

Families of children with autism spectrum disorders confront a wide range of challenges. Raising a child on the autism spectrum is difficult, both for the children as well as the parents. Autism's influence on the family may be unbearably exhausting, isolating and troublesome.

A child with autism may be withdrawn, frequently playing alone, and may be inappropriate in their play and conduct. Autistic children sometimes make strange noises or engage in repetitive behaviors that



can be frightening to other children and adults not used to being around someone with additional needs. Some children with autism may have sensitivities to certain foods, eat special diets to lessen their symptoms, or have strange eating habits. Many children with autism may have altered sleep patterns and be particularly devoted to doing things a certain way.

Sara's Garden is committed to providing an education to children on the autism spectrum. By creating a central resource for education, assessment and treatment, we aspire to replace fear and uncertainty with hope, knowledge and support, to aid in re-establishing family balance, and to help put children on the path to realizing their fullest potential and becoming an active part of their community.

Sara's Garden uses a whole-child approach to autism therapy. This means that every child is assessed to determine his individual strengths and weaknesses and to establish a set of goals unique to the child. As part of this approach, each child is monitored to evaluate the ongoing effectiveness of the programs in which he participates. This way, each child's program can be efficiently tailored to meet his needs.



Every child is unique. Therefore, Sara's Garden uses a variety of teaching techniques compiled into a multi-disciplinary approach. Speech and language, applied behavioral analysis and verbal behavior, and sensory integration techniques are all seamlessly integrated into the academies core curriculum. This multi-faceted method helps children to learn in a variety of different ways. The ability to apply different self-educational methodologies helps children to become more flexible learners in the classroom and in the community at large.

Spectrum of Care

An essential component of our program is the generalization of skills. The skill sets that are taught here are generalized, so a child can take their skills from the classroom and use it in the home and community. Parents play an important role in this aspect of the programming, and Sara's Garden encourages their participation and an environment of open communication to reach a successful model of achievement.

We use a number of therapy methods to teach children with autism. Educational therapy includes:

- Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) teachers observe the behavior of a person with autism and then provide instructions on any necessary missing skills. The teachers teach by providing a concise instruction and reward a correct response. The reward system encourages the positive behavior.
- TEACCH is a structured teaching method that provides an organized school environment with a strict schedule, visual teaching methods and short, clear instructions. TEACCH programs can easily be personalized.
- Sensory Integration Therapy is useful to assist children with autism that have repetitive behavior or sensory issues. Controlled sensory input has been shown to be effective in reducing stress and improving concentration, eye-hand coordination and motor function.
- Developmental, Individual Difference Floortime uses play to teach autistic children emotional engagement, how to connect ideas and focus attention as well as problem solving and self-expression.
- Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) is a form of alternative and augmentative communication (AAC) that uses pictures instead of words to help children communicate. PECS was designed especially for children with autism who have delays in speech development.

