Community Coaching Center
Volunteer Orientation Packet v.6

2011-2012
With gratitude and enthusiasm we welcome you to Community Coaching Center! As a Peer Pal or a Volunteer Coach at CCC you get to make a difference in the lives of San Diego youth with autism, while supporting us in fulfilling our mission of promoting awareness and inclusion in the community.

Community Coaching Center’s volunteering program exists to provide first-hand experience with and support to youth with autism, while serving as a positive role model and friend. The gift of your time, friendship, hard work and encouragement engenders a sense of self and community engagement in our program participants. As they become familiar with you and you with them, the opportunities to promote inclusion and friendship only deepen.

The purpose of this handbook is to provide basic information about autism, CCC and our direct service volunteer program. I hope you will find your experience here rewarding and meaningful.

On behalf of our Board of Directors, Executive Director Tina Waters, and coaching staff, we look forward to your service at Community Coaching Center. Together, we’re making San Diego known as a city inclusive of individuals of ALL abilities.

Thank you—you truly make a difference.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Rayburn
Community Inclusion Coordinator
srayburn@communitycoachincenter.org
office | 858.603.9835
cell | 858.603.7311
**Autism Is...**
A neurological developmental disorder characterized by unusual or limited communication, social skills, or behaviors

**Helpful Hints for befriending someone who has autism:**
Use clear, literal language.
Allow time for responses; be patient.
Note that sometimes we may see, hear, and process things in a different way than you do.
Understand that lack of eye contact does not mean you are not being heard.
It may look like we don’t want to be your friend, but we do...Please include us.

**Autism Is...**
According to Autism Speaks, autism is a complex neurobiological disorder that typically lasts throughout a person's lifetime. It is part of a group of disorders known as autism spectrum disorders (ASD). It occurs in all racial, ethnic, and social groups and is four times more likely to strike boys than girls. Autism impairs a person's ability to communicate and relate to others. It is also associated with rigid routines and repetitive behaviors, such as obsessively arranging objects or following very specific routines. Symptoms can range from very mild to quite severe.

**Prevalence**
According to the Autism Society of America and the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the prevalence of autism has risen to 1 in every 110 American children. Recent studies report that ASD prevalence was 4 to 5 times higher for boys than for girls and occurs in all racial, ethnic and social groups. These estimates typically include those with autism, Aspergers Syndrome, and Pervasive Developmental Disorder Not Otherwise Specified (PDD-NOS) as considered part of Autism Spectrum Disorder.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Autism Diagnosis Rates</th>
<th>By the numbers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1980: 1 in 5000</td>
<td>1%: U.S. children with autism spectrum disorders</td>
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<tr>
<td>1990: 1 in 1000</td>
<td>5: Average age for diagnosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000: 1 in 5000</td>
<td>40%: Children with autism who do not talk</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007: 1 in 150</td>
<td>$35 billion: Annual spending on caring for people with autism</td>
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<tr>
<td>2010: 1 in 110</td>
<td>$3.2 million: Amount spent caring for each person with autism over their lifetime</td>
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<td>2012: 1 in 88</td>
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**SOURCES:** Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Harvard University School of Public Health

**Characteristics & Symptoms**
In the first few years of life, some toddlers with autism reach developmental milestones, such as talking, crawling, and walking, much earlier than the average child; whereas others are considerably delayed. Approximately one-half of autistic children develop what appears to be typically often until around 1 1/2 to 3 years of age; then autistic symptoms begin to emerge. However, many parents of children with autism state...
that they noticed symptoms earlier but were not aware that they may have been caused by their child’s autism.

“When you know one person with autism, you know...one person with autism.”

The strengths and deficits of this disorder show up differently in each individual. The following challenges, however, are present in each of our program participants:

• **Deficits in social interactions and relationships** such as significant problems developing nonverbal communication skills, like eye-to-eye gazing, facial expressions and body posture; failure to establish friendships with children the same age, and lack of interest in sharing enjoyment, interests, or achievements with other people.

• **Verbal and nonverbal communication** such as delay in, or lack of, learning to talk, problems taking steps to initiate and maintain conversation, stereotyped and repetitive use of language, echolalia, or difficulty understanding their listener’s perspective.

• **Self-stimulatory behaviors** such as repetitive, non-goal directed behavior; this looks like rocking, hand-flapping, self-injury (e.g., hand-biting, head banging), sleeping and eating problems, poor eye contact, insensitivity to pain, hyper-/hypo-activity, and attention deficits.

• **“Perseverative” behaviors** such as becoming overly insistent on routines; if one is changed, even slightly, the child may become upset and tantrum. A perseverative behavior may also be a self-stimulatory behavior.

**Limited interests or specialized interests in activities or play** such as unusual focus on pieces of a game or parts of toys (the wheels on a car rather the entire toy), or a preoccupation with certain topics. For example, older children and adults may be fascinated by video games, trading cards, or license plates.

Individuals with autism sometimes have difficulty with the transition to puberty. Many individuals with ASDs may experience seizures during puberty which may be due to hormonal changes and changes in neurology. In addition, many behavior issues can become more frequent and more severe during this period. However, others experience puberty with very relative ease.

* Factors such as age, both chronological and developmental, as well as characteristics of individual personalities also play a part in how a program participant’s individual proficiencies and challenges manifest.

**Sensory Integration Issues**

Many if not all autistic individuals seem to have an impairment or disregulation with one or more of their senses. This impairment can involve the auditory (hearing), visual, tactile (touch/pressure), gustatory (taste), vestibular (equilibrium/balance), olfactory (smell), and proprioceptive (motor planning/body’s relationship to space) senses.

**Hyper Sensitivity:** over-responsive or acute, causing painful responses to “normal” stimuli, over responsive, giving the brain little too much or an “overload” of information with which to interpret and respond to the environment.
Hypo Sensitivity: under responsive, giving the brain little to no information with which to interpret and respond to the environment.

Cognition
"Theory of mind" refers to one's inability to realize that other people have their own unique point of view about the world. Many autistic individuals do not realize that others may have different thoughts, plans, and perspectives than their own. For example, a child may be asked to show a photograph of an animal to another child. Rather than turning the picture around to face the other child, the autistic child may, instead, show the back of the photograph. In this example, the autistic child can view the picture but does not realize that the other child has a different perspective or point of view.

Many autistic individuals also have a narrow or focused attention span; this has been termed 'stimulus overselectivity.' Basically, their attention is focused on only one, often irrelevant, aspect of an object. For example, they may focus on the color of a utensil, and ignore other aspects such as the shape. In this case, it may be difficult for a child to discriminate between a fork and a spoon if he/she attends only to the color. Since attention is the first stage in processing information, failure to attend to the relevant aspects of an object or person may limit one's ability to learn about objects and people in one's environment.

Causes
Although there is no known unique cause of autism, there is growing evidence that autism may be linked to a variety of factors which may include, but not limited to:

- Genetics (the autism gene)
- Environmental exposures to toxins and pollutants
- Exposure to viruses or diseases
Community Coaching Center  
A Non Profit 501(c) 3 Service Provider

Our Mission...  
To develop appropriate social behaviors and functional independence for school aged individuals with autism while promoting awareness and inclusion in the community.

Our Vision...  
At CCC, our vision is the successful integration of individuals of all abilities within the community.

Our Volunteer Program Goals
- Enhancing the quality of services currently provided to our program participants by providing guided mentorship and friendship.  
- Assisting in educating and sharing with the general public information on autism in the community and how the community can be a part of CCC. 
- Cultivate friends and advocates in the community on behalf of CCC. 
- Help us raise awareness, funds, or equivalent in-kind resources in support of our work. 
- Contribute ideas and input from the community-act as a sounding board to gauge community reaction to programs, projects, etc. 
- Learn more about autism and the amazing individuals affected by it- connecting faces to statistics. 
- And more importantly, have a GREAT TIME serving as a positive role model and friend to our amazing CCC kids!

Our goal is for the next time you hear a radio piece or see a headline about autism, that you are able to exclaim loudly to the nearest person- “Oh! I have a friend with autism! We went to the aquarium together and she taught me about starfish.”

SERVICES PROVIDED

Background  
Community Coaching Center (CCC), a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization, was established in San Diego in 2003, as an after-school/Saturday Community Participation and Behavioral Social Skills Development Program for families, children, and teens with Autism Spectrum Disorders. This program is modeled after a similar program in Denver that was founded and successfully operated by the Executive Program Director of CCC.

Overview  
CCC serves families in San Diego County. We provide service for school-age children with Autism Spectrum Disorders between the ages of 6-17. Each day, we divide into age and social skill appropriate peer groups - a younger kids’ group and a teen group. We depart into the community in these separate peer groups to experience all that our local San Diego community has to offer. We bring into the community a unique perspective, understanding, and awareness of the CCC program participant’s individual social perceptions and personalities.
At CCC, we work on building and maintaining appropriate social interactions and peer relationships while cultivating and nurturing community friendships. Through providing structured and supportive exposure in our program's daily activities and interactions, we offer opportunities to provide first-hand autism education and inclusion experiences in our San Diego community.

**PROGRAM COMPONENTS**

- The Community Coaching Center is a small-group, community-based, social behavior and skill development program for school-aged participants ages 6-22 (as long as they are in school), diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder.

- CCC is a community inclusion focused program that teaches functional independence and provides community access to kids and teens with developmental disabilities.

- We implement an approximate 2-to-1, participant-to-paid team member ratio most days. This approach ensures each child’s safety and that he/she receives the individual attention necessary to have a successful community experience. *The number of Team members scheduled each day is determined by the specific “participation-mix” of each group and the particular community activity planned. While groups are staffed at a 2:1 ratio, volunteer experiences are partnered 1:1.*

- Community peer groups of 4-10 participants are formed according to age, skill level, and interests to promote friendship development both within our group and with peers out in the community.

- After school, Saturday, and school-break hours of service provide socially educational, therapeutic, and fun activities either at Home Base or out in the community.

- Individual Program Goals (IPGs) are designed for each program participant addressing the skill areas of Socially Appropriate Behaviors and Community skills which include goals regarding safety and independence building.

- Progress and behavioral data is recorded daily and synthesized into baselines and progress reports to track progress towards social and behavioral goal development.

- Program Participant’s Unique Proficiency or area of particular interest and skill competency is recognized developed and nurtured.

- Aberrant or challenging behaviors and their antecedents and consequences are investigated and analyzed by the CCC Team to ensure that appropriate and relevant behavior management strategies can be designed and implemented within the structure of our program.

- By exposing the participants to a variety of “real life” environments and social arenas, we can focus on social skill building, generalization, and transitioning.

- CCC facilitates learning and maintaining appropriate social interactions and behaviors, building community and peer relationships, increasing self-esteem, recognizing, safety awareness, and implementing viable communication skills in the community, at home, and beyond to promote social independence.
• Sensory issues and provisions are addressed and factored into behavioral planning, individual goals, and program implementation.

• The CCC Team makes an effort to communicate with parents/legal guardians to discuss the day’s successes and challenges each day we meet.

• Community activities are planned for the majority of service days. Home Base days may include working on practical skills such as baking/cooking, gardening, music, art projects, dance, physical fitness, and other therapeutic and sensory motor activities.

**CCC Teen Groups**

• Our teens build upon more individualized independence building skills when visiting our community venues such as independent shopping, meal planning/cooking, transportation, restaurant social dining, and other getting-ready-for-the-world skills.

• CCC plans specific activities for our teenaged participants intended to provide pre-vocational and transitional skills for “post school” life, including volunteering at food pantries, riding public transportation, and independent shopping, cooking, and dining experiences.

The **CCC Friends** are a group of young teens with high functioning autism/or Asperger’s Syndrome that meets every other Saturday. These teens participate in a variety of community excursions practicing appropriate conversational and social skills, friendship building, and citizenship. This group has a 3-to-1 participant-to-team member ratio as the Group Leaders serve more as “friendship facilitators” for the participants and take a more hands-off approach to leading the group than the other groups.
Volunteer Duties and Policies

Peer Pals: Volunteers aged 13-16
Volunteer Coaches: Volunteers aged 17+

As a volunteer at Community Coaching Center you are contributing your time and effort to work with a great group of individuals on the autism spectrum. Your volunteer time will be rewarding, educational and fun and it will be spent in a variety of direct program participant contacts. You will be interacting with the participants and demonstrating what it looks like to be a positive role model and a friend. You will be matched with a single program participant as your partner most days. Your partner will likely have fairly strong verbal skills and a low incidence of aggressive behaviors. At the Program Supervisor’s discretion, you may also be assigned a “floater” volunteer role on a given day, which allows you to support all participants in the group without the responsibility of a specific partner. At all times while at CCC you will be accompanied by staff who will be there to provide support and educational information about autism, our kids and our program.

Volunteer shifts typically run 2/2:30-5:30 on weekdays during school, 1:00-5:00 during school break, and 11:00-4:30 on Saturdays, (10:15-3:00 for the CCC Friends Group).

A Typical Day Volunteering at CCC:

• Upon arrival at Home base, check in with your Group Leader or the Manager on Duty first thing. They’ll get you a volunteer t-shirt and introduce you to your partner for the day.

• Check the whiteboard at the entrance for your name, activity, and partner. Ask staff questions about your partner so you know what to expect and get tips on the most effective way to facilitate socially appropriate interactions with your partner.

• Down Time- before program participants change into their CCC shirts and eat snack together, we have a bit of unstructured time that allows you to ask other staff members for insight about their partner, to talk with your partner, and to observe him/her interacting with their peers.

• Snack Time- join your partner at the picnic table for snack

• Community- grab a seat in the van next to your partner and venture forth to the day’s planned activity. Be sure to ask questions of your Group Leader and Community Coaches in your group, who are happy to share anything they can about your partner, our program, or autism.

• After returning to Home Base, ask your partner what they did today to be a good friend- they’ll know what this means and provide you with examples. Your Group Leader will provide a “Good Friend” report for you to fill out and send home if applicable.

• Kids are picked up pretty quickly after returning to Home Base, so after your partner has been picked up take a moment to check in with your Group Leader to see if there’s any other help you can offer before logging your time in the Volunteer Hours notebook.
THROUGHOUT YOUR VOLUNTEER SHIFT, YOUR MAIN JOB AT CCC IS TO BE AN INTERACTIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ROLE MODEL TO YOUR PARTNER AND HIS/HER PEERS. This is by far your most important duty at CCC.

Please note that at no time while at CCC as a volunteer are you to physically attempt to manage a program participant’s behavior or assist staff in a behavior management technique.

If at any point you feel that you need help, in particular due to a program participant’s behavior, immediately seek support from staff and allow the trained staff to step in and take over. Our staff is very well trained in behavioral techniques, and is always in the best position to help safely bring a program participant back to baseline.

**CCC Code of Conduct**

Volunteers at CCC are obligated to respect the dignity and worth of all people, and the rights of individuals to privacy, confidentiality, and self-determination of the clients and families of CCC and of their fellow coworkers and volunteers at all times.

The clients, their families, volunteers and the staff have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their work environment and community. With this right comes the responsibility to be law-abiding citizens and to be accountable for actions that put at risk the safety of others or oneself.

Volunteers at CCC are expected to strive to benefit those with whom they work and take care to do no harm. In their professional actions, the CCC volunteers are expected to safeguard the welfare and rights of those with whom they interact professionally and all other affected persons.

In summary, we ask that you show up for our kids, listen, ask questions, and don’t be afraid to jump into the mix. The contribution of your time and energy is priceless, and deeply appreciated by each of us at CCC.

**Cell / Mobile Phone Usage**

Personal cell phone usage at the facility or in the community should not disrupt your interaction with program participants or the work of others, or distract the user’s attention from effectively performing volunteer duties. Volunteers may leave purses, backpacks, and phones in the Staff Room in the main house while they are out in the community.

**Food Policy**

Volunteers are encouraged to bring a sack lunch on Saturdays if you would like to eat at the picnic tables with program participants before we head out in the community.

While out in the community, we work on restaurant skills like waiting in line, taking turns ordering, and sharing small appetizers. The purpose of these activities is entirely skill-building, and staff typically does not join in the snack. If you would like to order anything, feel free to bring your own money to do so.
What to Wear
Volunteer t-shirts are provided to all Peer Pals and Volunteer Coaches. While you are free to take yours home or leave it with us to wash, we ask that you bring your shirt with you each time if you choose to keep it.

In a given day, CCC volunteers might find themselves hiking up Cowles Mountain, playing kickball, or walking to Balboa Park. To keep safe and comfortable, please wear closed-toe shoes and jeans or casual pants that allow you to move and have fun.

CCC expects each volunteer to use good taste and mature judgment in maintaining appropriate appearance at all times at Home Base and in the community. **For reasons of safety, it is recommended that no jewelry should be worn during service hours.**

Best Practices in speaking with Program Participants
- Use a clear, calm voice
- Don’t raise your voice especially if a child is upset
- Give short, precise directions and sentences
- Be consistent and concrete when giving directions/instructions
- Wait a minimum three seconds between repeating a direction

Helpful CCC Phrases and Directions
- “Quiet Hands”
- “Quiet Feet”
- “Quiet Voice/inside voice”
- “Wait for your friends”
- “Make good choices”
- **First .... Then ....**
- No thanks
- Refocus

- “Act like a big boy/girl”
- **Be a Good Friend**
- “That’s too close”
- “Stay with the group”
- “Not okay”
- “Do you need a break (or to Refocus?)”
- “How do you feel” (high, low, just right?)
- Quiet time

Fx: is the abbreviation for frequency. You will see this on data sheets and ABC forms and need to record the number of times a behavior, antecedent, or consequences took place.

Bx: is the abbreviation for behavior. You will need to list and describe the behaviors that occurred in an objective manner.

**“Stimming” (see self-stimulating behavior):** a repetitive body movement (often done unconsciously) that stimulates the senses and neurological system for example:

- Hand flapping, body spinning or rocking, lining up or spinning toys/objects, echolalia (repeating back what has been said to them by others), perseveration (repetition of a particular movement, response, or topic despite the lack of context or stimulation of such a topic, response, or phrase), nonsensical noises, etc.