

Autism Resource Handbook

Providing Help, Hope
& Answers For Families
Living With Autism Today



Kids. Therapy. Progress.



“Don't think that there's a different, better child 'hiding' behind the autism. This is your child. Love the child in front of you. Encourage his strengths, celebrate his quirks, and improve his weaknesses, the way you would with any child. You may have to work harder on some of this, but that's the goal.”

**Claire Scovell LaZebnik,
American novelist / author,
mother of a child with autism**

Autism is characterized by delays in communication, interacting with others and repetitive behaviors. If you notice any of the items below in your child, please contact our Autism Helpline toll free at 855-511-3773 to talk about further screening.

- **No big smiles or other warm, joyful expressions by six months or later.**
- **No babbling or back-and-forth gestures by 12 months**
- **No response to their name by 12 months of age**
- **No words by 16 months**
- **No pretend play by 18 months**
- **No pointing at objects to show interest**
- **Avoidance of eye contact and desire to be alone**
- **Any loss of language or social skills at any age**

Contents

About Easter Seals	4
Autism Learning Center	5
ASD Diagnostic Clinic	6
The P.L.A.Y. Project	7
Behavioral Services for Autism (ABA)	8
Counseling Services	9
Social Skills Therapy Groups	9
New Diagnosis Orientation Program	10
Autism Resource Centers	10
Red Café	12
Our Partners	12
Contact Information	14

Our Mission

Easter Seals provides exceptional services, education, outreach and advocacy to ensure that people with disabilities and their families have equal opportunity to live, learn, work and play in their communities.

It has been 90 years since the roots of Easter Seals were planted in Central Illinois. What started as a once-a-week clinic in a downtown storefront in Peoria for just a few children has blossomed into three service centers serving thousands of children and adults with disabilities and their families every year. Widely recognized as a place of hope and progress, Easter Seals provides services for children from birth to age 21 and is a provider for Early Intervention, a government program that provides services to eligible children.

Our Values

Integrity. Respect. Excellence. Customer Focus. Teamwork.

Progress Is Our Promise

The Autism Program at Easter Seals is accredited by CARF International in Behavioral Services and Supports for children with Autism Spectrum Disorders, making it the first CARF-accredited autism program in Central Illinois.

The Autism Program at Easter Seals offers a variety of service options from highly intensive and comprehensive to issue-focused consultation for children, families and regional schools.



The National Research Council recommends that interventions for children with autism be intensive, engaging, strategic and comprehensive with a high adult-to-child ratio.

Autism Learning Center: an intensive therapeutic autism program

The Autism Learning Center, formerly known as the Intensive Therapeutic Autism Program (ITAP), provides Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) and Developmental Individual Differences & Relationship-Based (DIR)/Floortime-based intensive services for children ages 3-6 that have a medical diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). In a specialized preschool environment, your child will receive comprehensive one-on-one help through discrete trial training, basic behavior strategies, DIR/Floortime activities and speech and occupational therapy.

The goal of the program, which is developed and monitored by a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA), is to help children gain academic, social and emotional skills through structure and play. The program is designed to complement a child's current early childhood educational services and is offered three hours a day, two days a week. The daily schedule includes individual work sessions and group learning opportunities.

Autism affects one in 68 children
and one in 42 boys.

Registration is accepted at any time for current or future sessions; children must be 3 years old by the date of entrance into the program. The Autism Learning Center is located at the Peoria Center and is covered by most insurance companies. Financial assistance is made possible through the Heart of Illinois United Way and the Matthew Moorman Endowed "Ready To Learn" Fund.

ASD Diagnostic Clinic

Easter Seals is one of very few organizations in Illinois that offers an ASD Diagnostic Team Clinic, which is led by a developmental pediatrician, for diagnosing children who may have an Autism Spectrum Disorder. This one-day multi-disciplinary, comprehensive service consists of a medical evaluation and administration of the Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS). It may also include communication and occupational therapy evaluations.

Easter Seals performs more than
150 Autism Diagnostic Evaluations
each year.

Our goal is to diagnose early, provide the most comprehensive assessment and treatment plan possible and provide families with the support they need to best care for their child. Diagnostic services result in a diagnosis of autism or differential diagnoses such as ADHD, anxiety disorder or other developmental, learning or mental health conditions. A clinical, medical diagnosis of autism is distinctly different from an educational diagnosis provided by school districts and is often required by insurance providers.

A family meeting to explain diagnostic results and initial treatment guidelines will follow the evaluation on the same day. Families leave the clinic with a short written summary and within 30 days receive a comprehensive diagnostic report that further explains the diagnosis and offers recommendations for additional diagnostic and treatment options that will help their child meet his or her maximum potential.

Referrals to the Clinic must come from a physician, and a child receives an autism screening prior to diagnostic scheduling.

The P.L.A.Y. Project

We consider you, the parent, to be the expert on your child. Parents spend more time with their children than all of their teachers and therapists combined. The P.L.A.Y. (Play and Language for Autistic Youngsters) Project teaches parents of young children with autism how to play with and relate to their child in a way that helps their child progress more rapidly through the normal developmental stages of early childhood. With The P.L.A.Y. Project, children acquire social skills, language and other key abilities that enable them to be more successful throughout their lives.

“Our research shows that in addition to improving language and interactional skills in children with autism, The P.L.A.Y. Project actually reduces autism severity.”

-Rick Solomon, MD, Medical Director, The P.L.A.Y. Project

Our Home Consultation Model provides training and support for families of children with autism right in their home. Trained consultants will show you practical ways of making everyday interactions with your child, like bath-time and outdoor play, a growing and learning experience.

Created by Dr. Richard Solomon, who has diagnosed and treated children with autism for over 15 years, and based on the DIR (Developmental, Individual Differences, Relationship-based) theory of Dr. Stanley Greenspan, The P.L.A.Y. Project is a treatment model that is:

- **Evidence-based**
- **Intensive**
- **Early intervention**
- **Family-centered**
- **Child-led**
- **Play-based**
- **Developmental**

“Our son has blossomed as a result of The P.L.A.Y. Project. He’s much easier to engage, carries on a conversation and has an imagination! The fact that he can pretend play has been such a joy to watch.”

-Lynde France

Behavioral Services for Autism (ABA)

At Easter Seals, we offer two types of ABA services: Discrete Trial programming to teach new and complicated skills and Focused behavioral services. Both behavioral services begin with an assessment by a Board Certified Behavioral Analyst. The assessment includes direct observation and family/caregiver interviews, resulting in a plan for services to address the child’s needs and family’s priorities.

Discrete Trial programs typically include 8-15 hours of intervention each week to help your child learn new skills. This service may take place in your home or at an Easter Seals center.

Focused behavioral services address any behavioral challenges your child may face – from teaching your child how to sleep in their own bed, to eliminating self-injurious behavior or aggression.

Focused services typically take place 1-2 times per month; the frequency and duration of services are based on the individual needs of the child.

Counseling Services

Many children, youth and adults with disabilities face special challenges. They may experience fears about the future, disappointment or frustration regarding their limitations, self-esteem issues or feeling “different” than their peers. Facing these issues can take a toll on the entire family.

Our counseling staff at Easter Seals specializes in providing counseling services for children with disabilities, as well as for his or her families. Counseling can help your child focus on their abilities and learn positive coping strategies. For parents, we can work through grief, effective parenting or how to work with the professionals involved with your child.

Social Skills Therapy Groups

Children with an autism diagnosis desire the same things as their peers without disabilities. They want to “fit in,” have friends, participate in fun activities and be happy. At Easter Seals, we want that too!

Each year, Easter Seals provides more than 24,000 hours of therapy.

Our Social Skills Therapy Groups benefit children ages 5-13 who are experiencing difficulties in social settings. Specific social skills, such as how to initiate a conversation, share thoughts, handle emotions, respect boundaries, and be a good sport, are practiced by same-aged group members to achieve functional goals. These skills are taught weekly in a classroom setting, as well as with aquatic therapy in a warm water pool.

New Diagnosis Family Orientation Program

Learning that your child has an Autism Spectrum Disorder can be overwhelming, frightening and confusing. You are not alone in this new journey. Our Autism Spectrum New Diagnosis Family Orientation program is designed to assist parents, extended family and friends in their journey to create optimum growth, independence and joy for their child.

The program provides information on:

- **Autism Spectrum Disorders**
- **Interventions for autism**
- **Resources for parents and families**

Autism Resource Centers

Easter Seals has two Autism Resource Centers. Located in Peoria and Bloomington, these centers are an all-inclusive, one-stop, trusted resource for autism information and referral services across the lifespan.

Each center contains a wide variety of resources including visual supports, books, DVDs, games, structured teaching kits, computer software programs and other learning aids. Many of the materials are free, while others are available on loan.

Families, service providers, educators and the general community can utilize the centers. Contact the center closest to you to schedule a visit.

For more information, see page 14

Red Café Bringing People Together

The Red Café is a free and informal parent group for any parent who has a child with special needs. At this monthly meeting, you will meet other families in your community, listen or share your experiences and ideas, gather information, learn about resources, hear from knowledgeable speakers and maybe even relax a bit. Childcare is available for those who register.

Easter Seals serves more than 400 children with autism each year, a number that continues to grow.

Our Partners

Easter Seals Peoria-Bloomington is grateful for the generous participation of our community partners who help us reach many people with disabilities every year. Without the constant support of our partners, we would be unable to provide children and families with the enriching programs that improve their quality of life.

- **Academy for Autism at Children's Home Association of Illinois**
- **The Autism Program**
- **Autism Society of McLean County**
- **Heart of Illinois United Way**
- **Illinois Partners for Human Services**
- **Peoria Regional Chapter of the Autism Society of America**
- **University of Illinois College of Medicine at Peoria**



People with autism, at any age, can make significant progress through therapy and treatments and can lead meaningful and productive lives.



Autism Helpline

855.511.3773 Toll Free

Locations

Easter Seals has two service centers in central Illinois, in addition to a camping, recreational and conference center on Lake Bloomington.

Peoria Center

507 E. Armstrong Ave.
Peoria, IL 61603
309.686.1177

Bloomington Center

2404 E. Empire St.
Bloomington, IL 61704
309.663.8275

Timber Pointe Outdoor Center

20 Timber Pointe Lane
Hudson, IL 61748
309.365.8021

ci.EasterSeals.com

KidsTherapyProgress.com



"A treatment method or an educational method that will work for one child may not work for another child. The one common denominator for all of the young children is that early intervention does work, and it seems to improve the prognosis."

Dr. Temple Grandin,
A noted author, professor and
speaker with autism





Kids. Therapy. Progress.

ci.EasterSeals.com