

VOL. 2 ISSUE 8 • AUGUST 2024

MOSAIC MINDS

Official Newsletter of Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers



WELCOME TO MICHIGAN

SOUTHFIELD EVENT RECAP

Our President Brian Steinberg represented Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers at the recent Collective Chamber Alliance Expo event in Novi, Michigan! Midwest will be launching our first center in the Greater Detroit Area this fall. It was our pleasure to have the opportunity to connect with other local businesses as we wrap up construction and prepare to join the community!



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Read this issue
and more online!





BACK TO SCHOOL TIPS

We all know the summer flies by, and getting back to the classroom (or starting school for the first time) is never an easy experience. But, when you have a child on the Autism Spectrum, shifting routines, working with new teachers or classroom aids, and navigating unfamiliar social situations can make “back to school” feel a lot more daunting. To help you ease into the school year, we’ve put together some of our favorite strategies for navigating the transition.

ESTABLISHING A ROUTINE

Daily schedules are important for everyone. During the summer, school day routines can get way out of whack. And, for kiddos entering school for the first time, families may not have a set routine at all. 2-3 weeks before the first day of school, start preparing your child by adding pieces of the school day to their summer routine.

For example, if your child needs to wake up at 7:00 am during the school year, practice their rising and shining ahead of time so you don’t end up with a grumpy, tired kiddo on the first day of school. Gradually, you can start incorporating more pieces of the school day routine like prepping their backpack, getting dressed, or sitting for breakfast. You may even be able to work with the school to tour before the first day and practice getting your child acclimated to their new environment and routine. If your child struggles with changes to their routine, try using visual aids, planners, and social stories like the one linked below to help them learn!

[First Day of School Social Narrative](#)

COMMUNICATING WITH EDUCATORS

If your child has an Autism diagnosis, they will qualify for in-school assistance and services in the classroom. The specific type of assistance will be written into a legal document called an IEP (Individual Education Plan) or 504 plan ([learn more about IEPs](#)). In most cases, writing the IEP/504 plan will be a collaborative process between parents and school districts. But, you can be extra proactive by setting up meetings with school staff (teachers, aids, etc.) before the school year starts. This will allow you to review your child’s plan with staff and build rapport with the school. Use these meetings to share your child’s strengths, challenges, and coping strategies or tactics that help them navigate challenges. Feel free to take your kiddos’ [“All About Me”](#) page for staff members to have as they too prepare for the new year!

ABA THERAPY FOR CLASSROOM READINESS

ABA therapy is another great tool to help your kiddo reach key developmental milestones before hitting the schoolyard! Through an early-intervention ABA program, like those offered at Midwest, families can work with a Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) who develops an individualized treatment plan based on your child’s needs. Skills that can be nurtured with ABA include:

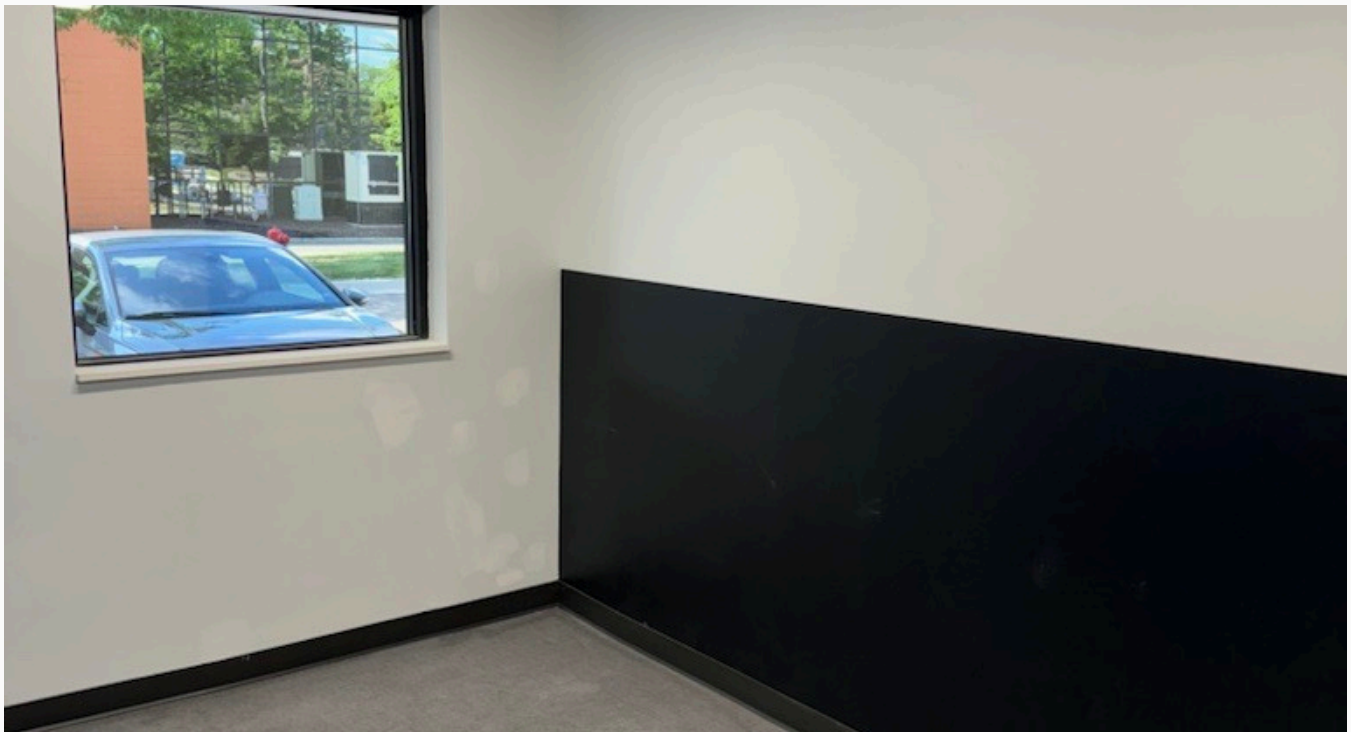
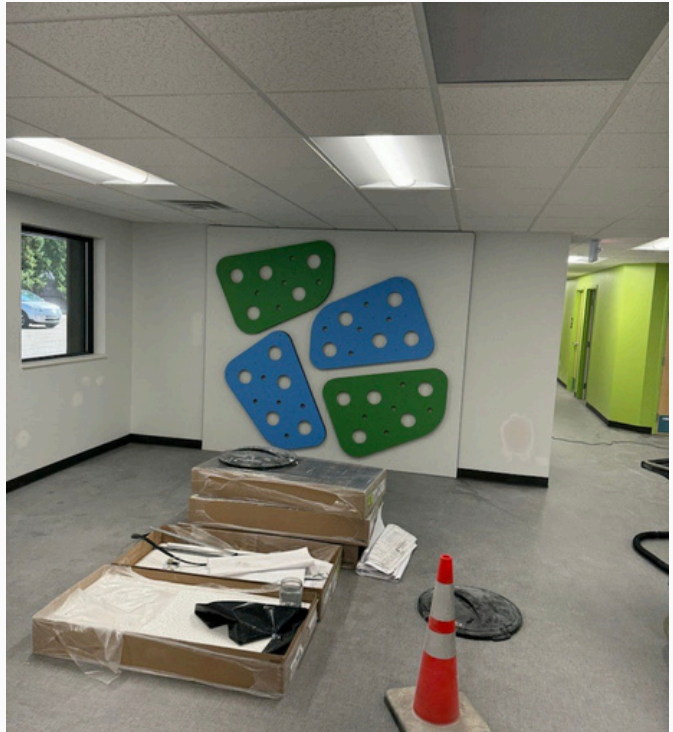
- Building coping strategies for anxiety, overstimulation, or frustration.
- Practicing self-care tasks like using the restroom, dressing, packing bags, and personal hygiene.
- Teaching organizational and listening skills that are key to classroom success.
- Developing routines based on school structure like eating lunch in a group setting or transitioning from one activity to the next.
- Navigating social situations and safe play skills.

As your child nears graduation from an early intervention program, your BCBA will also provide detailed input and recommendations for an IEP or 504 plan. Many children gradually reduce their hours in an ABA program to ensure a safe and smooth transition into the classroom.



SOUTHFIELD CENTER UPDATE

Excitement mounts as we draw closer to the opening of our new Southfield, Michigan therapy center! Seeing the walls begin to take color, the climbing wall being installed, and chalkboard walls throughout, we can't wait to see this center fully come to life with all of the new kiddos!





NEW CLINICIANS



DANIELLE BRAUN, M.S., BCBA, LBA
Edina Campus

- M.S. in Family and Human Development from Arizona State University
- PBS/ABA Certificate from Northern Arizona State University
- B.S. in Elementary Ed from Southern Oregon University

Danielle was drawn to the field of ABA by her love for working with children and families. She graduated from ASU with an advanced degree in Family and Human Development and enjoys building meaningful connections with her clients. The field of Behavior Analysis is one that allows for continuous learning and growth, which are a few of Danielle's favorite things.

ROSE LUDESCHER, M.A., BCBA, LBA
Edina Campus

- M.A. in Behavior Analysis Practice from Florida Institute of Technology
- B.A. in Psychological Sciences and Biology with a minor in Neuroscience from Gustavus Adolphus College

Rose Ludescher joined Midwest as an RBT in 2023 and was promoted to a Sr. RBT position before completing her Master's degree and Board Certifications. In June, Rose officially accepted a new role with Midwest as our second BCBA in our Edina Minnesota office. As a BCBA, Rose will be working with center-based early intervention clients ages 2-5. She looks forward to continuing her journey with Midwest and working with local families!



JENNIFER WAGGONER, M.A., BCBA
Woodbury Campus

- M.A. in Applied Behavior Analysis from Florida Institute of Technology
- B.S. in Finance from West Chester University in Pennsylvania

Jennifer entered the Autism services field in 2020 when she began working as support staff in an alternative placement school focusing on ABA therapy. She became fascinated with the field of behavior analysis and its many applications. 6 months later, she began a Master's program in Applied Behavior Analysis at the Florida Institute of Technology and started working at an early intervention center shortly thereafter. She is so proud to be part of this field and has fallen in love with helping little learners build lifelong fundamental skills like functional communication!





5 TRAVEL TIPS FOR FAMILIES WITH ASD

Kids on the Autism Spectrum often thrive in their own spaces, with predictability and consistent routines. Traveling brings new experiences and overwhelming sensory input that can affect even neurotypical kids. Parents with a child on the Spectrum may shy away from travel because of the stress it puts on their family. And, we get it. Juggling travel plans and navigating new destinations doesn't always equal a relaxing getaway. So, how do you prepare for summer travel? We've put together a list of five tips to help you navigate vacation plans this year.

1. CREATE A SOCIAL STORY™ NARRATIVE

If you've read any of our previous blog posts, you know we love a [Social Story™](#)! If you have plans to visit high-traffic/high-stimuli attractions this summer, [use these tips to write a Social Story™](#) with your child or check the location's website to see if have one available online!

[My Flight: A Social Narrative](#)

2. CREATE A SCHEDULE OR ITINERARY

Before you head out for your summer trips, create a schedule or trip itinerary for your child (bonus points if you let them help!). We also recommend explaining where you are going, why you are going, and what you will be doing. Breaking down each step of your trip can help your child understand what to expect. You can make this process extra fun by using tools like a Bingo card to "gamify" everything from packing to car rides. Give your child a crayon and clipboard to check off parts of the journey as you go!

[Travel Bingo Card](#) [Packing Bingo Card](#) [Road Trip Bingo Card](#) [Summer Vacation Bingo Card](#)

3. INCLUDE DOWNTIME AND STRUCTURE

If you're going on a longer trip build in periods of quiet time to give your kiddo (and yourself!) a space to decompress. It's also helpful to have an "escape plan" in case overstimulation hits. We also suggest planning activities that allow for flexibility. If you start seeing signs of frustration, tiredness, or overstimulation you can adjust your day on the fly.

4. CREATE CONSISTENCY

It's hard to keep a normal routine while on vacation, but even small things make a difference. For example, having breakfast at the same time each morning, keeping up with regular naps, and incorporating preferred foods into your day can create some consistency amidst all of the changes.

5. PACK SMART

Sensory-friendly items like noise-canceling headphones, compression vests, or fidgets are an essential part of any Autism parents' travel kit. Noise-canceling headphones can make crowded areas much more manageable and help avoid outbursts and discomfort from overstimulation. Fidgets, tablets, and other items of interest help to distract from long waits in line. If you're planning a day trip or you expect a long travel day, we also recommend bring a change of clothes with soft, comforting fabrics in case your kiddo gets tired of their current fit. bring a change of clothes in case fabric textures start to become uncomfortable. For overnight trips, don't forget comfort items your child needs for bedtime. And, we always recommend keeping some preferred foods handy. This is a game changer if your child struggles with new foods and won't be thrilled about swapping a PB&J for chicken piccata. Keep in mind, not all attractions will allow outside food. If that's the case, make sure there are options available that your child is comfortable with, or call the business in advance to explain the situation.



WATER SAFETY: A SOCIAL NARRATIVE



Being around water can be fun! But I know water can be dangerous, too. I know I need to follow the rules to keep myself and others safe. Water can look different everywhere I go, the pool, the lake, the ocean, the bathtub, they're all different.



I will stay with my parents or other adults watching. I can ask for help when I need it. I will let someone know before I go near the water. I might need to wear my life jacket.



We can have fun at the water when we follow the rules to stay safe and pay attention.



CONGRATULATIONS!

Jaida Hernandez-Howard, RBT
Altoona Campus

Congratulations Jaida on recently passing your RBT exam! Thank you for your dedication to our clients and your team!



Courtney Groom, RBT, Admin Assistant
Altoona Campus

Congratulations to our Altoona Administrative Assistant and RBT, Courtney Groom, on her one year of employment with Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers! We are incredibly grateful to have you on our team Courtney. Your experience, commitment, and personality are a joy to have in our center each day!



Kayla Jones, RBT
Altoona Campus

Congratulations to one of our newly Registered Behavior Technicians, Kayla as she passed her RBT exam! Thank you Kayla for everything you do for your team and our clients!





Sign up to receive email updates from Midwest Autism & Therapy Centers! Email updates include monthly newsletters, new blog posts, center updates, activities for the kiddos, announcements and more.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY

- BAO Y., RBT - WOODBURY CAMPUS
- TORI S., RBT - ANKENY CAMPUS
- JOSLYN C., RBT - ANKENY CAMPUS
- KIAH K., RBT - WOODBURY CAMPUS
- CAITLIN P., BCBA - ALTOONA CAMPUS
- YUSRA A., BT - EDINA CAMPUS

AUGUST

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