and assess if a child is appropriate for TEAP. If TEAP clinicians are not sure of the skill level of a child, they will ask your child to come back in for further assessment using different skill areas of the Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment and Placement Program (VB MAPP). TEAP clinicians will work with families to then determine what the best setting is for their child.