



Topic of the Month: Summertime Fun!

In July, the Family Services team asked families to share their successes about community participation and traveling. We received so many encouraging and inspiring responses throughout the month. Here are a few.

HOW DO YOU EDUCATE STAFF IN COMMUNITY PROGRAMS ABOUT YOUR CHILD'S NEEDS?

"I call or email in advance and describe my daughter's needs. If it is a long term activity, then I usually plan on staying and doing 1:1 training with her buddy. This was her first year playing tee ball so all of her therapists worked on the different skills involved. I introduced her to the batting helmet and glove early and we worked on sensory issues surrounding those. We made a picture card of the different things we practice for tee ball, checked out kids' tee ball books at the library to read at home, and practiced batting and wearing the glove before we go to the game. It's been a lot of work, but has been worth it!" - Anara

WHAT HAS WORKED FOR YOU TO ENSURE SMOOTH TRAVEL WITH YOUR CHILD?

"Last month we traveled to Walt Disney World. Our first family vacation and our son's first time being on a plane. I wrote a blog post about how we prepared. You can read it here: www.autismwonderland.com/2011/06/prepping-for-vacation-autismwonderland.html - Lisa

"Traveling to an amusement park? Waiting in lines can be quite a challenge, even impossible! Check with guest relations for ADA passes. On a recent visit to a Six Flags park I discovered they had a pass that eliminates waiting in line. The pass is taken to the ride attendant (through the exit gate) and they will write down a time to come back. The time they give you is equivalent to the length of time you would have waited in line. When it is your time to come back, enter through the exit gate and you will be placed next in line. The pass is good for 4 people, although we had 6 and weren't ever denied. Also, no proof is needed...so no need to bring an IEP or psych report. I have heard from others that Disney parks have a system in place, yet require proof." - Nikki

"Print out a daily itinerary for your child. If they are not old enough to read, paste pictures of the places you are going to go that day. I can't stress enough the importance of sticking to that schedule. Our son is almost 14 and he still gets upset even if we stop for ice cream or the bathroom and it's not on the schedule." - Ali

“My little brother, who is turning 9 has autism and we often take 8-10 hour car rides to Florida to visit family. These are the things that we’ve found to help:

- Calming low music (instrumental only no vocals slow tempo)
- Veggie tales videos or dvds
- If the child can have suckers the large solid suckers do well to entertain (a bag of dum-dums works great also)
- These help in the car - <http://www.ecrater.com/p/11331433/mini-gsm-gprs-gps-tracker-for>. This tracker is especially a good idea if your child is a runner.
- Going somewhere unfamiliar to your child can be overwhelming. There is strength in numbers. The more people that know your child and his or her needs, the more prepared you will be to keep your child safe. Travel with your spouse and any other typically developing children that can help monitor your child.
- If your child has allergies to gluten or milk (both of which are common in children with autism) “eating out” is VERY difficult and risky. Ask for the ingredients in whatever your child may want before you order. A reaction to anything while traveling is not ideal. If there are more severe allergies pack food for your child instead of trying to find something they can eat in unfamiliar places.
- Nap time is your friend. Packing and unpacking while your child is sleeping is the easiest way to make sure you don’t leave things in your hotel room. Try to make sure that the check-in and check-out times for your hotel are clear and that you are ready to leave an hour before you have to be out. There WILL be setbacks.
- If your child has any fears of strangers try to schedule a cool down time for your child to unwind and relax in between events. Often a rest period (even if they don’t sleep) does a lot of good for the behavioral aspect and tension your child with autism may be feeling. Return to the hotel halfway through the day and allow your child to play with familiar toys and to interact with you outside of the distractions of being away from home. This helps SO MUCH.

Hope these help! Love to all my little buddies! My prayers go out to those traveling.” - Jamie

We just got back from two of our three vacations and our biggest issue was that our daughter didn’t understand that everyone’s toys at the beach weren’t hers. We used a schedule for the zoo, and were extremely prepared with things to distract her . . . stickers, coloring books, games, anything and everything that may help. We had a well stocked amount of snacks for long car rides to help distract in the car. So, think of all the tools you use at home and practice before you leave, use social stories, games, anything to introduce the activities before going so there are no real surprises. Best tip is to try to think how your child feels. I’ve found that really helps me think how I can best help her. Happy travels!” - Megan

WHAT DOES YOUR CHILD DO TO ENJOY SOME SUMMERTIME FUN?

“A few years ago I wasn’t aware of what my rights were for ESY (what does that stand for?). The summer we lost because of limited services really, really hurt our son. Never again! With the help of other parents and a good lawyer (who specializes in education issues), we got the benefits our son was entitled to by federal law. So now he has ESY, SCL (what does this stand for), some respite, and an AMAZING one-on-one day camp with typically developing peers. Our summer is full.” - Kibblesbits

“Unfortunately, we are rather isolated in our area and have a severe lack of funds. So, what I am doing is encouraging my Aspie teen to socialize with her friends through outings, overnights and such.” - Sandra

“The local library has a Lego club every week for the summer. My son was able build for two hours with no outbursts. We are very proud of him!” - Betsy