

# Therapeutic Early Autism Program (TEAP)

## Our Mission

The Therapeutic Early Autism Program (TEAP) provides center-based IBHS (Intensive Behavioral Health Services) to young children with autism spectrum disorder. These services, which utilize the principles of applied behavior analysis (ABA), are aimed at assessing a young child's skills and behaviors and providing individualized treatment to meet the needs of each child. TEAP aims to implement treatment that is provided as early as possible and is aimed at enhancing language and communication, social and play skills, pre-academics and independent living skills of young children so that they may take better advantage of opportunities in their communities and may require less professional attention as they grow older.

The focus of TEAP is to serve young children of all skill levels while providing behavior support that allows them to achieve their individual potentials. The program is committed to providing the highest quality treatment available to young children diagnosed with autism. The treatment team is committed to approaching each child uniquely and individualizing interventions to best meet their needs.

## Services

The Therapeutic Early Autism Program provides intensive, evidence-based treatment in a preschool setting for children, ages 2 to 5. A full-day, theme-based preschool schedule serves as the backdrop for daily intervention and is located at 2400 East Carson Street, Pittsburgh PA 15203.

Each child's ABA treatment will be individualized to meet their needs. TEAP focuses on environmental adaptations and preventative strategies to decrease behaviors that are a barrier to the child's learning. Preventing behaviors before they occur reduces the need for behavior management interventions.

Self-stimulatory behaviors (stims) are common in children with autism. Our approach is to redirect these behaviors only if they are interfering with learning or are dangerous in nature. These behaviors help many children with autism to regulate and changing them is not a goal of treatment.

The TEAP team focuses on skill development within a typical preschool routine. Communication skills are taught both during one-on-one sessions and in a group environment. Our approach involves supporting the children in learning new skills by introducing concepts gradually.

Treatments following Applied Behavioral Analysis are typically provided in the home and community environment; however, TEAP provides this treatment in a center, where children are also provided with socialization opportunities. Family involvement and consistent attendance are important and will help to enhance progress across environments.

## Treatment

The program uses applied behavioral analysis within a daily preschool schedule and one-on-one intensive teaching strategies. Activities are individualized to meet each child's needs and may include:

- Functional Behavior Assessment and Positive Behavior Support Plans to optimize desired behavior change

- Individualized treatment programs to address a child's cognitive development, language development, self-care and adaptive behavior, and social-emotional development
- Theme-based preschool activities including circle time, centers, gross motor, pretend play, arts & crafts, music & movement, gross motor play, story time, fine motor activities, and sensory play
- Applied Behavior Analysis methods including Discrete Trial Training, an analysis of verbal behavior, and Natural Environment Teaching which allow for individualizing and optimizing instruction to enhance a child's learning
- Systematic re-evaluation to monitor a child's developmental and behavioral needs and to measure progress including the Verbal Behavior Milestones Assessment & Placement Program (VB-MAPP)
- Enhancing social competence by teaching social skills and play repertoires to support appropriate peer interactions
- An early focus on generalization of each targeted area
- Parent support and education program through regular family meetings that helps parents to enhance their child's development in targeted areas and support transfer of skills to the home and community
- A referral system linking families to various community services
- Mealtime opportunities to target adaptive skills, food selectivity issues, and socialization

### **Child Eligibility**

TEAP offers rolling admission in two different classrooms ranging in levels of support. The Individual ABA classroom provides 1:1 support and can accommodate up to 4 children at a time. The Group ABA classroom has four staff to support up to 7 children at a time. Length of stay is dependent on each child's progress. Children are able to move between classrooms, depending on their individual progress and availability of open spots.

Children ages 2 to 5 years of age who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and who qualify for Medical Assistance are eligible. Services are contingent upon agreement by all involved parties at the periodic treatment team meetings.

TEAP is an Intensive Behavioral Health Service (IBHS) within Allegheny County. Families must be committed to full-day treatment, each weekday in order to enroll. Regular communication with families is required and home visits every other month are highly recommended.

### **Referral and Acceptance**

All referrals will need to complete and submit a referral form. The program's Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) will coordinate a family tour, and an on-site observation with the referred child. Acceptance into the program is determined prior to intake and includes the following:

- Child meets eligibility criteria
- TEAP program is a clinical match for the child
- TEAP has an open slot to provide treatment for the child
- Child has active Medical Assistance insurance (MA/Medicaid)
- TEAP is in-network with any commercial/primary insurance

### **Contact**

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