

THERAPY ASSOCIATES FAMILY RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Mission Statement

Therapy Associates LLC ("Agency" or "TA") is a private New Jersey Limited Liability Corporation which provides high quality pediatric evaluative assessments, therapy services, and developmental intervention to children qualifying for early intervention services referred by county Special Child Health Services ("SCHS"). Specific services provided include skilled speech, physical, and occupational therapy, special education and cognitive development, ABA therapy, social work and other supporting services such as translation and sign language interpretation. We support a family training model which emphasizes learning and cooperation between therapists and family members and focuses on family priorities and concerns. Our agency supports the right of families to have their cultural and religious priorities respected and we make every effort to accommodate a family's individual needs.

To the maximum extent possible TA services its client families in their natural environments, including the home and community settings that are natural and typical for all children of the child's age. TA's therapeutic methods emphasize using materials and equipment that are found in these environments so that the family can learn techniques to carryover to the child's normally occurring routines.

Families and therapists are encouraged to call or write to the Agency to communicate concerns, difficulties or requests. TA will endeavor to solve all problems with the help of SCHS and The Regional Early Intervention Collaborative ("REIC") to the best of its ability.

Non-Discrimination Policy

TA services children and families without discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, or marital status.

I. Therapist Assignment

Families the Agency serves are encouraged to contact TA at any time with any concerns as well as with positive feedback about its providers. If a parent has a concern or complaint about a provider, the Agency will endeavor to remedy the situation. If the problem continues without amelioration, and a parent/caregiver is still dissatisfied with the therapist the Agency has assigned to them, s/he may request a change in provider. This can be done by contacting the Agency directly or by making the request to the service coordinator. The parent should give the reason for his/her dissatisfaction.

After a review of the parent's concern, a new provider may be assigned based on the availability of alternate providers or TA may voluntarily transfer the case back to service coordination for assignment to a different Early Intervention agency.

II. Safety and Hygiene

- A. The parent is responsible to provide a clean and safe environment for the therapist to conduct services. A therapist may never stay in a place or situation which s/he deems unsafe and may not return to the premises unless or until safety provisions are made. A therapist must immediately leave an unsafe place. The determination of what is unsafe is at the therapist's discretion.
- B. When there is one or more male adults in the home, TA suggests that a female therapist should request that the front door to the home remain ajar for the duration of the therapy session; similarly, TA suggests that male therapists work with an open door to the home when there is only a female adult present in the home.
- C. A therapist is not obligated to work in a hygienically compromised or unclean environment. If cleanliness is not maintained to the therapist's satisfaction, s/he may request to be removed from the case and the Agency will respect that request. Depending on the nature of the situation, the agency reserves the right to discontinue all services if cleanliness is not maintained.
- D. A therapist is not obligated to work if the child or another resident of the house has a contagious illness. It is in the therapist's discretion whether to temporarily discontinue services depending on the nature of the illness. The parent is responsible for informing the therapist if there is a contagious illness in the home. Depending on the nature of the illness, the therapist may not be obligated to return to the home until a letter of medical clearance signed by a physician is forwarded to the Agency.
- E. A therapist should not service any child when the therapist is harboring a contagious illness.
- F. Services may never be provided in therapist's home.
- G. A therapist may not transport a client in the therapist's car.
- H. A therapist may not be left alone with a client child.
- I. If a parent/caregiver wants a third party to observe and/or record a session by an Agency therapist, this must be pre-approved by the therapist and the Agency office. Please call the Agency if you have any questions about having another person attend a therapy session.
- J. TA retains the right at all times to have one of its supervisors observe the therapist as a way of ensuring quality services.

III. Policy on Makeup Sessions

- A. If a parent cancels a session for any reason, the therapist is not obligated to make up that session. However, the therapist may make up the session if s/he can, subject to the limitations of the EI system rules.

- B. Similarly, if a treatment day falls on a religious or national holiday as enumerated below, the therapist is not required to provide a makeup session.
- C. Service provision which is missed due to a therapist's attendance at an Early Intervention-required training session and/or TA-sponsored training may be made up but is not required to be made up.
- D. The Agency office may be closed, and our therapists may elect not to provide services on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Presidents' Day, Purim, Easter, Passover (1st two days and last two days), Memorial Day, Shavuot, Labor Day, Rosh Hashana, Yom Kippur, Sukkos, Shmini Atzeres, Thanksgiving, Christmas. There is no requirement to provide makeup sessions for these holidays. If a therapist observes religious holidays other than those mentioned above, s/he is permitted to take them as excused holidays as well.
- E. A therapist may be excused for canceling up to two consecutive weeks of sessions. However, the therapist is required to make up any sessions s/he misses beyond this.
- F. If a therapist needs to cancel sessions after two consecutive weeks of missed or cancelled sessions, and cannot find the time to provide makeups, a substitute therapist will be offered to the parent to provide the makeups (see section VII).
- G. Makeups can be done before or after the missed session, subject to the EI system's rules. Questions about specific cases may be addressed by calling the TA offices.
- H. Makeups cannot be provided for sessions missed by a prior therapist without special authorization provided by the Agency, subject to the approval of the REIC.
- I. If a parent repeatedly cancels service sessions, the practitioner has the option of asking to be transferred off the case. Agency will generally honor that request, and depending on the reasons for the multiple cancellations, reserves the right to discontinue servicing the case.
- J. Cancellation of a scheduled service session less than 24 hours in advance can be considered a "no show."

V. Policy on No Shows

A. Definitions:

A "no show" means either:

1. that a therapist does not appear at a prearranged time and location for a scheduled therapy session, when no communication about cancellation has taken place prior to the scheduled session. Being more than 15 minutes late for a scheduled session can be called a no show. ("therapist no show"); or
2. that a child is not available to receive therapy at the prearranged time and location for a scheduled therapy session, when no communication about cancellation has taken place prior to the scheduled session ("parent no show"). A child's being more than 15

minutes late for a scheduled session can be called a no show. Examples of a child 'not being available' are:

- s/he is sleeping;
- that s/he is awake but too groggy or sick to receive therapy,
- the child is busy with another activity, such as eating, bathing or another therapy session, and is not ready for therapy by 15 minutes after the scheduled time;
- there is no adult over the age of 18 with the child;
- that the parent plans another activity at the time of the therapy session such as a trip to a doctor;
- the child/parent is not home or doesn't answer the door;
- A parent's calling a therapist to cancel while s/he is en route to the house.

B. Policy:

TA recognizes that on a rare occasion, a parent or therapist may experience an emergency situation that requires missing a session without being able to notify the other party, or may on a rare occasion forget to cancel a session. When a no-show occurs, Agency policy is as follows:

1. Therapist 'no show':

In the event a therapist misses a prescheduled session without prior explanation, the parent should call the therapist to clarify the situation. Often, what is perceived as a no-show is in actuality a miscommunication about the agreed-upon schedule. If a therapist no show happens more than once, the parent should contact TA to notify us of the situation. The Agency will then confer with the therapist, and if necessary, counsel the therapist to be in touch with the parent at all times. If the therapist subsequently misses another session without prior notice or explanation (for a total of three no-shows), the parent may request another therapist and the Agency will respect that request.

2. Parent 'no show':

If a parent/caregiver misses a prescheduled therapy session without prior notification, the therapist should contact the parent to clarify why s/he missed the session. In addition, the therapist should call the Agency to notify them. Agency, in conjunction with Service Coordination and/or parents, will clarify that no miscommunication about the schedule occurred and will establish that the parent/caregiver will be available in the future or will call to cancel at least 24 hours prior to the scheduled session or at least several hours if a sudden situation arises.

Agency policy is that if there is a documented parent no-show two times within any four week period, a therapist may request to be taken off the case and the Agency may respect that request. In addition, if a parent does not show three times over a more extended time period, a therapist may request to be taken off the case and Agency will respect that request. Depending on the frequency of the no shows, the offered explanations, and the parent's response to Agency concerns, TA reserves the right to discontinue servicing that child altogether.

All parents of children receiving therapy must inform the Agency when they move or get a new phone number. Failure to do so may impede the therapist's ability to provide services, and sessions missed as a result will be considered as parent no shows.

VI. Documentation

- A. Each service "session" consists of working with the child (or parent in the case of social work), giving follow-through instructions to the parent/caregiver, and writing the clinical note. The note should be written in the home during the session. The therapist should give the parent the pink copy of the note before s/he leaves. If the therapist sees a child out of the home, individual arrangements may be made to receive the note.
- B. The parent should sign the note if present at the session.
- C. In addition to the clinical note, parent/caregiver must sign a Service Encounter Verification Form, which is a state form documenting attendance and duration of session, during or after each session. If the therapist sees a child out of the home, the babysitter or day care personnel should sign the Verification Form at the end of every session. It is improper to ask a therapist to wait for some future time to get the caregiver's signature on the form.

VII. Therapist Substitution

- A. Definition: a "substitution" shall mean the temporary replacement of a therapist with a similarly qualified therapist for a period not to exceed three weeks.
- B. A parent/guardian has the option of requesting that a substitute therapist be placed in the home when the regular therapist is unable to provide services for more than two consecutive weeks or has missed more than two consecutive weeks of sessions and cannot provide makeups.
- C. Where services are/must be missed for longer than three weeks, the Agency will provide a replacement, not a substitute therapist. In some situations, such as maternity leave, the therapist is entitled to return to her caseload at the end of the leave of absence. If a parent prefers otherwise, they may make that request to the Agency office and it will be considered.

VIII. Ensuring Fully Informed Consent

- A. The EI system is a voluntary one, which means that parents have the right to choose which interventions, if any, they want for their child from those determined by the Team to be appropriate. They are never required to receive services, and if they choose to reject one or more services offered, it is without prejudice to their receipt of other services. Therefore, parents must consent to all services given to their child prior to the first service provision; this consent is ordinarily documented in the child's IFSP.
- B. If during the course of treatment, the parent or caregiver decides not to continue any particular therapy, the parent must alert either the Agency or Service Coordinator of this fact. TA will then notify the therapist to stop seeing the child. In addition, if a therapist

recommends additional therapies and the parent disagrees, no additional therapies will be provided.

- C. It is not acceptable for a parent to simply not show up for therapy sessions if they don't want them to continue.
- D. If additional assessments are requested subsequent to the development of the IFSP, the therapist must obtain the parent's consent prior to the assessment.

IX. Translation Services

- A. If a family speaks/understands both English and another language, it does not have the right to services in the other language.
- B. If a family the Agency is servicing does not speak or understand English, TA will first attempt to arrange for a bilingual therapist to service the child.
- C. If a bilingual therapist is not available, TA will then attempt to assign a translator to accompany the therapist to each session. The translator's function is to translate all communications from the parent/child to the therapist and from the therapist to the parent/child. The translator should also transcribe the family notes into the language of the parent.
- D. The translator is not a licensed therapist and therefore may not volunteer information or answer any questions of a professional nature except upon the therapist's direction, nor stay in the client family's home unless a therapist is present.
- E. If TA does not have a translator available the service coordinator may attempt to arrange translation services with an outsourced translation agency licensed to do business in the EI system. In this situation TA is not responsible for the quality of the translation services even if the therapist is sent by TA.
- F. TA places its translators based on their proficiency in the language desired. TA will not discriminate in translator assignments based on accent, national origin, religion, or ethnicity, even when different from the client family.

X. Ensuring Confidentiality

- A. All children and their families enrolled in the Early Intervention system have a right to privacy and to have their personal information kept strictly confidential, according to federal and state law and professional ethics. All therapists contracting with TA are instructed about confidentiality rules under the EI System and federal law in detail, and are contractually obligated to follow them.
- B. Should a parent elect that a child be seen at a babysitter's house or in a daycare, the therapist may not speak to the caretaker about the child's development nor show them the family note, without written consent of the parent.
- C. Similarly, a therapist may not converse with any other third party about the child's development, such as a pediatrician or other doctor, without the parent's written consent.

- D. Should the parent wish to give written consent for the therapist to speak to a third party, a legal consent form should be obtained from the therapist or the TA offices for the parent to sign.

XI. Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect

- A. Any therapist, support personnel, or paraprofessional who has reasonable cause to believe that a child has been or is being subjected to any form of hitting, corporal punishment, abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment, or any other kind of child abuse, neglect or exploitation by any adult, is required by State Law to report the concern immediately to the **Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) Office of Child Abuse Control 24 hour hotline (English & Spanish) 1-877-NJABUSE**; or to any county DYFS District Office.
- B. New Jersey law states that any therapist making a report in good faith of child abuse and neglect shall have immunity from any civil or criminal liability. (N.J. S.A. 9:6-8.13).