



# Paragon Autism Services

## Newsletter

### July 2014

MAKING A DIFFERENCE TOGETHER

IN THIS ISSUE

## What's New?

Paragon Autism Services is pleased to announce that our third full team will begin on July 7<sup>th</sup>, with a third group of children beginning services on the 21<sup>st</sup>. We're also excited to announce the opening of a new office in Chatham Heights this summer.

In other news, the Fredericksburg Regional Autism Action Group (FRAAG) meetings held monthly at the dRC have been discontinued, with a new autism council to convene in the fall. Paragon Autism Services is proud to be a participant and will work hard to increase community exposure and participation of area service providers, community organizations and families.

We are up and running with our playgroup outings and would love to hear any suggestions you have for activities or locations. We plan to continue with one outing per month on the first Thursday of every month. Please remember that for July, the meeting will take place on the second Thursday, the 10<sup>th</sup> as we are closed the week of 6/30-7/4.

Our monthly support group and training events will continue on their regular schedule for the summer. See the *Our Services* section below for details on each. We would also love to hear what training topics are most important and relevant to 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.

If you haven't seen it yet, check out our Facebook online support group page. We hope that this page may serve as an always-on, online extension of our monthly support group meetings for parents of children with autism. Members of the group can post comments and ask questions to the rest of the group. The group is called Fredericksburg Autism Support Group and the address is indicated to the right.



## Feeding Concerns and Strategies

In this month's newsletter we will review some common obstacles parents of children diagnosed on the autism spectrum face when it comes to regularly eating a variety of foods. Our free community training event for July will be Feeding Concerns and Strategies to Address Them, so if this is a current concern for your family, please come join us and get some great information on how to proceed.

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Questions:

[marc@paragonautismservices.com](mailto:marc@paragonautismservices.com)

Like us at:

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

Support group:

[www.facebook.com/groups/fredericksburgautismsupportgroup/](http://www.facebook.com/groups/fredericksburgautismsupportgroup/)

Follow us:

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

[paragonautismservices.com](http://paragonautismservices.com)

# Our Services

## In-Home Applied Behavior Analysis

Paragon Autism Services provides Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to individuals ranging in age from 2-21 diagnosed along the autism spectrum. Our services include individualized ABA therapy delivered to the client in their home, parent/caregiver education and training, educational advocacy, collaboration with other service providers and assistance in locating resources. ABA is a service provided through Virginia's Medicaid program, covering 100% of the cost for services. Children with a diagnosis of Autism can qualify for Medicaid through the EDCD waiver, regardless of family income level.

## Educational Advocacy

Paragon Autism Services is pleased to announce that we are now offering educational advocacy and consulting services as a standalone service to families in Fredericksburg city, Spotsylvania, Stafford, King George 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.

## Parent Support Group

Paragon Autism Services hosts a monthly support group for parents/caregivers of children with Autism. Co-hosted by the Autism Society of Northern Virginia, meetings will take place at Paragon's offices on 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 and should be sent in advance to receive childcare.

## 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

## Community Trainings

Our ongoing community training events are free and open to anyone. The training for July will be Feeding Concerns and Strategies. This training will review several common obstacles to varied diets and regular eating and will propose strategies to address them. Further upcoming topics will include Teaching and Facilitating Play and Teaching Safety Skills.

We will continue with at least one free monthly community training to be held on the third Wednesday of each month from 6-8PM. If you have suggestions for training topics, please contact us to let us know.

## Playgroup Outings

We have begun our playgroup outings for children with autism. 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. Playgroups will be open to any child with autism and their siblings. Though these meetings will be open to children of any age, we anticipate most participants will be between two and eight years old.

## Social Skills Training

Additionally, we are still interested in providing intensive social skills training as a separate service, but must have appropriate peer pairings in order for participants to derive the most benefit. If you are interested in this service for your child, please contact us.

## 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!



## WHY ABA?

ABA is the science of changing behavior through the manipulation of environmental factors. Through the use of ABA strategies our team brings about positive and meaningful change. ABA strives to increase and teach socially acceptable behaviors through skill-building and the reduction of inappropriate behaviors to include aggression, self-injurious behaviors, tantrums and elopement. ABA is a scientifically validated approach for the treatment of individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder.

We help reduce inappropriate behaviors to include aggression, self-injurious behaviors, elopement and noncompliance.

We help clients build functional skills including:

Language and conversation skills

Socialization and play skills

Self-help skills to include grooming, toileting, and eating skills

Replacement behaviors for and reduction of undesirable behaviors

Cooperation and compliance skills

# Food Selectivity

Food selectivity can occur with ANY child. The likelihood of food selectivity is higher for children with disabilities, and in particular for children with autism. But how do you know when *picky eating* becomes an eating *problem*? It's hard to define this with a number of acceptable foods or something similar, because it's technically possible that a person could eat fewer than ten foods but have an adequate diet (if they've picked very healthy foods). Clear indicators that a child's eating habits are problematic include low weight or height, severe or pervasive inappropriate mealtime behavior and excessive family stress surrounding meal planning and eating.

Regarding a child's diet, what's more important than number of foods eaten is the variety in terms of nutrients. For example, if a child were to avoid eating all meats, they could potentially still have an adequate diet if there were other sources of protein and other specific nutrients. However, if the child wasn't making up for the missed protein elsewhere it would be problematic. The same holds true for a variety of different nutrient types. If a child refuses all foods of any broad class (proteins, vegetables/fruits, grains, dairy), a nutritional deficiency is relatively likely.



Pediatricians often are concerned only with nutritional needs being met. This is frequently achieved by supplementing a child's severely limited diet with drinks such as Pediasure. While this does solve the problem of short-term nutritional needs, it does nothing to address the long-term behavioral skills needed to ensure an adequate diet over the lifespan. This is doubly problematic in that achieving behavioral change means overcoming behavioral history. The longer a child continues a limited diet with supplementation, the harder it will be to change.



## Playgroup Outings

Our second playgroup outing to KD'z Kidz World was a success! Everyone had a great time and we had some nice interactions between kids. Please join us for our next outing on Thursday, July 10<sup>th</sup> from 4:00-6:00 PM. This time we'll meet at Chuck E. Cheese's in Central Park.



## 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.



## AROUND TOWN

KD'z Kidz World hosts a monthly special-needs night on the third Thursday of the month. The facility is only open to children with disabilities, their siblings and other family during these events. Come out for the next one on Thursday, July 17<sup>th</sup> from 6-8 PM. <http://kdkidzworld.com/>

# Trying New Foods

Generally speaking, there are two primary approaches to addressing feeding issues. The more physiological approach often implemented by Occupational Therapists (OTs), Physical Therapists (PTs) and Speech-Language Pathologists (SLPs) is frequently used to address physiological feeding issues, such as poor oral-motor awareness and strength and dysphagia (difficulty with swallowing). In this type of approach, an assessment will be conducted to accurately identify the problem, and a plan will be developed to deliver the necessary therapy and/or care to ameliorate the symptoms of the physiological obstacle.

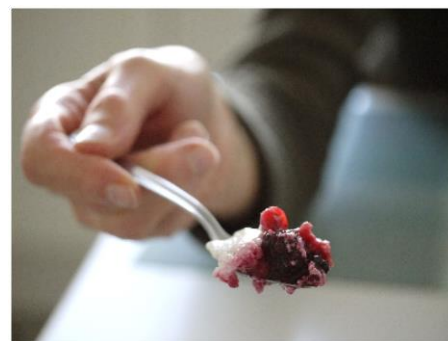
Truly physiological barriers to appropriate feeding should not be treated using solely behavioral methods. If these types of difficulties are suspected, medical consultation is imperative before proceeding.

However, for many of the most common feeding problems a behavioral approach may be appropriate. Issues such as reduced or limited intake, severe food selectivity or refusal and inappropriate mealtime behavior can all be addressed with a behavioral methodology. Even when food selectivity is occurring according to texture rather than type of food, a behavioral approach may be most appropriate. When OTs and PTs implement feeding programs utilizing other methodologies, for texture-based selectivity and similar issues they frequently include strategies that are patently behavioral in nature. Desensitization and exposure-based procedures are behavioral, though the execution of such procedures will vary greatly.

When it comes to behavioral strategies for addressing feeding issues, the real distinguishing characteristic between them is intensity. On the low intensity end of the continuum are strategies for pairing low and high probability targets, such as taking one bite of non-preferred food before getting preferred food. To do this correctly, one would plan for appropriate and consistent implementation of this new contingency, and would plan for a reinforcer of sufficient value (a reinforcer that is actually reinforcing) to be delivered for success. Once success is reliable with one bite, the target is increased to two bites, with systematic increases to continue until the long-term goal has been achieved.

On the other end of the continuum are highly intensive inpatient feeding programs that are generally reserved for the most severe cases. In such cases, the primary obstacle identified will be indisputably behavioral, and there will generally be an indicated medical or behavioral need, such as risk of malnutrition or injury from resulting behavior. This type of program is generally not advisable in those cases where the need or risks present are not as great. Though highly effective, such procedures are demanding of time and energy and are highly stressful for the family.

If you are experiencing difficulty with feeding, seek input and guidance from any trained professional available to you. If your child has speech, OT or ABA therapy, ask the provider for their opinion. It is generally advisable, though, to ensure that someone with behavior analytic expertise be part of the team when behavioral approaches are to be implemented.



## HEADS UP!

Paragon Autism Services will be closed the week of June 30th-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

July

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
29	30 Paragon Closed	1 Paragon Closed	2 Paragon Closed	3 Paragon Closed	4 Paragon Closed	5
6	7	8 Parent Support Group 6-8PM	9	10 Playgroup Outing to Chuck E. Cheese's 4-6PM	11	12
13	14	15	16 Free Community Training Feeding Issues & Strategies 6-8PM	17 KD'z Kidz World Special Needs Night 6-8PM	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26 Sensory friendly movie AMC Potomac Mills 10AM
27	28	29	30	31		