

The Achievements Program

at the Center for Autism and Related Disorders

Who We Are

The Achievements Program at the Center for Autism and Related Disorders provides individualized treatment in small-group settings to children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) who struggle with communication and social interaction.

The Achievements Program includes:

- Early Achievements (for 2-year-olds)
- Achievements (for children 2 years and 9 months to 5 years old)

These groups focus on language, learning readiness, and social communication and interaction, which play important roles in a child's prognosis.

Our Team

Groups are led by a speech-language pathologist (SLP) certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) and licensed to practice in Maryland, or by a speech-language pathology assistant supervised by an ASHA-certified, Maryland-licensed SLP, and by one or two therapeutic assistants. Student-to-staff member ratios are low, and parent involvement is encouraged. Children are active participants in theme-based learning activities that provide a motivating context for addressing individualized goals that target language, social, play and cognitive skills.

Our Approach

The Achievements Program provides an enriching environment for social discovery through language mastery. Children immediately apply what they are learning in a variety of ways. For example, a book may become more "real" as children are able to participate in a play routine based on a story in the book. Our goal is for the treatment session to become not only a place for learning, but also a place to form friendships.

We recognize that each child has individual strengths. By combining aspects of the most recent, research-based therapeutic techniques, we create programs that fit each child's needs.

Multiple teaching methods, systems and approaches are used, including the following:

- A highly visual environment that uses books, photographs, toys, picture symbols and written words to support language, ease transitions and clarify demands
- Tasks broken down into specific sequential steps to teach new skills
- Routine-based instruction in structured activities to highlight important information while providing repeated practice with mastered and emerging concepts



- Targeting skills across settings and with different people to promote generalization
- Shaping behaviors by rewarding a child for making attempts to reach the desired goal
- Incidental teaching—a structured teaching approach designed to seize “teachable moments” by following a child's lead, activities and interests
- Social units planned around functional communication, such as greetings or gaining attention
- Social stories and scripts to help children understand what behaviors are expected of them in social situations
- Low- and high-technology augmentative communication systems that promote verbal language and emphasize the importance of initiation by the child

We recognize the importance of a team-oriented and holistic approach to treating children with ASD. That's why we offer cotreatment with an occupational therapist who joins our Achievements groups once a week to address areas such as sensory processing, self-care, and fine and gross motor skills in the context of the group's daily routines and activities.



The Achievements Program at Greenspring also offers a preschool classroom for typically developing children who are integrated into Achievements groups as playmates and peer models. This program provides neurotypical children with access to high-quality, language-rich preschool classrooms and teaches them about diversity and empathy at an early age, while exposing children with ASD to natural and age-appropriate play, language and social skills.

Our Groups

Program elements are combined in different ways to achieve maximum therapeutic benefits for the wide range of children we see. Children participate in a brief screening process to determine the most appropriate group placement, and are matched with other children of similar developmental skills to best meet their individual needs in the group setting.

The types of groups in the Achievements Program vary, according to three factors:

- **Staffing ratio:** Most groups have two adult staff members for every three to five children with ASD, along with at least one neurotypical peer participating in all or part of the group's activities. The ratio varies, depending on the children's independence with learning readiness skills and the amount of attention and adult facilitation required to most effectively target speech, language, social-communicative and cognitive goals.
- **Degree of structure:** Some Achievements groups are more structured, with a high level of repetition and routine to support children who learn best under those circumstances. Other groups promote more flexibility and variety of activities and concepts. The level of structure and repetition is based on the individual needs of the children and may change throughout the year, as appropriate.
- **Duration:** Weekly schedules for Achievements groups include two to four days of group speech-language therapy and individual sessions, depending on the needs of the children and the group schedule. Group sessions may last between one and a half and two and a half hours, depending on a variety of factors, such as school schedules and our efforts to maximize the intensity of intervention within the parameters of each child's attention span.

Prerequisite skills for some groups begin with the ability to use basic gestures for communication and engage briefly with adults. For other groups, they may extend to the use of conversational turn-taking and initiation of peer interaction.

Goals of the Program

- To provide state-of-the-art therapeutic services to individuals with ASD and related disorders
- To train those interested in working with individuals with ASD and related disorders through student practicums, annual intensive training institutes, community outreach, and paraprofessional and volunteer opportunities

Contact Information

Center for Autism and Related Disorders at Kennedy Krieger Institute

Space in the Achievements Program is limited. Please contact our clinical services coordinator at **443-923-7880**.

For more information about the center and its programs, call **443-923-7630**. To schedule an appointment, please call **443-923-9400**, or call toll-free at **888-554-2080**. TTY users, please contact us at **443-923-2645**, or dial **711** to make a Maryland Relay call.

[KennedyKrieger.org/CARD](https://www.kennedykrieger.org/CARD)

Main Location

3901 Greenspring Avenue
Baltimore, MD 21211

For information about other locations, please call the numbers above.

Mailing Address

707 North Broadway
Baltimore, MD 21205

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