



***Abilities First***  
***Autism Learning Center***  
Family Handbook

**2024 - 2025**

**4710 Timber Trail Drive  
Middletown, OH 45044  
(513)423-9496**



Welcome to our Autism Learning Center! We look forward to working with you and your family. This handbook is designed to inform you of our policies and procedures. Please read through it thoroughly and ask any questions you may have. Please keep it in a convenient place at home for future reference.

### **Abilities First Mission Statement:**

Abilities First empowers children and their families living with Autism and differing abilities to celebrate their strengths and reach their unique and highest potential by providing comprehensive care and support in an inclusive learning environment.

### **Autism Learning Center Philosophy**

To provide Preschool, Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students with Autism opportunities to achieve their highest potential while preparing to successfully move to the next grade level in their local communities.

## General Information

The Autism Learning Center is a unique program providing a comprehensive range of therapeutic, behavioral, and teaching strategies and family supports beginning at an early preschool level. The ultimate outcome is to promote successful transition into a school age program within your community.

All children in the program benefit from:

- *Preschool:* Four days per week, 5 hours per day structured class with a maximum of 1:3 staff to child ratio. Gradual transition to full class duration is available based on individual needs of children. Curriculum follows Ohio's Early Learning Standards and Teach Town Meta Play Curriculum.
- *Kindergarten, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade:* Five days per week, 6 hours per day structured class with maximum 1:4 staff to child ratio. Curriculum follows K/1 Ohio Department of Education Common Core standards, and Teach Town Encore Curriculum.
- *Moderate/Intensive Classroom:* Four days per week, 2 separate sessions (morning/afternoon) with a maximum of 3 students per class. Individual and small group instruction in the areas of positive behavior support, social emotional learning, and emotional regulation, with individualized lesson planning and support.
- Experienced teaching staff with backgrounds in Early Childhood Education, Special Education, DIR, ABA, and Therapeutic Intervention in an interdisciplinary team.
- Interdisciplinary Physical, Occupational and Speech Therapy Team on-site daily.
- Specific, individualized programming integrating a range of developmental, therapeutic and behavioral strategies including PECS, TEACCH, Assistive and Alternative Communication, Sensory, ABA, DIR principles and others, integrated into the classroom curriculum.
- One-on-one specific intervention incorporated into daily programming, provided by Intervention Team; in-class and "pull-out" sessions as appropriate.
- Natural Environment and developmental play-based approaches to learning; facilitation of communication, social interaction and independence intrinsic to all programming.
- Individualized Behavior Support Plans developed with team, including parents/guardians, Intervention Specialists, Therapists, and BCBA (as appropriate).
- OT, PT, SLP, BCBA (as needed/requested) consulting in the classroom.
- On-site inclusion activities with peers in the Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center preschool and school age classrooms.
- Home, community and/or school visits as requested to promote carryover of learning and parent/guardian support in everyday routines and transitions.
- Assistance for families, children and local school district staff with school age program transition.
- Individual PT, OT and SLP services as identified on the child's IEP including scheduled team involvement in IEP meetings where possible.

## **Abilities First Support Staff**

All can be reached at (513) 423-9496.

David Hood (Executive Director), [David.hood@abilitiesfirst.org](mailto:David.hood@abilitiesfirst.org)

Sarah Watts (Director of Autism Learning Center), [Sarah.watts@abilitiesfirst.org](mailto:Sarah.watts@abilitiesfirst.org)

Jen Marshall (Assistant Director of Autism Learning Center), [Jen.marshall@abilitiesfirst.org](mailto:Jen.marshall@abilitiesfirst.org)

Dani Solem (Intervention Coordinator), [Dani.solem@abilitiesfirst.org](mailto:Dani.solem@abilitiesfirst.org)

Lacey Steele (Program/Intake Coordinator), [Lacey.steele@abilitiesfirst.org](mailto:Lacey.steele@abilitiesfirst.org)

Simon Sawyers (Account Receivable), [Simon.Sawyers@abilitiesfirst.org](mailto:Simon.Sawyers@abilitiesfirst.org)

Michelle Moran (Success Liaison), [Michelle.moran@abilitiesfirst.org](mailto:Michelle.moran@abilitiesfirst.org)

## Enrollment Process

### Evaluation

The Program/Intake Coordinator will schedule a tour and evaluation with the student. There is no additional fee for this evaluation. If the student has an IEP and ETR, please bring these to the evaluation. Upon completion of the evaluation, the student will be considered for enrollment into the program.

### Enrollment

The parent/guardian must complete and provide the following items:

- Intake and Enrollment Packet
- Autism Scholarship Application (2 pages)
- Copy of child's birth certificate
- Proof of Residency
- Individual Education Plan (IEP) & Evaluation Team Report (ETR)
- Child Medical Statement (JFS 01305)
- Physical Care Plan (JFS 01236) – if needed
- Autism Scholarship Program Scholarship Acceptance Form
- Release of Information (if not already obtained)

### Tuition

The Ohio Autism Scholarship and private pay are accepted. Assistance is available to complete the Autism Scholarship Program Application. Contact our Intake/Program Coordinator or Director of ALC with questions about the Autism Scholarship application or private pay options.

### **School Year FEES:**

\$854.00 per week

Includes all and/or part of the following, depending on student IEP:

Physical Therapist	\$150.00 per hour
Occupational Therapist	\$150.00 per hour
Speech-Language Therapist	\$150.00 per hour
Intervention Specialist	\$150.00 per hour
Instructional Aide/Licensed Teacher	\$50.00 per hour

## Program Information

### Service Delivery Methods

Teachers and therapists collaborate with the student's home school district to develop/renew an annual Individualized Education Program (IEP), as well as an Evaluation Team Report (ETR) during enrollment in preschool and prior to entry into Kindergarten.

Speech, Occupational, Physical Therapies, and Intervention Services are incorporated into the learning environment during individual and group therapy sessions, as specified on the student's IEP. Our highly skilled therapists and teachers play an integral role as members of each student's educational team. Our Success Liaison works with students and teachers of the program on a case-by-case basis. Program Directors, Success Liaison, Director of Development and Community Relations, and the Program/Intake Coordinator work with the team to provide additional assistance and resources.

Preschool students are assessed in the winter and spring using the Early Childhood Education Checklist and the Kathleen Ann Quinn Social Skills Checklist. Kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade students receive an Academic Assessment Report, Written Narrative per ODE Standards at the end of the school year, completed by the Intervention Specialist/Director of ALC, submitted to their home school district. Results are shared with families during conferences. Results are also used to develop individual goals for the student.

DIR/Floor time principles underlie all classroom activities based on each student's individual needs. PECS, TEACCH, Assistive Technology, and Sensory-Motor Integration are also used.

All educational content aligns with Ohio Department of Education learning standards and Common Core standards.

As requested/scheduled home and community visits help families generalize and carry over approaches used and skills learned into daily life and problem solve critical issues.

Program staff assist students with transitioning into local school districts or other community programs.

The program routinely maintains a 1:3 or 1:4 staff to child ratio.

All students have access to iPads which are used at very deliberate and strategic times.

**Volunteers and Students:**

Abilities First encourages community involvement in all our programs. Volunteers are incorporated to perform a variety of duties depending on their interest and our needs. Student volunteers are given the opportunity to observe and gain practical experience in working with young children. Although these additional people are encouraged to actively interact with our children, they are not considered to be staff and will not be included in the staff/child ratios and will never be alone with the children. All Abilities First volunteers and student volunteers undergo background checks and orientation.

**Progress Reporting**

Progress on each student's IEP goals is reported quarterly to the parents, as well as to the student's home school district. Progress on additional goals is shared at Parent/Teacher Conferences, at scheduled home visits, and through informal day to day contact.

**Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Parent/teacher conferences provide an opportunity for parents/guardians and teaching staff to get to know each other better and to promote a closer working relationship between home and school. Individual conferences will be scheduled two times per year. Each family will be notified in advance of the available dates and times. Additional conferences may be scheduled at any time by either the parents/guardians or the teachers.

If you should have any questions concerning your child, you are invited to call/message your child's teacher either to discuss matters on the phone/virtually or to set up an appointment for a conference. Discussing your child during program hours could be a challenge, as the children require constant supervision. We are diligent to protect the confidentiality of information pertaining to all children and avoid detailed conversations in public areas.



### **Weather Emergencies, Delays & Closings**

- If Middletown City Schools are **closed** due to severe weather, then the Autism Learning Center will also be **closed** that day.
- If Middletown City Schools are **delayed**, then the Autism Learning Center will be **open** that day, but we encourage you to take your time, be safe, and use your best judgement as to whether to bring your child that day.
- Parents/Guardians are welcome to call or message the Director of ALC or ALC/AFF Staff after 8:00 AM to ask if class will be held when there is severe weather.

Since the children in our program live in different areas, we encourage you to use your best judgment to decide if it is safe for you to drive your child to school from where you live. If you feel it is unsafe and decide not to bring your child, please call the Director of ALC or Assistant Director as early as possible. (513) 423-9496, ext. 413 or ext. 431.

If you have access to a computer, log onto [www.whiotv.com](http://www.whiotv.com), click on “weather” and click on “view complete list” under school closings.

If you see a “delay” for Abilities First, this applies to the 6:30 am opening of the Early Childhood Learning Center. Programs or therapy sessions starting later in the day will not be affected.

Program closings or delays will also be announced on:

WHIO(1290 AM), 99.1 FM, Channel 7

[www.K99online.com](http://www.K99online.com)

[www.1290whio.com](http://www.1290whio.com)

WKRC-TV Channel 12

WLWT-TV Channel 5

[Local12.com](http://Local12.com)

WPFB 105.9 FM

Please listen for Abilities First or Abilities First Foundation.

## Attendance Policy

It is our goal to assist your child in making as much progress as possible. For that to happen, consistent attendance is essential.

### Where does drop off and pick up occur?

Drop off and pick up occurs outside of your student's classroom.

**\*Drop-off** occurs no earlier than 5 minutes prior to 9:00am. *If you arrive after 9:30am, wait in the lobby and a staff member will walk your child to their assigned classroom\*\*.*

**\*\*This is to limit disruption, as activities have already begun.**

**\*\*\*At 10:00am, your child has been marked absent and you need to call first before arriving tardy.**

**\*Pick-up** occurs no earlier than 5 minutes prior, to 10 minutes after, the end of your child's class time:

- Preschool: 2:00pm – 2:10pm
- Kindergarten – 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade: 3:00pm – 3:10pm

**\*\*LATE PICKUP CHARGE:** Your child(ren) must be picked up 10 minutes after their class time in order to avoid a late pickup charge.

- If you find that you will be late in arriving to the center, please call for planning purposes.
- The charge will be \$50.00 per 20 minutes per child after 2:10pm for Preschool, and after 3:10pm for K-2.
- **If no contact has been made with a parent or designee by: 3:00pm for Preschool, 4:00pm for K-2, the local children's services authority will be called.**
- Habitual late pick-ups could jeopardize your child's spot in the program.

### What is my responsibility in notifying ALC staff when my student cannot attend?

You are responsible for calling the Director of Autism Learning Center, Sarah Watts, at 513-423-9496 x 413, emailing [Sarah.Watts@abilitiesfirst.org](mailto:Sarah.Watts@abilitiesfirst.org), or messaging ALC staff on Procure within one hour to the start of the school day.

### What is considered an excused or unexcused absence?

We understand people cancel or miss school for a variety of reasons. The following are the definitions of excused and unexcused absences:

**Excused Absence:** An illness, accident or other emergency situation, or a notification within one hour to the start of the school day. The absence will be considered unexcused until a parent/guardian makes direct contact with the Director or Assistant Director to verify the student's absence, or provide written documentation (e.g., doctor's note).

**Unexcused Absence:** Not notifying the ALC staff, not showing up for school, or a non-emergency situation in which a call is received less than 4 hours in advance of the school day.

**What happens after twelve (12) for Preschool, fourteen (14), for K/2, excused absences?**

If your Preschool student has twelve (12), or your Kindergartener has fourteen (14), excused absences within the quarter, they will lose their spot in the Autism Learning Center program and be placed on the waiting list, to be called as availability arises.

**What if my child is sick for two (2) weeks in a row (i.e. – chicken pox) or we are on vacation?**

This will be considered as one (1) excused absence since it all stems from the same issue.

**What happens after six (6) unexcused absences?**

If your child has six (6) unexcused absences within the quarter, your child will lose their spot in the Autism Learning Center program and be placed on the waiting list, to be called as availability arises.

**Will I be notified if my student is about to be withdrawn from the program?**

Yes, the Director of Autism Learning Center will notify you by phone, email, and in person (if able).

It is important that we can always contact at least one parent/guardian or our authorized other authorized individual when your child is at Abilities First. There should always be someone 16 years of age or older who is available to pick up your child in case of emergency or illness. Notify us immediately of any change in your contact information.

**No child will be released from the staff to anyone other than the parent(s), guardian(s), or other person specifically indicated on the enrollment application and authorization for pick-up. We require that you give advance written/verbal notice to the staff when changes occur. Photo I.D. is required for pick-up.**

**Before and After School Care**

Parents needing before and/or after school care from as early as 6:30 AM or until as late as 6:30 PM may seek to enroll their child in the Abilities First Early Childhood Learning Center. These services are at an additional cost, and placement is based on availability. Please contact the Director of the Early Childhood Learning Center at Abilities First's main number for more information and specific fee schedule or talk to the teachers or Intake/Program Coordinator, and they will help put you in touch with them.

### **Diapering & Toileting**

Diapers will be checked and changed as needed. It is the parent(s)/guardian(s) responsibility to provide diapers, wipes, and any other necessary personal hygiene supplies for their child while at school; an additional set of clothing should also be left at school.

Communication and consistency are essential for toilet training success. Because of this, we ask parents for input and to try to be consistent with the student's home toilet training routine. *Students are toileted according to their individual needs and schedules for the entire class.*

### **Dressing for Outdoor Play**

Children will go outside in all types of weather. Temperature guidelines for outdoor play are 40 degrees to 90 degrees. Time outside will be limited to 20 minutes or less when there is an air quality advisory in effect. Please dress your child with the day's weather in mind. Please provide clothing for outdoor play-including hat, mittens or gloves, a coat with a working zipper, and boots or extra shoes. You may want to include a sweatshirt or light sweater on spring and fall days and even in the summer if your child is not used to air conditioning.

We are unable to keep one child inside even though you may request it. If your child is healthy enough to attend school, he/she should be healthy enough to play outdoors for a reasonable amount of time. If your child has a medical condition which the doctor feels make outdoor play unsafe, please have the doctor inform us of this condition in writing. We will make every effort to accommodate.

***Please label clothing and book bags with your child's name.***

### **Shoes**

For safety reasons, we require both teachers and children to wear CLOSED TOE SHOES while at our center. These types of shoes prevent injury to the toes and keep foreign objects away from the feet. Open toe sandals are allowed during water play only.

### **Bringing Toys to School**

We find that when children bring personal toys and books to school, distraction from the program and conflicts between children develop. We also feel the classroom environment should revolve around the materials in the classroom so that children participate in the educational and enriching activities which the classroom offers. Please leave your child's personal toys and comfort items at home or in the car. If a child has a toy or item in the lobby, we will hand the item back to the parent before we take the child.

*We understand that transitions to and from certain areas and/or individuals can be difficult. If you would like to discuss creating a transition plan with your child's teachers, please contact them using the methods provided.*

### **Custody Agreement Procedures**

We follow the custody procedures ordered in court documents. Please provide a copy of your decree to the Director of Autism Learning Center, so that the proper procedures may be followed. The custodial parent or guardian is permitted unlimited access to the center. A non-residential parent is permitted unlimited access to the center, unless a court order is on file with the center specifically limiting access.

### **Behavior Management Policy**

1. Each child is treated with respect and concern for their developmental needs. Guidance and discipline are positive, productive, non-punitive, and appropriate to the situation and to each child's individual development. Behavior Support Plans will be developed and individualized based on the needs of the child. Support Team meetings will be held to discuss each child's plan. DIR and ABA principles underlie all classroom activities based on each student's individual needs.
2. Combined with Social Emotional curriculum, ALC staff use the principles of Safety Care De-escalation Training with "Help, Prompt and Wait" strategies to respond to and redirect behaviors. Differential reinforcement will also be used to reduce challenging behavior by teaching and reinforcing other, more desirable behaviors.
3. There will be no cruel, harsh, or unusual punishment.
4. No child will be isolated from their classroom as a form of discipline.
5. In case of physical aggression, teachers will attempt to de-escalate, redirect, block, and may remove the other children from the immediate area for their safety. Teachers may restrain aggressor for the safety of those involved but no form of physical punishment or physical restraint will ever be used for any other reason. If restraint is needed, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will be notified on the day of the incident.
6. Discipline will never be imposed for failure to eat or for toileting accidents.
7. No child will be humiliated, shamed, frightened, or verbally abused.
8. No discipline technique will ever be delegated to another child.
9. In our program we prefer to use phrases that are more positive and redirect the child, rather than using "NO."
10. Children are not permitted to hit each other on Abilities First property nor are parent(s)/guardian(s) permitted to spank, slap, or verbally abuse children at the center.
- 11.** The teachers may consult with the child's family about issues that are occurring at our center and encourage families to discuss any problems they are having at home. It is very important for us to work together for the benefit of the children. These issues will also be addressed during home visits. When children display a pattern of dangerous or very dangerous behavior(s) that threaten or cause harm to others, our center will implement our Procedure to Promote Positive Behavior (see pg. 15).

Behavior practices are in compliance with Ohio Department of Education guidelines regarding discipline and restraint.

Autism Learning Center Staff, under the guidance of the Director of Autism Learning Center and/or Assistant Director and Abilities First Leadership, retain the right to send your child home for dangerous behavior.

**-Disruptive Behaviors interfere with learning and functioning**

Examples Include:

<u>Yelling out during instruction</u>	<u>Inappropriate Language</u>	<u>Refusal to Follow Direction</u>
<u>Leaving the immediate area</u>	<u>Inappropriate Comments to peer/staff</u>	<u>Disrobing</u>

Staff Response Options include but are not limited to:

- Help/Prompt/Wait Strategies
- Observation report to families

**-Dangerous Behaviors are potentially harmful**

Examples include:

Property Destruction (without potential to cause harm)	Head Banging (in isolation)	Scratching, Slapping (in isolation)
Eloping from class	Throwing objects	Hitting in isolation

Staff Response Options include but are not limited to:

- Help/Prompt/Wait Strategies (when safe to do so)
- Incident Report sent home.
- Restorative Practices (ex. 1:1 time to assist with recovery)
- Debrief with individual (as appropriate)
- Reflection on team response

**-Very Dangerous (Potentially Lethal) Behaviors have significant potential to cause serious harm.**

Examples include:

Hitting/Kicking	Using objects as weapons/Using weapons	Property Destruction (with potential for bodily harm)
Head banging	Elopement	Fighting

Staff Response Options include but are not limited to:

- Help/Prompt/Wait Strategies (when safe to do so).
- Incident Report sent home.
- Family and Team Meeting scheduled as needed.
- Restorative Practices (ex. 1:1 time to assist with recovery).
- Debrief with individual (as appropriate).
- Reflection on team response.

### **Procedure to Promote Positive Behavior**

Promotion of positive behavior and interactions for the children takes collaboration between home and the center. Here are some you can expect from us, & what we will expect from you.

What you can expect from management and staff:

- Staff receive ongoing training in the disciplinary methods of affirmation and redirection.
- Teachers model these techniques and ensure that their assistant teachers and other classroom staff use them also.
- Zero tolerance for negative or punitive disciplinary language or methods being used by the staff or the volunteers.
- Privacy and confidentiality of information that you provide. Information that you supply to the center's management or your child's teachers or information they share with you will not be discussed with others.
- All aggressive behaviors that cause harm to others are reported to the Executive Director. Parents will receive an incident report if their child is harmed. If your child exhibits a pattern of documented aggressive behavior, you will be contacted to set up a conference within five working days.
- A collaborative plan will be set up at the conference, of things to do both at home and in the center to promote appropriate behavior and positive interactions with your child.
- You will receive informal updates during the next 6–8-week period; your input will be requested during that time. We believe that with consistency we will see progress within this time frame.
- A more formal discussion with you at the end of that time will be scheduled to discuss progress, additional/alternative strategies or more appropriate options.

What we expect from you:

- Provide your child with a bedtime that gives them the opportunity for a good night's sleep.
- Provide your child with the opportunity to eat a nutritious breakfast.
- Let us know about any unusual circumstance(s) in your child's life that may temporarily upset them.
- Consider further assessment by therapists or other specialists if it is suggested during your parent/teacher conference.
- Respond with concern and willingness to work with us when you receive a call that your child has been an aggressor; we want to partner with you to establish procedures that will help your child be successful.
- Work with us to develop a home and center plan that helps your child learn positive behaviors and interactions. Share ideas and insights with us.
- Follow through on your part of the plan. Give feedback to us about your progress at home.
- If you have concerns about anything relating to your child or their care with us, come to us immediately rather than waiting for a more difficult situation to develop.

Through our intake process and team meetings with you, we make every effort to ensure that our program is the best placement for your child at that time. There are times where we may see that the child is no longer benefiting from our program. At this point, we will initiate conversations with you to problem solve and discuss, as a team, appropriate options. If it is determined through those discussions that our program cannot continue to meet the needs of the child, our Success Liaison or Director will work with you to identify other options.

### **Permanent Withdrawals**

If you plan to withdraw your child from our program, please notify the Director of Autism Learning Center *in writing a minimum of two weeks in advance.*

### **Customer Feedback**

Customer satisfaction surveys are distributed to all parents on an academic yearly basis. A separate satisfaction survey is distributed for the summer program. Results of the satisfaction surveys are tabulated and analyzed annually by the Executive Director and specific areas of concern or areas needing further investigation are identified and discussed with the team. Follow up as determined is undertaken with families. Customer satisfaction results are tracked and trended over time and used for continuous improvement initiatives.

All families are encouraged to communicate regularly with program staff about questions or concerns. These will be discussed as appropriate with the Director, Executive Director and team. The Director or Executive Director will provide feedback on the resolutions.

### **Internal Monitoring/Improvement**

We have both formal and informal processes for program evaluation and continuous improvement. Our center has key processes and metrics that are tracked and analyzed regularly. The program has client related outcome measures established that are identified, tracked, analyzed, and reported annually. Informal mechanisms for monitoring include staff/parent communications, parent teacher conferences, open houses, and parent nights. We encourage you to share feedback with staff members on a regular basis. The Autism Learning Center team meets together bi-weekly and with the Executive Director monthly to review processes and operational issues. We monitor and collate the children's progress on goals regularly.

### **Staff Training/Professional Development**

The Autism Learning Center staff go through agency orientation at onboarding and specific orientation with the Director within the first 4 weeks. Our Intervention Specialists, Assistant Director, and Intervention Coordinator also provide real-time coaching, as well as 2-3 in-service days per year with all staff members. Every team member is allocated an individual Continuing Education budget, which can be used for approved professional development courses. Every



team member also receives up to 3 days of paid Continuing Education leave. Staff must have completed their 90-day probationary period before being eligible. The agency also offers tuition reimbursement for college courses.

**Grievances**

Complaints and problems should be discussed with a teacher, the Director, the Assistant Director, or the Executive Director. We want to know right away if anything we say or do causes you concern or worry and if you have ideas on how we can improve. We will do our best to resolve any problems that arise. If any problem that you have discussed with a teacher, the Director, or Assistant Director is not resolved to your satisfaction, please contact the Executive Director, David Hood, at (513)423-9496, ext. 245.

## Health and Safety

### Daily Health Checks

As each child arrives at school, we will perform a quick check for signs of contagious conditions, as well as any unusual bumps, bruises, scratches, etc. A child who shows signs of being contagious will not be allowed to stay that day. Families should have contingency plans already in place to care for their children when they are ill. We know it is inconvenient for parents/guardians to leave work and/or stay at home due to a possible communicable illness. However, our policy is to strictly exclude children with possible communicable illness and is designed to protect all of the children and staff.

A staff member who has a communicable disease will not work with the children and will be replaced by a qualified substitute.

***Symptoms for Dismissal-*** Children will be sent home or not accepted with any of the following conditions:

- Temperature of 100 degrees or above.
- Diarrhea - 2 or more abnormally loose incidents within 24 hours.
- Vomiting more than once or along with other symptoms of illness.
- Severe coughing (causing the child to become red or blue in the face or make a whooping sound).
- Difficult or rapid breathing.
- Yellowish eyes or skin.
- Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool.
- Stiff neck with an elevated temperature.
- Redness of the eye, obvious discharge, matted eyelashes, burning, itching.
- Untreated, infected skin patch or a skin rash that has not been identified in writing or by a phone call to our center by a physician who has seen the rash.
- Evidence of lice or other parasitic infestation.
- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing.
- Pain which the child complains about, and which interferes with activity.
- Other signs of possible communicable illness or conditions which interfere with the child's ability to effectively function in the classroom.

### Isolation Procedures

When symptoms of communicable illness develop during the day, the child will be isolated from the other children and supervised by an adult. Ill children will be provided with a clean mat or bean bag to rest on. The parent/guardian and/or the designated emergency contact person will be contacted to come for the child. We expect parent(s)/guardian(s) to respond quickly as we do not have the staffing capacity to keep ill children at the center.

Children with one of the following symptoms will be isolated from the other children for observation. The decision to discharge or to return a child to the classroom will be determined by department leadership.

- Sore throat or difficulty swallowing
- Elevated temperature (100 degrees)
- Isolated incident of vomiting.

### **Returning After Illness**

\*Children should be symptom free for 24 hours without the use of medication before returning to school.

**A statement from a physician must accompany a returning child.** The statement must confirm that the child is free from communicable disease and that returning to the center presents no risk to the child or others. *Abilities First retains the right to continue to exclude a child despite the physician's statement if that statement contradicts the center's policies.* We have the final say in caring for a child who may be contagious.

### **Return After Identification of Head Lice or Nits**

Once the presence of nits or live lice have been observed on a child's head by the center staff, your child will be sent home for treatment and must be lice and nit (egg sacs) free before returning to our center. We will re-examine a child on their return. If lice or nits are found to be present, we will send the child home.

In case of repeated findings of lice or nits on an individual child, we require a doctor's statement that they are free of both live lice and nits before they may return.

### **Policy Regarding Medication, Modified Diet**

We give prescription medications as a special service to the parents and children. Parents must complete a state mandated medication form for all medications. A Child Medical/Physical Care Plan (JFS 01236) or Request for Administration of Medication (JFS 01217) will be available from your child's teacher. Please allow time to complete the form in its entirety. Parents/Guardians are expected to take full responsibility for properly completing the appropriate forms and for dropping off and picking up medications. All medicines must be brought to the center in the original package.

Our center will not administer any over-the-counter medication to children without a specific physician's prescription. If the over-the-counter medication was prescribed by the physician, the medication and dosage must be exactly as the physician prescribes. State guidelines prohibit us from administering a generic medication that is provided by the parent that does not match the exact drug named by the doctor on the prescription.

- We also will NOT give any medication with an “as needed” instruction.
- We may apply non-prescription topical creams for skin irritation for no more than 14 days.
- We do NOT administer medications that are prescribed for reducing fever.
- We do NOT administer medication in a baby bottle or cup.
- We will work with parents whose children require a modified diet when we receive a doctor’s statement stating that foods should be excluded from the child’s diet.

### **Lunches**

It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to send lunch with their child each day. To ensure the safety of children with allergies, we do not serve or allow children to have peanut butter or nuts in our center. **WE ARE A NO PEANUT CENTER.** This includes all nuts from the nut family and nuts in the shell and or things cooked in peanut oil, and peanut butter.

### **General Safety Guidelines**

- No child will ever be left alone or unsupervised.
- There is always immediate access to a phone. Telephones are located in each classroom, the therapy department, and the front office. When staff take children to the playground or on walks near the center, they carry a cell phone and walkie talkie.
- A first aid kit is kept in each classroom and also taken outside on walks or to the playground.
- All staff members are trained in CPR/First Aid.

### **Incident/Injury Report Process:**

The supervising staff are required to fill out an Incident/Injury Report when a child in their care receives an injury that requires first aid treatment, a bump or a blow to the head, emergency transporting, or an unusual or unexpected event that jeopardizes the safety of children or staff, such as a child leaving the center unattended. Parents then have the opportunity to read, sign, and receive a copy of these forms. All incident reports are submitted and reviewed by the Director of ALC and Executive Director. Quarterly incident/injury report statistics are also reported to the Abilities First Safety Committee.

### **Emergency Transportation**

Our center obtains written emergency transportation authorization from each parent or guardian before the child begins attending the program. We may not accept any children whose parents refuse to grant permission for emergency transportation.

If a child is injured and needs treatment immediately, the center will call 911. A staff member will go to the hospital with the child and will take the child’s records. The parent/guardian will be called to meet the child and staff person at the hospital and the staff will remain at the hospital until the parent/guardian arrives.

### **Fire Safety/Drills**

All staff members receive orientation training in fire safety and procedures. Agency fire drills are held regularly to ensure that fire emergencies are understood and easily managed. A plan is posted in each classroom indicating staff responsibilities in case of a fire emergency.

### **Emergency Evacuation**

If an emergency requires staff to evacuate the building with the children under their supervision, they will be notified through our intercom system in plain language that states the type of evacuation emergency. Staff will calmly and quickly exit the building with the children, taking their attendance notebooks. They will relocate to a safe location, as instructed. In the event of a tornado or severe storm alerts, all classes gather in their “Tornado Safe Place” where they will be away from the windows. Parents that arrive during such an emergency will be strongly encouraged to remain at our center until the alert has been lifted.

### **Aerosol Spray Use**

The use of aerosol sprays is prohibited in areas where the children may be affected.

### **Child Abuse Reporting**

Ohio law requires that we report any suspicions of child abuse or neglect to the Children’s Protective Services in the county in which the child resides. Please understand our concerns and questions about injuries your child has had. We have a legal obligation to question bruises, marks, etc.

### **Parking & Parking Lot Safety**

The Abilities First parking lot has one entrance, and one exit and vehicles are routed one way from the entrance to the exit as indicated by arrows on the surface. The Timber Trail Drive access road is shared with Creekview Elementary School and traffic and can become congested at school drop-off and pick-up times.

For your convenience, we have designated “ten minute” parking spaces for you to use when dropping off or picking up your child/children. You may also use the parking spaces designated for “clients only”. The handicapped parking spaces are only for those families who have the parking designations as required by law.

Please **do not** park directly in front of the building; your car must be parked in a designated parking space. There are children and adults with and without disabilities entering and leaving the building constantly throughout the day and vehicles parked in non-designated areas may block traffic and create safety hazards. If a child’s physical limitations require you to stop in front of the building for a pick up or a drop off, please talk to an Autism Learning Center staff member or the Director/Assistant Director ahead of time and we will make special arrangements with you.

Please **do not** leave your car running or leave your purse in an unlocked car; Abilities First cannot be responsible for the security of unlocked vehicles or items left in unattended vehicles. Also, please do not leave children in the car when you are in the building.

## **Privacy Statement**

All employees of Abilities First are provided with an employee handbook that includes standards of conduct, Abilities First Code of Ethics, Client Rights, HIPAA, and Client Confidentiality. This is reviewed annually.

***Notice of Privacy Practices:*** In accordance with the federal law entitled **Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act** HIPAA. This notice describes how medical information about Abilities First clients may be used and disclosed and how you may have access to this information. We have summarized our responsibilities and your rights on this page. Please review it carefully.

### **OUR RESPONSIBILITIES:**

Abilities First is required to:

- Maintain the privacy of client health information.
- Provide clients and the public with this notice of our legal duties and privacy practices with respect to information we collect and maintain on individual clients.
- Abide by the terms of this notice.

### **YOUR RIGHTS:**

Abilities First does not engage in discrimination of clients, students or staff based on place of residence, race, color, ethnicity, ancestry, age, sex, national origin, disability, gender, religion or source of payment.

As a client or parent/guardian of a client of Abilities First, you have several rights with regard to your health information or that of the child you are legally responsible for, including the following:

- The right to request Abilities First not to use or disclose health information in certain ways.
- The right to request to receive communications in an alternate manner or location.
- The right to access and obtain a copy of health information.
- The right to an accounting of disclosures of health information.

Abilities First reserves the right to change our privacy practices and to make the new provisions effective for all health information we maintain. Should our privacy practices change, we will post the changes on the bulletin board in our facility, as well as on our website ([www.abilitiesfirst.org](http://www.abilitiesfirst.org)). A copy of the revised notice will be available after the effective date of the changes upon request. We will not use or disclose any health information without your authorization, except as described in the notice. If you have questions and/or would like additional information, you may contact our Human Resources Manager at (513)423-9496.

## **Special People**

### **Our Autism Learning Center Code of Ethics:**

Each staff member adheres to the Code of Ethics of the Ohio Association for the Education of the Young Child:

#### **General Statements**

- We are committed to supporting each child's optimum social, emotional, intellectual and physical development within a healthy and enriched environment.
- We will respect the racial, ethnic, religious, cultural, and socio-economic differences of all children, parents, and others with whom we work.
- We will maintain confidentiality in our dealings with children, parents, and colleagues.
- We will avoid misinterpretation of our professional skills, qualifications, and affiliations.
- We have the right and obligation to share in the maintenance of the ethics of our profession.

#### **Families**

- We will respect families' rights to make decisions for their children and will uphold their beliefs and practices whenever possible.
- We will be aware that not only the family, but also other people and experiences influence the development and attitudes of the children in our care.
- When conflicts arise between parent and early childhood educator concerning generally accepted professional and/or developmental practices, we will make every attempt to clarify the issues for the parent through education and communication.

#### **Children**

- We will uphold the principle that the early childhood educator's primary professional responsibility is to the child.
- Even though working with children may satisfy our own emotional needs, the child's total development will remain our primary concern.
- Because we believe that everyone has the right to feel that he/she is a worthwhile human being, we will treat each child with respect and dignity.
- We will not mentally, physically, or emotionally abuse a child in any way.
- We believe in positive, productive discipline and guidance as the means for dealing with inappropriate behaviors.

#### **Colleagues**

- We uphold the right of every early childhood educator to participate in an evaluation process, which compares current job performance to job expectations, and the right to written grievance procedures. We are committed to seeking and providing opportunities for personal and professional growth.



### **In Closing**

We appreciate that your family has selected us to educate your child. Just like you, we care deeply about your child. Your suggestions and comments will receive careful consideration as we continue to design a program responsive to the needs of your family.