



ACEing Autism

PARENT MANUAL

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Connecting kids
through tennis”



WELCOME TO THE ACEing Autism COMMUNITY!

As the cornerstone of our community, the parents of ACEing Autism's participants are an integral part of our program. Since the first program launched in 2008, we have sought to include parents in every aspect of our growth from program development to fundraising and even membership on our board of directors. We hope that ACEing Autism will become a valuable and fun part of your child's routine and provide you with the opportunity to connect with other parents and resources in your community. This manual will outline what you can expect during the program, provide you with valuable information about ensuring your child's best experience with us, and answer some frequently asked questions we receive from parents. For more information, please visit the "Parents" page on our website: www.aceingautism.org/parents/

WHAT TO EXPECT

Overview

ACEing Autism is a clinic-style tennis program for children with ASD between the ages of 5 and 18. Although we primarily serve this population of children, we also welcome participants with other closely related developmental issues that prevent them from accessing mainstream recreational opportunities. You will have the opportunity to discuss whether our program is a good fit for your child during the intake process. After completing our online registration, we encourage parents to bring their child to participate in one free trial session to determine whether our program is a good match.

Time Commitment

Each clinic meets once per week and is 50 minutes long. The length of the session may vary by location, but they typically run for 6 or 8 weeks seasonally. More information on each location's time, date, and session cost may be found on our website, www.aceingautism.org.

Volunteers

ACEing Autism is a volunteer-based organization. Our volunteers come to us from tennis communities, such as local high school and college teams, private tennis clubs, and from the autism services community such as special education teachers, Applied Behavior Analysis Therapists, Speech-Language Pathologists, Occupational Therapists, etc., and those studying to enter these professions. All volunteers complete an orientation/training prior to starting, and volunteers aged 18 and up are required to pass a background check before stepping on to the court.

Volunteer-to-Participant Ratio

Our goal is to provide the most appropriate volunteer-to-participant ratio for each child. Some participants do best working one-on-one, while others may need more or less support. In order to provide one to two volunteers per participant, we work hard to recruit enough for the session, but there will inevitably be times when we do not have as many as we would like. We ask that you bear with us, and be prepared if we should ask you to come out on the court to help ensure everyone can have a productive and safe session. Whenever possible, we will seek to turn successful volunteer-participant pairings into longer-term relationships for the duration of the session.

WHAT WE ASK OF PARENTS

Whenever possible, parents please:

- Be as thorough as possible when completing the intake questions during registration so we can pair your child with the appropriate volunteers and peers.
- Plan to arrive to each session a few minutes before it is scheduled to begin; it is important that we have a sense of how many and which participants are present before finalizing court and volunteer assignments for the day. In addition, late arrivals can be disruptive to the clinic.
- Inform us of any significant changes (i.e. behavioral, medical, medicinal, etc.) that may impact your child's performance or temperament.
- Let us know, by emailing your Program Director, if your child will be unable to attend on any given day.
- Share any tools (i.e. visuals, key terms, etc.) that will help your child have a successful session.
- Keep other children, including siblings, off the court at all times.
- Be prepared to come on the court to help if we need you, and watch from the viewing area at other times.
- Understand that we are not equipped to manage significant behavioral issues. We will work with you as best we can, but if your child presents any danger to him or herself, our other participants, or our volunteers, we will need to discontinue your child's participation in the program. We will immediately reimburse you for the remainder of the session.
- Feel free to provide us with constructive feedback on everything from how to interact with your child specifically, to suggestions for the program as a whole.



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. What should my child wear for the clinic?

A. Participants should wear their ACEing Autism t-shirt (if possible), athletic pants or shorts, and sneakers. Participants at outdoor locations should dress appropriately for weather. We recommend hats and sunscreen in hot weather.

Q. Does my child need to bring a tennis racquet?

A. Head Racquets will be available each week. However, it is certainly okay if your child would like to bring his or her own.

Q. Is this a drop-off program?

A. We prefer that parents plan to stay on site during their child's clinic. Parents can watch from the viewing area in most locations.

Q. Can I come out on the court with my child?

A. We are a very flexible program. We welcome a parent's presence on the court if you feel that your child is in need of added support and structure. We ask that you work with us to determine what is best for your child, and to keep in mind the experiences of the other children in the program.

Q. Does my child need to be toilet-trained in order to attend?

A. No, this is not required. However, we do ask that you be responsible for assisting your child with any toileting issues that may come up during the course of a clinic.

Q. My child has very limited speech (or none at all). Can he or she still participate?

A. Absolutely. Please let us know if there are other forms of communication your child uses (i.e. sign language, PECS, etc.) and we will do our best to accommodate his or her needs. We have had successful participation from children who use augmentative communication devices, and welcome their use out on the court.

Q. Does my child need to have an autism diagnosis to participate?

A. Not necessarily. We understand that it is often a lengthy process to get an actual diagnosis, particularly in younger children. While our focus is on children with ASD, we welcome children with other closely related developmental conditions that may prevent them from accessing mainstream recreational activities. We will work with you to determine if our program is a good fit for your child.

Q. What if my child needs to take a break?

A. Our program is very flexible and can be modified based on each child's skill level, favorite activities, and endurance. If at any time a child needs to take a break, he or she is certainly allowed to do so. We do not provide snacks, but we do have water fountains at most locations.

Q. My child's friend is also participating in the program. Can they play on the same court?

A. Definitely! Please let us know if there is a child you would like your child paired with on the court. We will honor these requests whenever possible and appropriate. Social connection is a very important program goal.

Q. Are siblings allowed to participate?

A. Priority will be given to serving children with ASD. However, siblings will be allowed to participate in the program as peer models as long as there is adequate space and volunteer support. This will be determined at the discretion of the Program Director.

Q. What is the cost to participate and what is the money used for?

A. We strive to have our program be of as little cost to families as possible. Program proceeds are used for the rental of tennis courts, purchase of equipment and teaching aids, to facilitate volunteer orientation, and to cover administrative expenses. Because of these factors, the actual cost of the program may vary based on location and program schedule. You can find location pricing information on our website, www.aceingautism.org.

Q. Do I pay upfront for the whole session?

A. We do request you pay for the entire session upfront. This enables us to maximize the availability of our program and also allows the Program Director and volunteers to spend valuable time focusing on the participants. We do allow new participants to a free trial clinic to ensure our program is a good fit.

Q. I don't know if this will be a good fit for my child. Can I try it out first?

A. Absolutely. Please contact us to arrange a free trial clinic. We recommend that parents bring their child to see our program site and also watch some of our online videos.

Q. What is the policy regarding inclement weather?

A. If a clinic must be canceled due to weather, you will be notified by your Program Director as early as possible on the day of the clinic. If possible, a make-up clinic will be scheduled, and refunds will be given if this is not possible. Some sites have make-up clinic dates established at the beginning of the session.

Q. What happens if we miss a clinic? Will we get a refund?

A. In most cases, we do not offer refunds for clinics that you miss. However, we will certainly try to be as accommodating as possible. Please speak with the Program Director at your location.

Q. How do you ensure my child's safety?

A. We make safety our top priority! We use organization-wide best practices such as working hard to provide the appropriate volunteer-to-participant ratios, keeping siblings off the court, asking that parents stay in the immediate area during clinics, and making sure participants maintain a safe distance from one another when setting up drills. We use low-pressure tennis balls that are lighter and softer. A first-aid kit is always available at each site. Lastly, every volunteer also completes an ACEing Autism training and all volunteers over the age of 18 are background-checked before stepping on the court.

Q. Is ACEing Autism insured?

A. Yes, we are insured under the United States Tennis Association's Master Liability policy.

We appreciate your interest in our program and we are happy to answer any additional questions or concerns you may have. Thank you very much!



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Our mission is to connect children with autism through unique tennis programs, and to develop and advance proven methods to positively impact the children, families and communities we serve.



Contact Us

aceingautism.org



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