

Autism Program Checklist for Parents

This checklist will help guide you so that you can make an informed decision regarding your child’s programming when visiting The Shafer Center for Early Intervention or any other schools and covers topic relevant to programs, staffing, facilities and parent communication. This checklist does not cover basic health and safety standards that all licensed programs must meet as these vary by state.

Be sure to inquire about the topics below during your visits.



Center 1 Center 2

General Questions			
What is the philosophy of the program? What is their mission?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What is the program’s goal for my child? What are their outcomes?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the program geared toward working with children on the autism spectrum?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the program offer customize programming to meet each child’s specific needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the program offer flexibility and opportunities for programming in different location, different hours of the day, evenings, and or weekends?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the program a 12-month program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What is the program’s policy on handling problem behaviors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does my child need to be potty trained before starting at the program?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What is the transition process going into the school and what it is leaving? How is my child supported?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the program multi-disciplinary and how is this demonstrated?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Programs			
Is your program MSDE approved?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do you provide customized/individualized programming to meet each child’s needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the program continue to be innovative being enhancing and developing new programming?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What grades do you serve?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What is the student to teacher ratio?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the program have the following:			
One on One Instruction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pre-school, elementary classrooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Small group learning experiences	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Applied Behavior Analysis/Verbal Behavior	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speech Language Pathology	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Occupational Therapy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Physical Therapy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Behavior Intervention monitored by a BCBA-D (Board Certified Behavioral Analyst Doctoral level) or BCBA (Board Certified Behavioral Analyst)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consultation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Home Programming	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School Aides	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life Skills – in school, home and community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Camps	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will the program offer to assist me in potty training my child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do the programs focus on the following and how?			
Communication and language	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Social skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Imaginative play	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Academics	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Self management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Life skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How will my child’s individual goals be outlined and progress towards those be monitored?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does learning occur in multiple settings and what are those settings? How much time is spent in these multiple settings daily? (classes, small group, individual...)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are speech language and occupational therapy services integrated into the classroom daily? How?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Curriculum			
Is the curriculum research based?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the program adhere to one specific teaching philosophy or do they employ a variety of philosophies in their approach to education?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the curriculum multi-sensory?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the curriculum provide opportunities for children to explore topics in detail and in multiple ways?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the curriculum take into account the various learning styles and language ability of the children?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the program emphasize school readiness skills, such as phonemic awareness, reading comprehensions, phonics, vocabulary, writing and math?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Do the programs follow a routine and is it the same for each child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the activity and lesson objective posted and is the teacher following it?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Who develops the curriculum and what is their educational background?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Does the curriculum address the whole child's strengths and needs? How does that happen?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning tools			
Does the program offer or use picture schedules?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What teaching techniques does the program utilize? For example:			
Discrete trials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Handwriting without Tears	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
HANEN	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Orton Gillingham	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PECS	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
PROMPT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Seeing Stars	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sensory Diets	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sensory Integration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
SUPPORT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talkies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
TEACCH	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Touch Math	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Touch Money	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Touch Time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Visualizing and Verbalizing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Personalization			
Does the program have a standardized behavior plan or do they measure and analyze each child's behavior to meet their individual needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often does the staff meet and discuss the progress of each child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is my child matched strictly by age or by strengths and needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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How is the one to one program individualized?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How does the program keep up with my child's rate of learning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How are skills learned in one setting maintained and generalized to others?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How is the data and data tracking personalized to meet my child's needs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How individualized are my child's goals? About how many would they have?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often is data being tracked on my child's goals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is data taken on skills you want to see increased as well as problem behaviors you want to see decreased?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How do I know that the data is reliable?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Staff			
What is the educational background of the Director? Does he/she have extensive experience/education in early education and development? What is the highest level of education/degree acquired? This is very important as the Director sets the tone, standards, guidance and input on curriculum, teaching styles, and discipline.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What are the qualifications for the staff members working with my child? (mastered special educator, mastered speech language pathologist, board certified behavior analyst, board certified associate behavior analyst, mastered occupational therapist)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much training does the staff receive before working with a child and in what areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How much staff training occurs throughout the year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What is the staff turn over rate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How is staff monitored to ensure program fidelity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How many children does a BCBA in your program oversee?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Parents and Communication			
Are there opportunities to be part of the school community and what are they?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often do I meet with my child's teachers or team?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you allow parents to observe and what is the process?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will my child see me while I am observing or is there a separate location where I can observe?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you offer parent trainings?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you have opportunities for my family to experience field trips, school performances, and other activities?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
If there are issues at home would the program allow for home visits?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are their daily and or weekly progress notes sent home to parents?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Do you have calendar and event information on your website?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Can the parents contact the staff via email and phone?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learning Environment & Facility			
Is it a caring and supportive environment? How?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the learning environment free from distractions? (example – too much stuff on the walls, too loud, loud bells)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Do you see smiling faces on the children and the staff?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often would my child go outside?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How secure is the facility?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
What happens when outdoor recess is cancelled?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are the toys developmentally appropriate?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is my child supervised at all times?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
How often is the building cleaned?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Are allergy diets followed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Is the facility peanut or nut free?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>