

INFORMATION SHEET*

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Supporting Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder in Extracurricular Programs

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Overview

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is a neurodevelopmental disorder that affects a student's ability to communicate and socialize. Because of these difficulties, some students with ASD may find it challenging to participate in extra-curricular programs offered by the school district without appropriate accommodations. Benefits of participation in extracurricular activities are numerous. These include improvements in emotional and behavioral self-management, expanded socialization opportunities, and development of a more positive attitude about school. Students with ASD have the right under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act to an equal opportunity to participate in their schools' extracurricular activities but may need one or more accommodations to do so successfully. Students with ASD tend to do well in situations that are organized around a specific activity and when there are clear visual references such as pictures and words to help them identify and understand the range of expectations needed for participation. This Information Sheet provides some basic information on the types of accommodations that can be used to support students with ASD who wish to participate in extra-curricular school programs.

Prior to Participation

- For interested students, prepare a Social Story that describes the purpose of the program, the activities, and the social and behavioral expectations. Attach a program description to the Social Story for the student to reference. Include information about enrollment. Send these materials home to the student and parent for review and decision making.
- Speak to the student and/or parent about specific accommodations that may be needed. Inquire about communication supports used by the student including an augmentative communication device.

During Participation

I. Organize the Setting to Support Student Participation:

- Set up the physical space so that it supports each of the activities involved in the program.
- Clearly label all areas with pictures/symbols and/or words so the student can associate specific activities with those areas.
- Consider an Activity Schedule for the specific activities the student will be participating in.
- Ensure all materials needed for each activity are available within the area or make the materials available in one location that the student can easily access and transported to the area.

II. Clarify the Social and Behavioral Expectations for Participation:

- Clearly post 'rules' for specific behavior needed to meet expectations. Consider posting these rules using pictures/ symbols and/or words.
- Identify a 'point staff person' for the student to go to if he/she is in need of assistance with an activity and/or with social problem solving.
- Ensure that all personnel are wearing name tags for easy identification.

III. Instruct the Student on Social & Behavioral Expectations for Participation:

- Use one or more Social (Skill) Stories to assist the student in understanding expectations within the context of the program.
- If needed, teach the student the skills needed to meet the expectation for participation. For some skills you may need to provide direct instruction. You can work collaboratively with the school team (if applicable) to assist with instruction on these skills.
- Use visual supports and/or verbal instruction subsequently for reminders about the expectations. Review as needed. Refer to the visual supports when providing corrective feedback (if needed).
- Consider establishing a ‘reward’ system for those students who require reinforcement for meeting behavioral expectations. The reward can be provided after each meeting if the student participated and met expectations. Work collaboratively with the parent and student to identify specific rewards.
- Consider setting up a ‘buddy’ system to provide peer support for assisting the student with meeting social expectations.

IV. **Communicate** with Personnel and Parents for Planning and Problem-solving to Support Student Participation:

- Train personnel on how to implement all accommodations. Seek technical assistance or formal professional development if needed. Work collaboratively with the school team (if applicable) and parents for problem-solving participation and other difficulties that may arise.
- Establish an internal communication plan to provide assistance to staff who may encounter difficulty supporting student participation.
- Establish a communication plan with parent(s) for planning and problem-solving.

Find Out More

Below are some resources that you might find helpful in developing and implementing needed accommodations.

On-Line, Self-Guided Training:

The Rochester Regional Center for ASD developed 2 on-line, self-guided training DVDs with downloadable training guides:

Daily Visual Schedules visit <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/childrens-hospital/developmental-disabilities/Rochester-Regional-Ctr-Autism-Spectrum-Disorder/Training-and-Education/Training-DVDs.aspx>

Teaching Social Skills Using Direct Instruction visit <http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/childrens-hospital/developmental-disabilities/Rochester-Regional-Ctr-Autism-Spectrum-Disorder/Training-and-Education/Training-DVDs.aspx>

Or, contact us at rrcasd@urmc.rochester.edu or call toll-free 1-855-805-8485 to request a copy of DVDs.

‘Tool Kits’/Guides:

Autism Speaks is a national organization that provides a range of resources for professionals, family members, individuals with ASD, and the general public. Visit the **Main Website:** www.autismspeaks.org

Check out some of the **Tool Kits** that provide information about various accommodations including Visual Supports and Behavior Supports. Check out the School-Community Toolkit for more comprehensive information about supporting students with ASD.

Visit the **Tool Kit Link:** <http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/resources-programs/autism-treatment-network/tools-you-can-use/visual-supports>

Check out some of the **Apps** that may provide support to a student with ASD in extra-curricular programs <http://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-apps>

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