



Paragon Autism Services

Newsletter

March 2014

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

IN THIS ISSUE

What's New?

March and April will be busy! In March we will put on parts two and three of our Educational Advocacy training series, followed by a free IEP workshop at the end of the month. We'll also host our monthly support group meeting, and you can catch us at the Spotsylvania SEAC Resource Fair as well.

Then in April, we'll be at the Spotsylvania County Little League opening day ceremonies as the proud sponsor of one of the special-needs Challenger teams. With April being Autism Awareness Month, we'll also be at the Spotsylvania Sheriff's Office Autism Awareness Day event, and of course you'll see us at the Autism Acceptance Walk, which we're helping to organize with the Autism Society of Northern Virginia. Find more information about all of these below, and in April's newsletter.

Of course, we'll also be providing ABA services! By the end of March we will be providing in-home ABA to another 12-15 area children with our full second team on board. If you or anyone you know has a child that may benefit from in-home services, please contact us for more information.

Don't forget that Paragon is now offering educational advocacy services. Marc and Nicole each bring a great deal of knowledge and experience in advocating for appropriate placement, services and goals for special-needs children. We offer comprehensive advocacy and consultation services to address any difficulties a family may face.

To keep up-to-date with new events and services we are offering, please "like" us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter if you have not done so already. Updates, details on events, questions for the community and general information are regularly posted on Facebook. Behavior management tips and fun items are posted on Twitter.



Educational Advocacy

For March, Paragon will continue with our Educational Advocacy theme. We are now offering educational advocacy and consulting services to families in the region, and will continue with parts two and three of our Educational Advocacy training series. Additionally, we will conduct a free IEP workshop that will be open to anyone. More information about all of these is provided below. Also included in this newsletter are another two short informative entries covering critical concepts in educational advocacy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Questions:

marc@paragonautismservices.com

Like us at:

www.facebook.com/ParagonAutismServices

Follow us:

[@ParagonAutism](https://twitter.com/ParagonAutism)

[Paragon Autism Services](http://ParagonAutismServices.com)

IEEs

Unfortunately many families of special-needs children are unaware of many of the parental rights under IDEA*. The right to an Independent Educational Evaluation (IEE) is one such right. School districts conduct a variety of evaluations to inform their decision making regarding classification, related-services, least-restrictive environment, etc. In addition to the fact that parents may disagree with classification determinations and placement proposals made by school districts, parents may also request that an IEE be conducted when they disagree with the district's evaluation results. An IEE may be requested for nearly any evaluation a school district conducts. If it relates to a child's education in any way, an IEE is appropriate. A district is always afforded the right to conduct their own evaluation. A parent may not request an independent evaluation until a district has conducted their own.

An IEE should be conducted by a third-party evaluator in the private sector, and will typically be done at public expense. "At public expense" means that unless a district elects to proceed to a due process hearing to prove their prior evaluation is sufficient, THEY must pay for an independent



evaluation. When a parent requests an IEE, the district cannot limit their choice of evaluator, so long as they meet district criteria regarding qualified evaluators. The district may not limit parents to a list of evaluators they maintain, nor may they impose price limits. A family is entitled to only one independent evaluation. The results of an independent evaluation must be considered by the district, but this does not guarantee that the outcome will be favorable to the family. If a family wants further evaluations, or if the district has demonstrated their evaluation to be

sufficient in due process, the family may proceed with as many evaluations as they wish, though at their own expense.

*WHAT'S IDEA?

The Individuals With Disabilities Education Act is Federal legislation that sets regulations for special education procedures, rights and services for children who are eligible. If a child has an IEP, they are covered under IDEA. If you're not familiar with IDEA, please take the time to learn more about it!



Our Services

Social Skills

To better address the social needs of children diagnosed along the spectrum in the area, Paragon will soon begin two new socially-oriented programs. The first, scheduled to begin in April, will be planned playgroup meetings for preschool-aged children. These meetings will take place at local recreational facilities and are designed to foster increased social contact between children and allow for a friendly environment in which they can play as they wish. Playgroups will provide a casual, free-play event. The only costs for playgroup meetings will be admission fees charged by the planned facility.

In the summer we plan to begin formal, intensive social skills training groups that are intended to develop and strengthen

fundamental skills of social initiation and interaction through facilitation and reinforcement. Each group will have eight meetings that each build on the prior session. In order to help us better estimate need, contact us now if you are interested in social skills training for your child.

Educational Advocacy

Paragon Autism Services is pleased to announce that we are now offering educational advocacy and consulting services for families in Fredericksburg city, Spotsylvania, Stafford and Caroline counties. Our rate for advocacy will be \$60.00/hour and pro bono services will be offered on a limited basis to those with demonstrated need. Contact us for more information.

AROUND TOWN

Community Trainings

Our free community trainings have begun! Parts two and three of our Educational Advocacy Training series will take place in March, covering the IEP process (March 5th) and behavioral concerns, including conducting Functional Behavior Assessments and writing Behavior Intervention Plans (March 19th). Additionally, we will host an IEP workshop on March 28th.

In April we will continue with at least one free monthly community training to be held on the third Wednesday of each month from 6-8PM. Some additional topics for upcoming trainings will be behavior management, long-term planning for special-needs children, and safety skills for children with autism.

IEP Workshop

As a conclusion to our Educational Advocacy training series, Paragon is hosting an IEP Workshop on Friday, March 28th. Anyone with an IEP related question can come and review their concerns with our knowledgeable staff in order to receive individualized feedback and formulate a preliminary plan on how to proceed. Workshop will be held at Paragon's offices from 9AM-5PM by appointment. Contact Marc for more information or to schedule an appointment.

CPR & First Aid Training

Marc, our Community Outreach and Education Facilitator, is now a certified CPR and First Aid instructor. Paragon will soon begin offering CPR/First Aid courses to area families at a nominal cost. Additionally, Paragon is now offering CPR/First Aid training to local human services and educational agencies at a discounted rate. Please contact us for details.

SEAC Resource Fair

The Spotsylvania County Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC) is sponsoring a resource fair on Saturday, March 15th at Chancellor High School from 10AM-2PM. Vendors will be there to provide information about local services and resources for families of special-needs children, and there will be five informative sessions throughout the day. We will be there to answer questions and provide information. For more information contact Jessie Scaglione: jbsrls2@verizon.net

FRAAG Meetings

The Fredericksburg Regional Autism Action Group (FRAAG) meets on the fourth Thursday of every month to assess and address local needs in the autism community. Meetings are from 1-3PM at the dRC with a lunch and learn session from 11AM-12:30PM. For more information contact Kim Lett: klett@cildrc.org

Law Enforcement/Autism Awareness Day

In support of their Project Lifesaver program, the Spotsylvania Sheriff's Office will hold their third annual Autism Awareness Day event on Sunday, April 6th, from 1-4PM at Classic Iron Motorcycles. There will be live music, food and games. Many local organizations and businesses, including Paragon Autism Services, will be there to provide information and answer questions.

Autism Acceptance Walk

The Autism Society of Northern Virginia (ASNV) is holding their annual Autism Acceptance Walk on Sunday, April 27, 2014 at the Fredericksburg Fairgrounds from 1-4PM. The walk is intended to foster increased acceptance of autism and to fundraise for the ASNV's Intervention Assistance Fund, which offers mini-grants to help cover the costs of necessary treatments and services. You can help support the cause by creating your own team to walk and fundraise, or by simply joining us to walk. Paragon Autism Services has created a team to walk and fundraise, and will have a table set up for the vendor fair. There will also be a sensory-friendly carnival put on by Helping Hands. We hope to see you there!

**Lending Library**

We recently began a lending library at our office, and though it's a humble beginning, we hope to see it grow quickly. There are books on many autism related topics, including education, special education law, behavior analysis, skill development, as well as memoirs. Please take a look the next time you're here. Any donations will also be graciously accepted!

**Support Group**

The positive response to our parent support group in collaboration with the Autism Society of Northern Virginia has been overwhelming. There is a clear need for more centralized information on resources and services in the area, and we hope that these meetings can be a first step in establishing this. We welcome any feedback or suggestions you can offer. Meetings will continue on the second Tuesday of each month. Childcare is provided for children on the spectrum. RSVP required.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email: info@autismacceptance.org

www.autismacceptance.org

[Paragon's Team Page](#)

IEP Basics, Part Two

IEP goals are a mystery to many parents. Often even educators are not provided adequate training on how to craft appropriate goals for their students. The difference between a good IEP goal and a bad IEP goal is elusive to many.

There are a few guidelines that should be followed to ensure better goals. Goals must not be too easy or too hard. This is a simple concept that sounds perfectly easy to implement. It is not. To follow this rule one must possess a truly objective understanding of their child's current ability. In addition, one must also be truly realistic about what the child can be expected to accomplish. If the goals are too difficult, the child struggles all year to accomplish something that is out of their reach. If the goals are too easy, the child will either master them quickly and twiddle their thumbs the rest of the year, or become rather frustrated that they have to continue practicing something so boring and beneath them.

Either error leads to a frustrated child who is not getting much out of their education. Be honest about where your child is today, and where they can go tomorrow. If you tend to take it easy on your child, you may need to boost your expectations. If you tend to set the bar high for your child, you must be sure to recognize when they are struggling.

Goals must be written to describe skills in terms that are observable and measurable. Let's start with a bad example:

Johnny will improve his social skills by engaging with peers during free-time in four out of five opportunities.

Which social skills? What constitutes *engaging with peers*? Does he only have to speak to them? Does he have to actually play with them, and if so, for how long? If he kicks a ball to a peer one time in a twenty-minute period and then spends nineteen-and-a-half minutes on a swing by himself, did he engage? Who knows? Here's a better goal:

In four out of five opportunities, Johnny will engage in an interactive task with a peer for at least five consecutive minutes, to include at least two self-initiated vocal exchanges.

See the difference? It's wordy and more difficult for staff, but this goal defines something and allows for true measurement. The first goal defines NOTHING and allows for NO meaningful measurement. IEP goals should not be open for interpretation to the various staff members that children in special education will encounter. The goal needs to be clear and understandable to anyone reading it.



HEADS UP!

Paragon Autism Services will be closed the week of July 4th. In order to better plan for summer schedules with minimal interruption to services, we have decided to plan for this week with no services while maintaining our normal schedule for the rest of the summer.

Paragon Newsletter

312 Progress St., Suite 300
Fredericksburg, VA 22401



Paragon Autism
S E R V I C E S
Making a Difference Together

Upcoming Events

March

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5 Educational Advocacy Training 2 IEPs 6-8PM	6	7	8
9	10	11 Support Group 6-8PM	12	13	14	15 SEAC Resource Fair 10AM- 2PM
16	17	18	19 Educational Advocacy Training 3 Behavior 6-8PM	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27 FRAAG Meeting at dRC 1-3PM	28 IEP Workshop 9AM-5PM By Appt.	29
30	31					