



ABC Anti Bully Club

March 4 ThisAbility launched a new program. The ABC was founded by Faith Sample hosted by ThisABILITY. She shared with her guests why she started the Club and what her goals are. The attendees sang karaoke, shared their stories of being bullied and enjoyed pizza and cake.

Each day about 160,000 students miss school because of the fear of being bullied or just because of the bullying. Most of the time bullies have at home or they are being bullied. Bullies also do this because they don't have anyone to talk to or they can be jealous or maybe just simply insecure about themselves.

Most of the time there is self-harm, suicide, depression, anxiety, loneliness, insomnia, eating disorders, and loss of interest in old hobbies. Other effects are bad self-esteem, headaches, adjustment problems to school, emotional problems, social skill problems, trust issues, and a tough time making or keeping friends. But most of all bullying can make a person feel worthless. Bullying can affect a person for the rest of their life or at least into adulthood.

The ABC goals: Are to help prevent bullying, reducing suicidal thoughts, and depression. We want to accomplish our goals through projects, activities, peer support groups, and through an awareness campaign. We are happy to be here with you to help ABC accomplish its goals with your insight, so we can help combat bullying.



"If you see someone down become their friend, and stop the bullying trend"

WHAT WE DO...

*HELP PREVENT BULLYING

*BUILD SELF-ESTEEM

*BUILD SOCIAL SKILLS

*LOWER SUICIDAL

THOUGHTS & DEPRESSION

*FUN ACTIVITIES

FOR AGES 10 - 16



Founded by Faith Sample

Call or Text: (804) 571-1018

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Facebook: facebook.com/abcantibully

Website: thisability.org/abc_anti_bully_club

April 2018 Newsletter

Knowdifferent

Things I “Pack” For an IEP Meeting

By Carissa Garabedian

It's almost that time, time for another IEP meeting.

You know, the meeting that you get to listen to all of the areas that your child falls short in and how the school wants to help find the accommodations for success. Yes, that is what I am “packing” for.

This is one of the most draining and adrenaline building experiences I have had to endure in my years of parenting. There is no right way to prepare and no way to walk out feeling completely satisfied.

I do not always know or like the person I become in preparation for these meetings or at these meetings. It brings out a fire in me that I did not know I possessed.

I have created a list of the things I bring, some are not items you can hold physically, but you can mentally and that may make all the difference. Here they are:

~ **Strength.** I don't mean the physical kind. I need the strength to bite my lip, squeeze my hand and hold my breath. These are the things I do when I have to listen to the weaknesses and the goals not achieved. I know they exist, I wouldn't be here if they didn't, right? It never gets easier.

~ **Honesty.** No one in that room knows my child as well as me. I will say all I can to be his voice and defend all I can. I will also challenge what needs to be.

~ **Perspective.** Many in this room who are telling me what they think is best can benefit from some perspective to what I live every day. It really opens eyes, and minds.

~ **Kindness.** I will always start with kindness and the hope that we can all come together. I believe I am more clearly heard when we can talk **WITH** one another and not at.

~ **Humor.** Yup. Because I need to laugh.

~ **Questions.** Many of them. There is no wrong question. I need info.

~ **Hope.** Because I need to have hope, I need to believe in the system and that we can come together for my child to succeed.

Then the items that are more tangible-

~ **Tissues.** I do tend to cry. My sleeves have been known to look like crap after these meetings.

~ **Notes.** Clear notes and examples of any and all situations needing to be discussed. You cannot be too prepared. Have a pen too!

~ **Gum or mints.** I need to have a distraction.

And then, a tool I learned about that has made a big difference in our lives, our...

~ **Advocate.** I like the security of an expert hired by us to protect our child and know the laws/ rights. I am not an expert at that and feel safer with this. These papers are grueling to understand, and I know my weaknesses.

Anything else you would “pack”?
Please share!

I never feel like I'm doing enough, I never think I know enough and I wonder always if it is the right thing.

I do believe that most teachers/ educators want our children to succeed. I think the breakdown is so frequently the system. A system that has been created to fit into a square box. This box no longer can house so many of our kids and the teachers can try to be creative, but the system won't allow it. This has to change.

I won't stop until it does. Our kids deserve that.

Here's to our kids and the incredible voices we are!



I would like to introduce Carissa Garabedian. She will be contributing to Thisability Newsletter. We are grateful to have her as a part of our team.

Carissa Garabedian is the founder of Knowdifferent.net, a Special Needs Website in Richmond, Va where she lives with her husband, 3 children and 2 shiht-tzus. Her youngest child has Autism and teaches in all he does. She is also the publisher of Richmond.Macaronikid.com. In her free time, she loves to cook, walk, read and enjoy her family & friends. Spreading awareness and acceptance is her ongoing mission. Say hi on Twitter at @knowdifferent

Knowdifferent's goal is to share information, stories and resources to educate the community that families with special needs are "knowdifferent". Through real life families and stories, we will spread this word as well as provide education and info on resource options.



Autism and Adolescence

By Courtney Pugh, Early Childhood and Education Advocate

April is a time for Autism Awareness which as we know, can impact children in many ways. Being a spectrum, Autism can impair social, communication, speech, behaviors, and cognitive functions at varying levels. Often our focus is centered on younger children with early detection and services geared toward children between 3-10 years old. But what happens when these children grow up?

As a child with Autism matures, they experience many of the same challenges as their neurotypical peers. These challenges; however, can be more dramatic or severe for a person with cognitive or social deficits. They may have limited understanding of what changes are happening inside them and around them with their peers. They may also be impacted in how they are able to communicate these feelings to others.

When a special needs student who has an Individualized Education Program (IEP) in school turns 14 (or sooner if the IEP team determines it is necessary), transition planning starts to occur for looking at what goals and services the child may need to help reach post-secondary education and/or independent living skills. Parents working with the IEP team may want to consider the following areas for goals and services for a child with Autism:

1. Personal Development-During puberty and hormonal changes, there are lots of physical developments as well as emotional ones that occur. Does the child recognize and understand the changes occurring within his/her own body and that of others? Is the child able to deal with any "body maintenance" issues (i.e. shaving, menstruating, etc.)? Can the child identify their own emotions and be able to self-regulate them, particularly when stressed or frustrated?

2. Social Development- Along with the puberty changes that are occurring, changes are happening in the social environment around the child at school and the community. The child may become aware of changes in others or may need assistance in recognizing how his/her behaviors, speech, etc. can impact others around them. Is the child aware of social rules regarding personal space, asking personal questions of others, or making inappropriate comments? Can the child recognize through body language cues of others when that person's emotions have changed in the context of their interaction (i.e. suddenly mad when social boundaries are crossed verbally or physically).



Additionally, this is the time when teenagers start wanting to hang out with their friends without adults, consider experimenting with drugs and/or alcohol, and dating. Is the child able to understand about making good choices about being safe, avoiding risky behaviors, and dangerous situations? Does the child understand how to seek help if he/she finds themselves in a risky or dangerous situation? Does he/she understand the social norms of dating and the serious (or even legal) implications if something occurs while on a date that is unwarranted?

3. Independent Living Skills-During the teenage years, many children prepare for their first jobs or feeling the urge to start looking at living independently. Does the child have the cognitive abilities to keep up with finances, paying bills, ability to clean up after self and home? Does the child understand the social norms and production expectations of a job (i.e. be on time, sit and do your work, don't disturb coworkers, etc)? Is driving by him/herself a possibility or do they need instruction on how to use public transportation? Will this child be able to live on his/her own or is guardianship a consideration?



At this point, take a deep breath and realize all families face similar struggles as these. Our challenges as parents of children with Autism mean we may need to focus more on these and consider role playing, social stories, and become more cognizant of the things going on within and around our child. Below are some links to a few resources to help you become an informed parent in the process:

https://iancommunity.org/cs/simons_simplx_community/autism_in_teens

<https://www.crchealth.com/troubled-teenagers/autism-in-teenagers/>

https://www.autism-society.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/NEWasa-growing_up-teen-final-rev.pdf

<https://www.autismspeaks.org/blog/2018/01/12/ten-steps-help-teen-autism-navigate-dating>

Thisability SPOTLIGHT



Kids Name: Alivia Grace
Nickname: Livi
Favorite Song: Trolls Cant Stop the Feeling by Justin Timberlake
Favorite Toys: Disney Princesses, Super Hero Girls
Favorite TV Show: Sofia the First
Favorite Activity: playing outside
Favorite place to go: park
Favorite Food: chicken nuggets/ice cream
Pet: cat Mickey
Siblings: sister Kindred
Diagnosis: congenital Hyperinsulinism, Beckwith Weideman Syndrome, ADHD, HFA.



Alivia is a 4.5 year old energetic little girl. She was born 6.5 weeks early with 2 separate rare diseases CHI and BWS. Today Alivia lets nothing slow her down, she loves going to school and spending weekends with her best friend Kimberly.

Name: Evan

Fav book: Brown bear what do you see, Llama Llama red pajama, & the bear snores on

Fav Song: Mickey Mouse Hot Dog song

Fav toys: toy cars & iPad

Fav TV show: Mickey Mouse clubhouse

Fav activity: reading books

Fav place to go: the beach

Fav food: whip cream

Pet: 2 cats Hokie & Layla

Siblings: only child

Extracurricular activities: school, therapy & driving my go baby car

Diagnosis: Evan was diagnosed with a duplication & translocation of chromosome 2, hydrocephalus he had surgery to place a vp shunt at 3 months, cleft palate repaired this past summer & due to palate he had a gtube placed at a week old, he does eat some food by mouth & continues to get better with eating new things, thin basement membrane disease of the kidneys which he takes daily medication for & a few other anomalies that have surgically been taken care of.



Evan is a happy little boy that loves school, therapy, reading & playing. He has been receiving PT, OT, & speech therapy since 6 months old & has made wonderful strides. He uses a communication device and walks with a gait trainer. We are so proud of what he has accomplished & excited for what the future holds for our amazing son!




Upcoming EVENTS

We have other events and activities throughout the year. Please visit our Website and Follow Us on Facebook for events and activity dates, times and location. You must register to attend ALL events except for our annual festival.



April 21
Vision Boards & Lunch
Ages 10-16
(Anti Bully Club)



July 14
Ice Cream Social
Ages 1-17



August 4
Education Conference
9 am—4pm
Guest Speakers
Comprehensive Autism Services
PEATC, Spencer Ferguson, Jr.
LCSW
Workshops: IEP's, Autism & More



Sept. 15
Pool Party & Lunch
11:30 am—2:30 pm
Hopewell Community Center



VENDOR REGISTRATION
INFO ON OUR WEBSITE
October 6
1pm-5 pm
6th Annual
Family Festival
Cultural Edition



November
Registration for
Christmas
Assistance
begins
November 15



December
December 16
5pm
@MP Bounce
with me.

This Organization Provides Resources & Information, Playgroups & Socials, Education Conference, Annual Family Festivals, Christmas Assistance Program, Annual Holiday Party, Online support groups & More.

Please visit our website at Thisability.org &/or follow us on [Facebook.com/thisabilityorg](https://www.facebook.com/thisabilityorg)
If you have any questions or would like to volunteer please feel free contact us.



Education Conference

August 4, 2018

9:00am—4:00pm



Disability Law Center

PEATC

Spencer Ferguson, Jr., LCSW

At Home Your WAY /Moms in Motion

Comprehensive Autism Partnership

IEP & 504, Autism

CCC+ & Accessing Waivers

Bully Prevention

Breakfast & Lunch

Children's Workshops & Activities

Swag Bags & Give Aways

*On site Education Consultants

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VOLUNTEER!



If you are interested in participating in our organization, please print and fill out the volunteer application on our site.

If you're unable to print and email or fax this form please fill in the form on our site.

Fax: 866-642-6659

Email: JByrd@thisability

Thisability SNFS

3305 B Oaklawn Blvd.

Hopewell, VA 23860



ThisABILITY is devoted to making a difference in the community and in the lives of children with special needs. We provide a variety of much needed services and activities throughout the year that benefit families who have children with special needs in our city and surrounding areas.

We ask that you consider supporting our cause.

ThisABILITY relies on the support of generous donors such as you. Your donation will help ensure the success of our future.



Donate on our website:

Thisability.org/donate

Paypal:

TaraSample@thisability.org

Donate by mail:

ThisABILITY

3305 B Oaklawn Blvd.

Hopewell, VA 23860

COMING SOON!

We will be adding membership options. You will receive more information soon!

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