



Paragon  
Autism  
Services

Newsletter

February  
2014

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

IN THIS ISSUE

## New Things in the New Year

Paragon Autism Services wishes to thank all those who have helped us get started here in Fredericksburg over the last several months. It has been a pleasure serving families in the area, and we are looking forward to helping more families get the services they need.

We are excited to announce that we will begin providing in-home ABA to another 12-15 area children beginning in March with the addition of a second clinical team. We hope that you will join us in welcoming our new Assistant Behavior Analyst, Jessica (Jessie) Waldman, to lead the team. Jessie is a Board-Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst (BCaBA) and has worked with children diagnosed on the spectrum for over five years.

Additionally, Marc Baumgardt, who many of you already know, has begun a new role as Community Outreach and Education Facilitator here at Paragon. Marc has been working with individuals with autism for over ten years and has experience with behavior analysis in a wide range of environments, including in a research setting as a research assistant at Johns Hopkins University. Marc brings expertise in behavior management, curriculum development, as well as educational advocacy to his new role.

With the addition of the Community Outreach position, Paragon has begun several new initiatives to help build the autism community in the area and provide families with needed resources. We know that families know best what they need, so we sincerely welcome feedback and suggestions to help us help you.

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.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Like us at:

[www.facebook.com/ParagonAutismServices](http://www.facebook.com/ParagonAutismServices)

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

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



### Educational Advocacy

In February, Paragon will officially begin offering educational advocacy and consulting services to families in the region. Additionally, we will begin a three-part training series on school concerns and educational advocacy that will be free and open to all. Included in this newsletter are two short entries to provide some essential information to anyone with concerns about their child's IEP or behavior at school. Further details about our advocacy services and training events are listed below.

# Behavior at School

Behavioral obstacles in school are a challenge for families, school staff, and most of all, for the child experiencing the difficulty. If your child is having regular episodes of inappropriate or disruptive behavior at school, there are a few things that should happen. A Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) is the single best tool to begin addressing inappropriate behavior. An FBA is a process of data collection and analysis to determine the cause (function) of the behavior. The results of the FBA are then used to write a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). Each of these two is essentially useless without the other. You CANNOT write a good BIP without an FBA, and an FBA by itself describes the behavior, but not what to do to change it. The BIP contains several things, but the two most important general pieces are the consequence strategies (what to do when the behavior occurs) and the antecedent strategies (the proactive measures that teach and encourage more appropriate behavior). The most recent Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) does require the use of FBAs and BIPs in certain situations, but not in others. Regardless, this is what you want to ask for



when behavior issues are pervasive. At a minimum, an FBA and BIP are required when a child's behavior has led to more than 10 days of suspension or removal from school and said behavior has been determined to be a manifestation of the child's disability. However, use of these tools is always justifiable when behavioral episodes are frequent and/or severe, and a compelling case can be made to school personnel. If you find yourself in this situation and you need to learn more, there are many great online resources that are free to use. Additionally, the third in our three-part Educational

Advocacy training series will cover these issues.

## 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.



# New Programs

## 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.

## Community Trainings

Paragon is pleased to announce that we will be offering free training events open to anyone in the community. The first event will be a multi-part training on school issues/educational advocacy. Topics covered in this three-part series will be special education rights (2/19), the IEP process (3/5), and behavioral concerns, including conducting Functional Behavior Assessments and writing Behavior Intervention Plans (3/19). Each will be held at our office from 6-8 PM. Some additional topics for upcoming trainings will be behavior management, long-term planning for special-needs children, and safety skills for children with autism.

## Parent Support Group

Our first support group meeting was a big success. Thank you to all who came and participated. The response from the community has been overwhelming, and we are looking forward to continuing with the support group and possibly adding another. Support group meetings will take place the second Tuesday of every month from 6-8 PM. Meetings are free and open to anyone, and free childcare will be provided to children on the spectrum. RSVP is required to receive childcare. Mark your calendar for this month's meeting, Tuesday, February 11<sup>th</sup>.

## 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.

## AROUND TOWN

### 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 for the event and we hope to see you there!

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Email: [info@autismacceptance.org](mailto:info@autismacceptance.org)

[www.autismacceptance.org](http://www.autismacceptance.org)

[Paragon's Team Page](#)



## Social Skills

Social skills can be one of the most challenging things to teach children diagnosed on the spectrum. For children with limited interests or social curiosity, parents are often unsure how to proceed. The same behavioral principles that make ABA such a powerful instructive methodology can also be used to teach and reinforce social skills. In fact, research demonstrates that the most successful interventions for building social skills all utilize a behavior-analytic model.



## Support Group

The positive response to our first 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.

# IEP Basics

Of the many challenges that parents encounter in attempting to meet the needs of a child with a disability, handling school and IEP issues can be especially daunting. There are many rights and protections afforded to parents of children with disabilities, but many parents simply don't know about them. If there's one rule to know, it's this: If you're not happy with your child's IEP, don't sign the IEP! You DO NOT have to sign anything that you don't agree with. In your role as advocate for your child, you need to be satisfied with this document and what's contained within it before signing. Here are some of the important things you CAN do, and others that you DON'T HAVE to do.

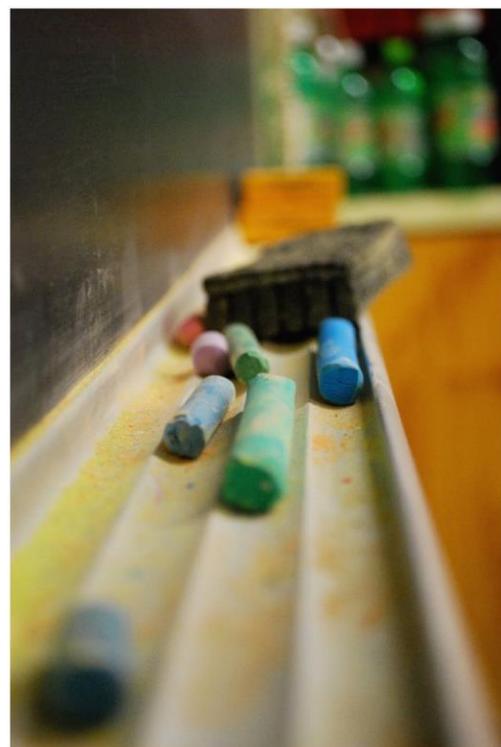
## Things you CAN do:

- Ask to reschedule
- Bring anyone you want
- Make an audio recording
- Request relevant school staff to attend
- Refuse to excuse staff that you want there
- Ask for anything that you think is appropriate
- Refuse to sign
- Have a record in the Prior Written Notice

## Things you DON'T HAVE to do:

- Sign the IEP
- Agree to meeting time/date if it isn't satisfactory
- Agree with evaluation results
- Agree with classification determinations
- Agree with placement decisions
- Agree with services and accommodation offered (or not)

The IEP process should be a truly collaborative, team effort. It's up to you to make sure that you fulfill your role as captain of the team!



## Paragon Newsletter

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Fredericksburg, VA 22401



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

## Upcoming Events

February

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11 Support Group 6-8 PM	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19 Educational Advocacy Training 1 6-8 PM	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	