



WESLEY SPECTRUM FAMILY & CHILD DEVELOPMENT CENTER WONDER KIDS CLUBS

Children and families with education, mental health and family support needs are searching for a better quality of life. Wesley Spectrum Services helps them to become independent, responsible and caring members of the community by providing an array of high quality special education, mental health and family services. These services give children and families the strength to learn, to live and to love, resulting in stronger families and stronger communities.

Philosophy and Purpose

A child diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) can have tremendous potential to learn and develop. In Wonder Kids Clubs, these children participate in small therapeutic groups where they can relate to peers and build relationships in a safe, structured, environment. This helps special needs children learn environmental cues from peers and adults, and generalize skills to interact with groups, allowing them to function in their community schools and typical environments.

Eligibility

Wonder Kids Clubs are for children ages 2 to 21 that have a diagnosis of Asperger Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder, High-Functioning Autism, or other developmental disabilities. Since this is a step down program, children must be able to function without one-to-one supervision. Participant criteria includes being able to express wants and needs, focus and play for 15 minutes, and engage the environment with limited self-stimulatory behavior. Older youth should be able to carry on a reciprocal conversation.

Availability

We allow 12 children per session, grouped loosely by age, maturity level and therapeutic needs. Wonder Kids Clubs are located in the North Hills, South Hills and East of Pittsburgh. We have a 3:1 client to staff ratio. There are morning and afternoon programs for preschool children, after-school sessions for elementary and middle school youth, and evening sessions for teens. Groups are also offered on Saturdays. Call us for a pamphlet that lists specific times for groups. If you are interested in the pilot program in the Penn Hills area, call for details.

When we are operating at capacity, a space may not be immediately available. Families can choose to wait or we will refer them to other programs. All eligible children and families are treated equitably without favoritism.

Referral

Children with a diagnosis of ASD are generally referred by an outside service provider, psychiatrist, hospital unit, diagnosing

psychologist or support group. Parents can contact us directly or work through their MH/MR Base Services Units. We can also help parents contact a psychologist for an evaluation.

Intake

Parents should complete and send in the referral form to the chosen site along with a current evaluation. They will be contacted by a coordinator. The coordinator will set up an initial meeting to complete the intake process. Before beginning the program, children and parents will have a chance to tour the facilities and meet the staff. Call for information and referral forms.

Funding

The program is paid for through Medical Assistance (MA) for up to 15 hours a week. This is available to most children with disabilities regardless of their parent's income. Services are funded by the Department of Public Welfare, through the MA card, but are managed by an HMO, which is arranged by the county. Wonder Kids also accepts private pay.

Licensure and Accreditation

Wesley Spectrum Services is licensed by the Department of Public Welfare and is a credentialed provider for Community Care and Value Behavioral Health managed care companies. We are also in the process of seeking COA accreditation for this service.

Treatment Approach

Every child learns at his or her own pace, and this is especially true for those with ASD. Wonder Kids Clubs are staffed by therapeutic specialists who are trained in applied behavior analysis principles and relational therapy. The therapeutic specialists are supervised by experienced master's level coordinators who are on site when groups are in session. They understand the behaviors associated with ASD and other disabilities.

We achieve the best outcomes for each child by basing our decisions – every step of the way – on what is best for this individual child. We call this Kid-Centered Decision Making and it encompasses Kid-Centered Planning, Kid-Centered Environment and Kid-Centered Measurement.



Strength to learn, to live, to love

The Wesley Spectrum Family & Child Development Center uses Kid-Centered Planning to develop an individualized strength-based treatment plan for various levels of intense behavioral programming that match a child's abilities and needs. A young child needs to learn relationship skills with peers and adults, master self-regulation and increase abstract language concepts. An older child learns coping skills and gains and understanding of his or her strengths and needs. We use the initial assessment to set one particular goal for each child, which is tracked and measured through assessment score criteria. Our therapeutic specialists write group plans for every group that include activities to help the child practice the skills needed to meet those goals. We reassess these plans every four months based on the child's progress.

We also provide a multi-sensory environment room for therapy, learning, relaxation and fun. In this space — unique to Wesley Spectrum — each child can completely relax, or interact with and control a variety of elements. Activities may include auditory and visual effects, tactile experiences and music. This environment helps children become more aware of sensory preferences, descriptions and expressions.

Services

Wonder Kids Club small therapeutic groups allow children with ASD to relate to peers and build relationships in a safe, structured, Kid-Centered Environment. They explore play, socialization and safety skills, learn how to be a good sport, cooperate, and make friends. Adolescents can refine friendship skills with regard to such issues as boundaries, and learn advanced coping techniques for dealing with anxiety or anger. This will also help these young adults increase their independence with regard to making choices as it relates to developing a positive sense of self as they mature to adulthood.

Depending on their age and abilities, children focus on therapeutic, structured relationships and group activities to refine emerging skills, master new social and learning skills, learn organization, planning and safety issues. Teens will participate in planning group activities and topics. Children will have access to art and music activities and regulated sensory integration environments to increase their ability to tolerate new and diverse stimuli.

Siblings and friends are welcome to visit Wonder Kids Club for an extra hourly charge. This visit can serve as a respite for parents and help siblings build stronger relationships. They will enjoy fun activities and be better able to relate to their brother or sister. Siblings and friends are geared toward the elementary and preschool aged groups.

Outcomes

The desired outcome for each child served is mastery of important social skills that will help that child successfully interact in our society. This allows him or her to become an independent adult, who will contribute to the community. Wesley Spectrum Services tracks percent of goals attained at discharge as well as whether discharges are planned or unplanned across children served. Parent satisfaction with the program is measured annually. This outcome data is then aggregated across clients and used to help us improve the quality of our services.

Discharge

Discharge goals and criteria are set as part of the treatment planning process by the interagency treatment team. A child leaves Wonder Kids Clubs when he or she has attained goals at the level of mastery designated for that child, which may be less than 100 percent perfection.

Aftercare and Follow Up

In our discharge summary, we include any aftercare recommendations for future services. The program does not provide any formal follow up services but encourages families to contact the Wesley Spectrum Family & Child Development if any future services are needed post discharge.

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