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**PARENT HANDBOOK**

**for Home and  
Community-Based Programs**

**2016-2017**

**Easter Seals of Southeastern PA**

Connect with us



August, 2016

Dear Easter Seals Parent,

We welcome you to the Easter Seals programs. Whether your child is enrolled in our Approved Private School, Preschool program, or is to receive home or community-based intervention, all of us - administration, staff and volunteers – strive to be of help to your child and your family.

Your child's development in our program is our primary concern. As you know from meeting with some of our teachers and therapists, our academic curriculum is individualized for each child. And, as a parent, you are an important member of the team, as well work together to set goals and work with your child to achieve them.

Good communication will enable us to work closely to maximize your child's progress. We hope you will take advantage of the many communication and information vehicles available to you in order to maintain the relationship between home and the Easter Seals program. We encourage you to call or send notes whenever you have a question. All of us – teachers, therapists, social workers, and administrative staff – welcome your inquiries. We also encourage you to participate in Back-to-School events, training opportunities, and parent support meetings, as well as Easter Seals fund raising events.

There may be times when you do not understand the reason for a policy or procedure or perhaps you would like to see a change in your child's program. You should not hesitate to discuss your concerns with any member of your child's team. Please also remember that our door is open and we hope that you feel free to discuss any issues or concerns with us.

We look forward to an interesting and fulfilling year of working with you and your child. Watching your child grow and acquire physical, social, cognitive, communication and social-emotional skills will be exciting for all of us.

Welcome!

*Carl G Webster*

Carl G. Webster  
Executive Director/CEO

## **AGENCY MISSION**

The mission of Easter Seals of Southeastern Pennsylvania is *“to provide exceptional services to ensure that all people with disabilities or special needs and their families have equal opportunities to live, learn, work and play in their communities.”*

Easter Seals staff fulfill this mission by incorporating these values into their work as the foundation of Easter Seals and a guide to our actions:

### **Integrity**

We conduct business ethically, and with a commitment to moral integrity. We expect people to hold a high moral standard. When faced with an ethical dilemma, we do what is right, regardless of the consequences.

### **Respect**

We respect each other. We value the uniqueness and dignity of each individual, and appreciate the strength of diversity and inclusion.

### **Shared Purpose**

We share a sense of purpose. We have an enthusiastic sense of mission. We believe that to better meet our mission, we must work as a unified organization.

### **Excellence**

We value excellence. We value people who get involved and show a sense of urgency. We believe it takes excellent, confident and accountable people to create innovative solutions that are valued by the people we serve.

### **Responsiveness**

We strive to continually understand and proactively respond to the increasing and changing needs of the people we serve as well as those who pay for the services.

## **PHILOSOPHY OF THE PROGRAM**

The intent of our program is to maximize each child's ability to benefit from an educational experience that addresses the "whole child" - their cognitive development, socialization opportunities, ability to communicate effectively with others, and physical needs.

Our program strives for programming which integrates therapeutic intervention with the acquisition of educational goals through a model of integrative programming. Integrative programming is a process which occurs when parents, teachers, and therapists have a coordinated approach to the use of therapeutic techniques and the implementation of goals throughout the naturally occurring routines in a child's day.

The expectation is that staff are accepting of family values, concerns, and priorities, and that these needs are taken into consideration in the development of individualized education plans.

## **STATE REGULATION**

Easter Seals programs are regulated by the Office of Child Development and Early Learning. As such we participate in periodic compliance monitoring activities and also follow the State's Early Learning Standards for Infant, Toddler, and Pre-Kindergarten programs.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education regulates our preschool programs.

## **GOALS FOR YOUR CHILD**

The goal of Easter Seals program is to provide your child with an appropriate educational program with state-of-the art techniques, and to assure a successful transition to the next step in his/her education.

To accomplish this goal, the following strategies are used:

- Educational and therapeutic goals are integrated in the early childhood setting and home to enable the child to become as independent as possible.
- Activities that stimulate cognitive, physical, sensory, communication, social and emotional development are the focus of our planned learning program.
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- A coordinated team works with each child. The team may include one or more of the following:

Teacher  
Physical Therapist  
Social Worker  
Speech Therapist  
Behavior Specialist

Teacher Assistant  
Occupational Therapist  
Occupational Therapy Assistant  
Assistive Technology Specialist

### **GOALS FOR THE FAMILY**

Our goal is to involve parents fully as team members in planning, implementing, and adding to your child's individualized program.

To accomplish this goal, the following strategies are used:

- Parents and/or caregivers of infant and toddlers are expected to participate in all intervention visits.
- Parents are encouraged to communicate freely by telephone, by notes sent with their child and/or by prearranged conferences. If you prefer to communicate via e-mail, please check with your child's team.
- Parents actively participate in developing their child's individualized program.
- The staff welcomes collaboration and consultation with parents to ensure the best possible program for each child.
- Family members (grandparents, aunts, uncles) are welcome to observe the programs and to attend parent meetings.

**EVALUATION PROCEDURES:** An evaluation and initial Individualized Education Program (IEP) or Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) is developed by the agency that refers your child to our school program. This agency can be an Intermediate Unit or School District. In preparation for your child's initial IEP, your child is evaluated by at least one educational or therapy professionals. All areas of development are addressed. An Evaluation Report (ER) is then compiled which includes the reason for referral, history or update of educational, social and physical status of the child, a summary of evaluation findings, and conclusion and recommendations regarding eligibility and programming needs.

Data collection and review of progress will determine when further assessment is needed. The team working with your child will continue to collect information about your child's progress, and this information will be shared with you.

The frequency of treatment is based upon your child's educational needs. The term *educational needs* refers to the amount and type of therapy required for your child to participate in his/her educational program, and will be different than medically-based therapy needs.

Parents of an eligible young child have the right to obtain an independent educational evaluation. Please refer to your copy of the Procedural Safeguards Notice for more information about independent educational evaluations.

**YOUR CHILD'S IEP or IFSP:** An IEP is an Individualized Education Program for children aged three years and older who are eligible for early intervention services. This is a plan for meeting your child's special learning needs written by you and your child's Easter Seals team. The IEP addresses some very important things about your child and what s/he will be learning.

A review of each child's program plan is scheduled annually. Easter Seals will be involved in the development and annual review of your child's IEP, once they are enrolled in our program.

The IEP addresses these questions:

- What skills and abilities does my child have now?
- What can I expect my child to be taught this year?
- What are the strategies or specially designed instruction that will be used to help my child accomplish these learning goals?
- How will my child's learning progress be measured?

Your child's program plan has information in it to answer each of these questions and will be used by everyone working with your child.

The Individualized Family Support Plan (IFSP) is a written plan for providing early intervention services to an infant or toddler with a disability and their family. This would be developed with you after qualified personnel have determined that your child is eligible for early intervention services. A review of progress toward IFSP goals will be conducted at least quarterly, along with an annual review.

The IFSP will include a statement of the specific early intervention services necessary to meet the unique needs of your child and family in order to achieve the agreed upon outcomes. These services may include specialized instruction, as well as any of the following therapy services.

## **THERAPIES**

Educationally relevant therapy services are provided as per each child's individualized plan. For your child to receive Occupational Therapy, Speech Therapy or Physical Therapy services indicated by their IEP, we must have a physician's prescription for treatment on file that reflects the recommended services in each child's program plan. This will generally require that a new prescription be obtained at least once each school year. A physician's prescription should also include recommendations for an oral motor evaluation and feeding therapy, if necessary or warranted.

When a child in the program has a surgical procedure, a revised prescription for therapy services will be required to resume treatment and address any changes or limitations.

All therapies are designed to support the routines already established for the child. The therapist is functioning as a home-based coach for the parent to facilitate how routines can be enhanced to incorporate therapeutic outcomes.

**PHYSICAL THERAPY:** concerns gross motor skills and mobility. One focus of physical therapy is review the positioning for each child which could include selecting and adapting chairs and equipment.

**OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY:** typically focuses on the fine motor and sensory activities children participate in every day. These can include playing with other children and toys, self-care, and moving from place to place. The therapist helps to adapt activities to maximize each child's ability to meet their educational goals.

**SPEECH THERAPY:** addresses how your child understands language and the use of language to communicate. Speech therapists work on improving the understanding of and increased use of both verbal and non-verbal communication skills. If a child is unable to communicate his/her wants or needs verbally, a speech therapist will work to establish alternative means (signs, pictures, or special devices) for communication, while continuing to encourage the development of verbal language skills.

**FEEDING THERAPY:** Easter Seals has a protocol to guide the safe oral feeding of children. If your child appears to be at risk for unsafe swallowing, difficulty with chewing or drinking, and/or oral/facial weakness, the feeding protocol will be followed, and you will be asked to work with us in obtaining necessary information and medical permission to allow for safe oral feeding. Forms will be provided for your permission to evaluate oral/motor functioning as it relates to feeding. Any recommended feeding therapy would be based on the evaluation results and information received from your child's physician.

**ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY:** Assistive or educational technology means any item, piece of equipment, or product system which is used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of children with disabilities. Assistive technology devices range from a simple switch for a child with particular physical limitations to a sophisticated vocal output augmentative communication device for a child with severe speech impairment.

**POSITIVE BEHAVIOR SUPPORTS:** Easter Seals is a member of the State's Positive Behavior and Intervention Support (PBIS) network. PBIS is a framework for supporting the social and emotional development young children. Within home and community programs, our goal is to support families in promoting routines and structuring environments that help build social emotional skills. This is accomplished by designing therapeutic settings that promote engagement and by building positive relationships among students, families, and staff. Through the process of PBIS, teachers and therapists will work together to ensure that children understand behavior expectations, receive instruction in social skills, and those with the most persistent challenging behavior receive individualized assistance. We will use positive approaches when addressing behaviors that interfere with learning.

Here are a few examples of what to look for in our Early Intervention and Community programming:

- Emphasis on building caring, responsive relationships with children and families.
- Behavior expectations are developmentally appropriate and focus on teaching our students what to do (rather than what not to do).
- Safe environments that are designed to promote positive social interactions.
- Positively stated directions and language are used by all program staff. We focus on teaching our children what to do with language such as "walking feet," "quiet voice," and "hands to self."
- Visual aids to assist students are used throughout therapy and instruction. These may include visual schedules, visual timers, and pictures to remind students of appropriate behavior.
- Emphasis on social emotional skills and development of social skills. Friendship building, emotional vocabulary, anger management, and coping/problem solving skills may be incorporated in individual and small group activities.



**FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES:** A Social Worker or their designee is available to make home visits to provide ongoing emotional support counseling and assistance with personal and family problems as they relate to the child's special needs. Social workers identify, mobilize, and coordinate community resources and services that would be beneficial to the child and family. The social worker assists families with tangible problems such as housing, financial and insurance concerns, equipment, transportation, and transition to the next intervention setting.

### **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**ACCESS TO RECORDS:** Easter Seals recognizes the family's educational right to review, inspect and copy any educational records related to their child's program here at Easter Seals. Easter Seals will comply with any written requests from parents within five working days. Easter Seals can release any records that were created by our agency for your child which would normally include the IEP, therapy and/or educational evaluations, attendance record, and Monthly Service Reports which document therapy provided and progress.

**CANCELLING A VISIT:** If your child is ill or you need to cancel a visit, please call the teacher or therapist from the program as soon as possible. It is important you also cancel your scheduled session if there is any type of contagious disease in your home. This helps prevent the spread of colds, viruses or infections to other children and families receiving home services as well as maintaining the health of Easter Seals staff.

**HOLIDAY CLOSING:** Easter Seals is closed for the major holidays, and the week between December 25<sup>th</sup> and January 1<sup>st</sup>. Please refer to your annual calendar of services for the specific dates.

**STAFF ABSENRCES:** Easter Seals employees are entitled to vacation leave throughout the year. Staff are also not to see children if they themselves are ill. Staff will give you suggested activities for you and your child throughout the course of the year. These can be used during scheduled vacations or in the event of the illness of a staff person, child or family members.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:** Easter Seals respects the privacy of each family we serve and adheres to strict confidentiality guidelines. These include regulations which govern the exchange of educational records (FERPA - Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) and those which deal with protected health information (HIPAA-Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act).

**MANDATED REPORTING:** Under federal and state laws, Easter Seals staff members are required to report if there is any reasonable cause to suspect child abuse. Staff members must also report any incidents that involve child health and safety. If an investigation is required by State law, it will be conducted by a Certified Investigator.

For more information about mandated reporting, please check the Keep Kids Safe website at [www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/laws](http://www.keepkidssafe.pa.gov/laws).

**CONFLICT RESOLUTION:** Easter Seals strives to provide an appropriate program for students, and to respond to concerns or disagreements that a parent might have about the school program. Disagreements can occur at any stage in a school program - when initial evaluations are completed, as a comprehensive program is developed and implemented, or as a child completes his/her school program with Easter Seals.

The first step in conflict resolution would be to contact the staff working with your child. The Social Worker is also available to facilitate this process, if needed. If no resolution is achieved, the next step would be to contact the Program Coordinator/Director or Division Director.

Under Federal and State Law, parents have specific rights and safeguards in obtaining a free and appropriate public education for their children; these are called "due process rights." A more complete guide for parents entitled The Right to Special Education in Pennsylvania is available from the Disability Rights Network at (800) 692-7443. In addition, whenever a placement or program is started or changed, parents of children in our schools who are three years of age and older will be given a *Procedural Safeguards Notice* issued by the Pennsylvania Department of Education.

For parents of children under the age of five the Office of Child Development and Early Learning has issued an Announcement entitled *Early Intervention Complaint Procedures*. The purpose is to deal with procedures to facilitate the prompt and amicable resolution of disagreements and conflicts among parents, County Administrators, agencies or other parties. This announcement includes a fact sheet on Problem Solving in Early Intervention.

**INTERAGENCY COORDINATING COUNCIL:** Each county is mandated to have a Local Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). The ICC is a group of parents and professionals joined in collaboration and coordination of resources to ensure that all children and families in need of early intervention services are identified and receive needed services. The ICC's purpose is to offer comments and suggestions on the development of local services and supports for children and their families. Parents and professionals work together to communicate directly with the various State Departments involved with education. For more information about your local ICC or State ICC, contact your school Social Worker or Division Director.

**SPECIAL EVENTS:** Throughout the year, Easter Seals holds various special events and fundraising activities. We hold numerous local events as well as benefitting from fundraising events by our national corporate partners. Parents and families are welcomed and encouraged to participate in these fun events and promotions to benefit Easter Seals programs and services. To learn more about

our events or how you can get involved, please call our Development Department at 215-879-1000.

## **YOUR CHILD'S HEALTH**

**MEDICAL UPDATES:** Please provide a medical update if your child has any of the following:

- A new physician with name, address and phone number
- A new evaluation
- A new orthopedic, medical, or surgical procedure
- Any change in medication
- New information is obtained from a medical specialist or developmental pediatrician, or from a specialized clinic such as Cerebral Palsy Clinic, Spina Bifida Clinic, Neurology, Ear Nose and Throat Clinic, Feeding Clinic, etc.
- A change of health insurance
- A selected HMO provider under Medical Assistance (ACCESS program)

Your completion and submitting a report from an annual physical will allow us to keep all health information current.

## **WHEN YOUR CHILD IS ILL**

**MEDICAL POLICY:** Sick children are not expected to participate in Early Intervention services. If your child is ill, please alert their therapist/teacher so that staff can take appropriate precautions. Please also alert the school if there is a contagious disease present in your home

A child may resume services only when he/she has been well (symptoms are no longer present) and/or fever free for 24 hours/

Symptoms and/or illness that are not acceptable for program participation include:

- fever 100.4°F or more
- diarrhea or vomiting
- severe headaches
- sore throat and/or swollen glands
- lethargy or weakness, no appetite, or irritability
- untreated rash or skin infection
- discharge from eyes, redness, or tearing of eye
- contagious illnesses such as fungal infections, lice, chicken pox, measles, mumps, pinworm, impetigo, conjunctivitis/pink eye), ringworm, hand/foot/mouth disease.

**Please remove this page, sign, and return to school. Thanks!**

I have read and understand the policies and procedures of the Easter Seals School/Program as stated in the Parent Handbook for School Year 2016/2017.

CHILD'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT NAME (please print): \_\_\_\_\_

PARENT SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_



Creating Solutions, Changing Lives

**PHILADELPHIA DIVISION AND HEADQUARTERS**

**YAFFE CENTER**

3975 Conshohocken Avenue  
Philadelphia, PA 19131

PHONE: (215) 879-1000  
FAX: (215) 879-8424

**EARLY INTERVENTION CENTER**

3905 Ford Road  
Philadelphia, PA 19131

PHONE: (215)-879-5010  
FAX: (215)-879-5051

**BUCKS COUNTY DIVISION**

**BROOKS CENTER**

2901 Edgely Road  
Levittown, PA 19057

PHONE: (215) 945-7200  
FAX: (215) 945-4073

**DELAWARE and CHESTER COUNTY DIVISIONS**

468 North Middletown Road  
Media, PA 19063

PHONE: (610) 565-2353  
FAX: (610) 565-5256

**MONTGOMERY COUNTY DIVISION**

**GRESH CENTER**

P.O. Box 333  
1161 Forty Foot Road  
Kulpsville, PA 19443

PHONE: (215) 368-7000  
FAX: (215) 368-1199

**Accredited by: National Academy of Early Childhood Programs**

**Approved by: Pennsylvania Department of Education as an Approved Private School (APS)**

**Licensed by: Pennsylvania Department of Education's Board of Private Academic Schools**

**Pennsylvania Department of Human Services as a day care center (Bucks, Delaware County – Marple and Montgomery County sites)**