**TAP 101**

* **Mission:**

“To educate, advocate for and empower individuals on the Autism Spectrum, their families, and communities; and to build mutually beneficial relationships among them.”

* **We believe in:**

Promoting autism awareness

Thinking outside the box and being different

Being outside and active

Forming relationships with community partners

Participating in meaningful real life projects that expand life skills

Trying new activities

Developing a sense of “family” within our groups

Learning by doing

Age appropriate activities

Setting high expectations

* **Philosophy:**  **1. Learning should be individualized and occur across all developmental domains**Our students come to us with very diverse and specialized needs. We strive to work with
each student at their level while maintaining both developmentally and age appropriate activities. We look for opportunities to teach the "whole student".

**2. Therapy should be collaborative**The Autism Project makes every effort to collaborate with families and other professionals
delivering therapeutic activities to the student.
We realize that collaboration is essential to progress and ensures consistency within programming.

**3. An eclectic approach leads to the greatest progress**The Autism Project does not exclusively follow any one particular treatment approach, but rather
employs multiple techniques to best suit the individual. We pride ourselves on using the best
practices available for students on the spectrum; in that we realize what may work for one student
may not work for another. Some of the treatment approaches commonly utilized in our therapies
include TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped
Children), Sensory Integration, Social Stories, PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System),
Incidental Teaching, Floor time, Discrete Trial Training, Montessori and Daily Life Therapy.
* **Admissions:**

Admission to TAP begins with an initial meeting to meet the student and family. This meeting will also allow the family to tour the facility, meet our staff and gain an awareness of what we do at TAP.

If there is an interest in pursuing group services the student will be given a group to “shadow” with for one session to help determine an appropriate placement. If there is an interest in pursuing individual services an additional meeting will take place to determine therapy objectives. Once placement has been determined a start date will be given. There is a $250 non- refundable initial consultation fee which must be paid for all students. Once all application materials and fee are received a student may begin services.

TAP is best suited for the following:
1. Students with an Autism Spectrum Diagnosis
2. Students of all abilities and intellectual capabilities
3. Students who may be additionally diagnosed with ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder), Bipolar, ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder), OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder), Anxiety Disorder, Executive Function Disorder, or Sensory Integration Dysfunction.
4. Students without a history of severe conduct disorders to include behaviors such as theft, assault, drug/alcohol addiction and sex crimes
5. Students without a history of severe physical, emotional, mental, and sexual abuse
6. Families who are interested in generating awareness for Autism Spectrum Disorders through various fund raising efforts and community service projects
7. Families who will offer support to one another in times of crisis and in times of celebration
8. Families who embrace an eclectic approach to understanding Autism Spectrum Disorders.

* **Services:**

The following services are available at TAP:

 Social Skills Groups

 Monthly Socials

 Individual Therapy

 Family Training

 Summer Camps

 Aquatic Therapy

 Respite

 School Observations

 Adult Housing

* **Fees & Billing:**

Group Fees are determined by the student/teacher ratio. Group fees range from $35-$100 per session. Group sessions range from 1 -4 hours. Times are based on the age and attention level of the students. Individual fees are $75 per hour. Family Training fees are $100 per hour.

Bills will be given the last day of the month for the services rendered in that month. Payments are due by the 7th of each month. Payments received after the 7th will receive a 10% late fee. Payments can be paid in person or by mail. If paying by mail all payments should be sent to the billing address listed on the bill and must be post marked by the 7th in order to avoid the late fee. It is strongly encouraged that parents bring their checkbooks on the last day of the month and pay for services upon receipt of the bill. If your child is absent the last day of the month it will be the families’ responsibility to ensure payment is still made. A copy of the bill will be sent to you by your group instructor by text or email.

All bills will be on letterhead with a tax ID number for tax purposes. Please make sure you write your child’s name and what you are paying for in the memo section of the check.

We do not bill insurance companies. If you would like to request reimbursement for services you should inquire with your company to find out if our services will be covered. If they are, let us know how you would like a bill prepared so you can obtain reimbursement.

In the event that a staff member at TAP is not available to receive payments you can always drop off payments in the red folder in the kitchen. If no one is at the building when you come to drop off payments they can be slid under the front door.

* **HIPAA**

All participants of The Autism Project (TAP) have the following rights:

to expect their Personal Health Information (PHI) will be used and disclosed only as allowed under the law

to obtain a copy of their records

to request any changes to their records

to request an accounting of disclosures of PHI

to request a restriction on disclosures of PHI

PHI means any health information whether oral or recorded in any form or medium that:

is created or received by a staff member at TAP

relates to the past, present or future physical or mental health condition of any individual, the provision of health care to an individual or the past, present or future payment for the provision of health care to an individual

examples might include daily contact logs, data sheets, student notes, staff notes, billing information and medication information

Staff is expected to maintain HIPAA policies in our center, in a student’s home and in the community.

* **Attendance**

Attendance with therapies is imperative. We understand the occasional absence due to illness but we would ask that therapy become a priority with TAP. Students are billed for sessions regardless of attendance or advance notice of absences. We take great pride in being able to offer quality staffing for our services and there is simply no way we can provide this level of support for our students without this in place. This policy also ensures solid attendance.

If a student is going to miss a session it is the parent’s responsibility to alert the teacher. You can do this by email, cell or text.

* **Planning Sessions**

The Autism Project will have 3 planning sessions per school year for group students. One will take place at the beginning of the school year and one will take place at the beginning of the summer session (only for those students participating in the summer program). The other session may be used at the teacher’s discretion. Students receiving individual services will have 3 planning sessions/parent consultations per year when sessions are canceled by the parent. The purpose of planning sessions is to prepare new material, research activities and program plan for the group/student. These are billed sessions.

* **Arrival/Dismissal**

Students should not be dropped off any earlier than 5 minutes before the start of their group. Students that meet in the main house should enter thru the front door. It is OK to drop students off at the front door

without a parent escort as long as the child is able to safely enter the building. We encourage parents to do this to develop independence.

Students that meet in the clubhouse should walk on the paths (not through the grass) to the door of the clubhouse. This will keep the dirt and mud outside. Students are not permitted to play in the yard before group unless they are supervised by an instructor from The Autism Project.

It is imperative that parents pick up on time. If you are going to be late please call your instructor’s cell phone to let them know.

* **Snacks**

We try to encourage our students to move and exercise. We also believe very strongly in the mind/body connection especially when it comes to behavior. Our students work hard in their sessions and they enjoy their snack time. Snacks should be healthy choices such as fruit, vegetables, yogurt, nuts, seeds, granola/protein bars, cheese, pretzels, etc. We would also like for the student to choose, pack and carry their snack items to group.

* **Communication:**

Communication will occur primarily thru email. As a standard practice please check email before coming to therapy sessions just to make sure there are not any last minute changes. Our staff is very well organized with emails, trips and changes in schedule. Please help us out by being just as prepared. Organized parents lead to organized students which is what we all want.

* **Health/Sickness**

Students should not attend TAP if they have been home from school/work due to illness. Additionally, students must be 24 hour symptom free from vomiting/diarrhea and fever before returning to TAP. If a student becomes ill at TAP we will be in touch with parents ASAP about arranging an early pick up. If a contagious condition such as poison ivy, pink eye, lice, etc. occurs please inform us so that we can arrange for a proper cleaning of our facilities.

* **Medication/Allergies**

If a student takes medication during a scheduled session at TAP parents will need to complete an authorization form for allowing TAP to administer the medication. All medication must be in a container with the students name, medication and dosage clearly labeled. All medication at TAP is kept in a locked box and only staff has access to the keys.

* **Cancelations:**

TAP does not follow any school system for closures. Staff will be in touch regarding weather related cancelations. If TAP cancels for weather or any other related reason (staff illness, vacation, etc.) there is no charge for service.

* **Trips:**

TAP believes very strongly in getting our students out into the community. We have an 11 passenger van and a mini –van for this very reason. When we take trips into the community we meet at TAP, travel together and return after the outing. The ride to and from activities gives our students an opportunity to review the expectations with their instructor and build rapport. Students in social skills group take trips once per month while students in individual therapy have much greater flexibility. Trips are always functional and age appropriate. We use trips as an opportunity to expand our student’s interests and teach flexibility, responsibility and independence.

* **Volunteers**

TAP depends on volunteers to assist with fundraising, administrative tasks and therapeutic activities. We have a variety of groups and camps that could use an extra hand and we are always preparing/organizing for our next event. We will match our volunteers to their area of interest. Our program allows high school students to fulfill community service hours. If there is an interest in volunteering in any capacity please contact Linda Gaither at lindanatoligaither@gmail.com.

* **Parent Observations**

Parents may request to observe sessions at TAP with their instructor. We ask that the observations be for adults only and free from additional distractions (cell phone in silent mode). You may take notes for reference. Be mindful that all of our students come to us for a reason. There are times when the staff at The Autism Project cannot predict tantrums, meltdowns or aggressive behavior. In general, be prepared for anything. Please direct any questions or concerns.

* **Traditions:**

TAP has a number of activities and traditions that we have built over the years. These include:

**The Redskins Raffle** – This is a major fundraiser for TAP in the fall months. Participation can range from organized raffle sales out in the community where our students are handling the entire sales exchange to sorting, counting and wrapping coins.

**Bake Sale** – Students begin baking projects in March which requires them to bake, package, sort and label items. All students participate in the sales process by either going door to door in neighborhoods to sell their baked goods or by hosting an organized bake sale out in the community.

**Dog Biscuits** – In a search of opportunities for our transitioning youth select TAP students participate in this “business” with staff members. They make the biscuits from scratch, package them, take them to local vets, stack them into bins, collect the money, sort/stack money and then take it to the bank for deposit.

**Community Partnerships** – With a desire to have our students participate in real life “Projects” TAP has formed partnerships with many community agencies including: Chesapeake Church, End Hunger, The Lobby Coffee Bar, Chesapeake Cares Food Pantry, Chesapeake Grille, Traders Restaurant and the town of North Beach. Our students learn life skills by working, volunteering and helping others in need. These partnerships are a win/win for both parties.