

Parent Handbook



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School Leadership Roster

Board of Directors

Marie Hughes, *Co-Chairperson*
Brett Zimmerman, *Co-Chairperson*
Danielle Zimmerman, *Founder, Treasurer*
Robert Rand, *Board Member*
Debbie Malaga, *Board Member*
Donna Denton, *Board Member*
Selicia Noreika, *Board Member*

Leadership Team

Mary Catherine “Kate” Murphy *Program Director*
Rossana Cuervo, *Office Administration*
Melissa Bustillo , *Curriculum Specialist and Summer Camp Director*
Paige Susser, *Afterschool Director*
Michelle Van Niekerk-Miller, *ADLS and Vocational Specialist*

Therapists

Michelle Van Niekerk-Miller, *OTR, Occupational Therapist*
Jessica Laguerre, *COTA*
PPT4Kids, *Physical Therapy*
Therapy4Kids, *Speech Therapy*

Faculty

Melissa Bustillo
Paige Susser
Jennifer Charles
Rosanna Sahadeo
Gloria Solomon
Annalesia Bennett
Melissa Goldstein
Ashley Thomas
Rhaea Palombi

Introduction

Welcome

Welcome to Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place where we believe all children deserve the opportunity to **LIVE, LAUGH, AND LEARN**. As you and your child enter our school, we want to make you feel right at home. We always address the whole family. Therefore, when you see or hear the words "you" and "your" this automatically includes children, parents, and other family members. We are sure you are going to have questions, so please read this handbook to see if your questions can be answered.

We do ask that you sign and return the "Overview" page to confirm that you agree with our policies. If you have any questions regarding policies, please ask our Director.

Mission Statement

Abi's Place is dedicated to building the skills of children with autism and complex disabilities to create a foundation for life-long success through the delivery of highly individualized education, outpatient services, community involvement and lending support to families.

Non-Discrimination

Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place welcomes students of any sex, race, religion, national and ethnic origin, physical, mental, and emotional disability. All the rights, privileges, programs, and activities are made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of sex, race, religion, national and ethnic origin, physical, mental, and emotional disability in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarship, and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

Admission Philosophy, Policies, and Procedures

Enrollment and Registration

Before being accepted into our day program, each child is informally evaluated by our director to make sure that we offer the appropriate services to meet that child's needs. If your child's needs match our school's mission and services, you can be added to our waiting list. Upon entry into the program, parents and staff discuss their wishes for their child and reach mutual goals to achieve each year. The yellow and blue school forms are required from your pediatrician according to county standards. We also ask for parents to fill out papers to help us get to know your child's medical history, likes and dislikes, and emergency contact information. We always welcome parents to observe their child's progress and communicate any concerns throughout the school year.

Your child's student file is rather in cumbersome according to county standards. We will give you all the forms

required just know that we need your help in creating your student file. Children and parents are responsible for returning all forms to the teacher or director. Thank you for your assistance.

Payment, Scholarships, and Late Fees

In order to determine if Abi's Place is the correct placement for your child and/or to establish yearly PEP goals for returning students, there is a non-refundable fee of \$150.00 to cover the cost of the evaluation. Enrollment is on a first-come, first-serve basis. Abi's Place requires a non-refundable \$500.00 deposit each year in order to secure classroom placement. The deposit is then credited toward tuition. The annual tuition is dependent upon your child's curriculum. We accept the McKay Scholarship and other donated funds (e.g. matching grants, health insurance grants, etc.).

Tuition payment(s) can be made in 6 payments, bi-annual, or annual payments. Tuition payments are due according to the tuition payment schedule you chose upon enrollment. If tuition is not received within 5 days from the due date, a \$25.00 per day late fee is added to the tuition payment. We accept cash, checks, and credit cards.

McKay Scholarship recipients must provide the office with all state mandated documents required for payment disbursement, prior to the beginning of the school year.

Tuition Description

Tuition will include the following:

- Creation of multiple home programs, which must be carried over to maximize your child's educational and therapeutic progress.
- Intense language program to facilitate appropriate means of communication designed for each child.
- Independent Functioning/Daily Living Skills Curriculum focusing on age-appropriate therapeutic needs.
- Group Activities for language, art, cooking, and music.
- Sensory or Oral Motor Program if necessary.
- Group Gross Motor time in the gym daily.
- Data Collection to track your child's progress over the year.
- Bi-Annual parent-teacher meetings.
- Adaptive PE

Please note to make time for your child outside during home time. Vitamin D is still an important role in all growing children.

Therapy and Insurance

Therapy Plan

Abi's Place offers therapy services on the premises. If you would like for your child to receive therapy at our facility, we are able to bill your insurance company or offer a private pay rate. Please be aware that you will be responsible for your co-pay or deductible. If not using insurance for therapy services, we offer a student discounted

rate. Information regarding our therapy services can be found on www.abisplace.com
Therapy services are billed separately from tuition and will be invoiced to you every other week.

Outside Therapy at Abi's Place

If you would like to bring in an outside therapist to Abi's Place to work with your child during the school day, this can be arranged as well. Please discuss with director.

School Policies and Procedures

Hours of Operation and Days Closed

Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place is open from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Our day program runs from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. You can arrive as early as 8:30, but we do ask that children are picked up at 3:00 unless afterschool arrangements have been made. Applicable charges for the after school program will be immediately invoiced to the parent. After the first 3 incidents charges will be assessed at a rate of \$1.00/minute.

Days closed are listed on our school calendar which can be found on the Abi's Place website (<http://www.abisplace.com>). However, in the event of weather or emergency closing, Zimmerman School House follow the Broward County Public School emergency closing decisions as broadcasted in the local media. Every reasonable effort will be made to notify parents or a designated person on the student's emergency pick-up form. If a weather or emergency closing decision is made by Broward County Schools and announced in advance by the local media, such as for a hurricane, our school will close too. Parents are also welcome to call our school with any questions regarding weather conditions/emergencies.

Health Policy

No child may attend school at Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place without the required health forms on file. Currently the Florida Department of Health requires two forms, number DH 3040 (yellow) and DH 680 (blue). These forms are obtained from the student's doctor. It is the responsibility of the parents to make sure the forms on file at the school are current. We will remind you of these forms and their expiration dates. Forms should be delivered by the expiration date in order to continue attendance. Abi's Place also requires a Student Health Form to be completed by parents and the child's doctor.

Parents and staff share the responsibility of reducing exposure to and spreading infections, illnesses, and communicable diseases. The school's illness policies, as well as state regulation, require that children need to be free and clear of the following symptoms/illness BEFORE returning to school:

- Diarrhea (more than one abnormally loose stool per day)
- Vomiting
- Nausea
- Severe cough
- Unusual yellow color to skin or eyes, or unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool.
- Skin or eye lesions or rashes that are severe, weeping or pus-filled
- Stiffneck
- Difficult or rapid breathing or wheezing

- Complaints of severe pain
- Fever of one hundred degrees (101) degrees Fahrenheit or higher, taken by the auxiliary method, with any other signs of illness
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Infectious nasal discharge

If a child shows any of the above signs, he/she will be isolated and the parent will be notified. It is the parent's responsibility to pick up his/her child immediately or to make arrangements for someone to do so. These precautions are taken to protect the health of all children at Abi's Place.

A child with head lice will not be permitted to return to school until treatment has occurred. Treatment shall include the removal of all lice, lice eggs, and egg cases.

If a child has mild cold symptoms for three days or more that do not impair his/her functioning, he/she may remain in the program and the parent will be notified when he/she picks up the child. This means that to attend the program, a child must be able to participate fully in program activities including therapy. If a child will be absent due to illness, parents should call and notify the school as early as possible. If a child contracts a communicable disease, Abi's Place should be notified so that staff and other parents may watch for symptoms. To maintain consistent staffing, in the event of a child's absence due to short-term illness, a parent will still be billed for the usually scheduled hours. When a parent has prior knowledge that a child will be absent due to illness (e.g. doctor's appointments, scheduled hospitalization), please contact the school to make arrangements.

The single-most significant step that individuals can take to reduce the spread of disease is to improve hand-washing. As a childcare program, all staff members at Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place wash their own hands frequently and carefully instruct children on how to adequately wash their hands.

The staff is trained in complete hand-washing, which includes running water, soap, and scrubbing and rubbing. This occurs after diapering or assisting with toileting or nose wiping and before all feeding, food preparation, or service.

Parents are requested to continue proper hand-washing instruction at home to reinforce the procedures learned at school. We also wash our toys, furniture, countertops, bathrooms, floors, and equipment daily to prevent spread of germs and infections.

Sign-In, Sign-Out, and Release of the Student

Attendance is recorded daily. Please remember Abi's Place will only release children to individuals authorized on the Pick-up Information and Authorization form. Until we get to know the parents and other authorized persons, we will require picture identification before releasing the child to unfamiliar faces.

In an emergency, a parent can authorize someone to pick up your child on a one-time basis. If at all possible, this authorization should be in writing sent to our office.

Please use caution upon entering and exiting the building. You never know when a driver is not paying attention while in the parking lot. Please watch yourself and child when entering and/or exiting.

Medication

Abi's Place staff members may administer medication only with written permission from a parent/doctor. The medication (both prescription and over the counter) must be in the original container, clearly marked as to the type of medication contained and the correct dosage. The form must contain all requested information. Please hand the medicine personally to the student's teacher or the director so that it may be properly secured in the facility. Do not put medication in any form (cough drops, lozenges, etc.) in your child's backpack or lunch box.

Emergency and Evacuation Procedures

Evacuation procedures are taught to the children in case of an emergency. We encourage parents to teach their children about safety as well. If an individual child is injured in the program, a staff member will take the necessary emergency steps and contact a parent as soon as possible. Medical procedures will not be undertaken without parent contact, except in the case of a medical practitioner's determination that such an immediate action is necessary. Any transportation of an injured child will be by ambulance or other emergency transport.

Accidents

An Incident/Accident Report is the form used by staff to report all accidents that occur which result in injury. This information includes the date, what happened, and treatment, if any. Parents will be informed of all injuries that occur at school. The incident form will be sent home with the student and needs to be returned the next day signed by the parent. These forms will then be electronically filed for safe keeping. This is to ensure we, as a team, continue open communication. If a parent has further questions, please speak to the teacher present who handled the incident and obtain more information. Parents are responsible for keeping emergency information updated. For anything other than a minor injury, a parent will be contacted as soon as possible. Staff members will call 9-1-1 if a true medical emergency occurs.

School Decorum

Zimmerman School House's dba Abi's Place staff members believe that children need a safe and peaceful environment in which to grow, learn, and feel comfortable. Our environment is structured in a way that allows children to safely explore, live, laugh, and learn.

Class starts at 9:00 a.m. during the regular school year. Parents should bring their children by 9:00 a.m. Many important activities occur during the early part of the day, leaving your child at a disadvantage if he is consistently late.

We do understand that some children may have existing behavior problems that will be discussed in their evaluation meeting. We support each family and will work with families to create appropriate behavior protocol to follow consistently at school and home. For further suggestions regarding home environments, support will be given upon request.

Grievance Procedures

Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place is an extremely family-friendly facility. If there are any concerns, questions, comments, or complaints, please feel free to discuss them with the director. You can choose to express yourself appropriately in private or write a letter. We are here to support families and help children progress.

Meals and Snacks

At this time, our facility is not equipped to provide hot lunches. We do ask parents to send a snack and lunch for their child daily. Please make staff aware of your child's allergies or other nutritional information. Please include an ice pack, napkins, and any necessary utensils. If your child requires food to be a specific texture or bites to be a certain size, please prepare in advance. If your child receives their nutrition via G-Tube, please make the teachers aware of their feeding schedule. If a child with a G-Tube wishes to eat orally, we must have a doctor's note and swallow study that states the child is medically capable.

Dress, Diapering, Toileting and Supplies

Extra clothing is required in case of an accident and must be replaced each time it is used. We ask that extra clothing is placed in a bag with your child's name on the bag. We also ask for a supply of diapers and wipes (if applicable). We encourage toileting for all children that show signs of toileting readiness and will work with families to be consistent. If there are any other supplies that are necessary in order to care for your child, please label them with your child's name (e.g. cups, bibs, oral syringes, personal comfort toys).

Termination of Enrollment

In order to terminate your enrollment, proper notice is required to withdraw a student from school. "Proper notice" is defined as written notice 30 days prior to the withdrawal date. Upon proper notice and payment of all tuition up to the withdrawal date, a student may be withdrawn without further tuition due.

Parental Involvement

Parent Meetings

Parent-Teacher Group (PTG) meetings are scheduled regularly. Individual parent meetings with teacher(s) and director are held only on the request of the parents. Annual and bi-annual educational plan meetings will be scheduled by the lead teacher and director. Please keep in mind, parents are encouraged to be involved with their child's education and to communicate with teachers and the director daily through face-to-face communication, emails, phone calls, and daily home notes.

Personalized Education Plans

A Personalized Education Plan (PEP) meeting is simply a time that directors, therapists, and families sit down to create common goals for each child. We are here to support you and your child with special needs. This meeting will take place annually when all parties can be present or via phone conference. The Personalized Education Plan will address all areas of need for your child. Taking care of children with special needs is truly a team effort. We understand that parents or teachers alone cannot make a difference. Collaboration is key.

Fundraising Policy and Procedures

Collecting Donations

Monetary Donations

Must be made directly to the organization for the benefit of the whole organization rather than for a specific child, otherwise these funds would be considered program fees rather than legitimate tax-deductible donations viewed by the IRS. Donations may be in the honor or memory of a person however the funds are still used by the organization as a whole.

In-Kind Donations

Are accepted only when in good condition and can be easily sold for hard dollars, used in our facility, and/or can be traded through ITEX for barter dollars which we use for facility costly services, i.e. carpet cleaning, air conditioning, plumbing, etc.

Donor Privacy Policy

Our privacy policy is to insure our donors, consumers and school members that their personal information is private. Abi's Place does not sell any personal names, addresses, and/or credit information. The information you provide is only used to place a donation, purchase a product, or to communicate with our organization.

Our online shopping cart is protected and secure through PayPal and our e-commerce accounts. All emails and memberships to our sites are confidential and only viewed by our staff. Your information is exclusively stored in our secure consumer databases for future promotions and upcoming events. If you have any concerns about information being captured through the Internet we encourage you to call us.

Gift Solicitation Policy

All mailings, websites, and social media sites must indicate the organization, Abi's Place, as a non-profit 501(c) 3. All material references what donations will be used for: i.e., day program, therapies, equipment, etc. Donor is informed as to what their donation is helping.

Special Events

Marketing materials must indicate organization as 501 c3 and donations are for the benefit of the organization entirely. Third party fundraising must submit printing collateral to the board for approval on verbiage. The board must see wording for the organization, logo, and purpose for donation to support ethical and integrity follow-through.

Parent Teacher Group Fundraising

The parent-teacher group is a group designed for the day program to help give emotional support to both parents and teachers. This group does, but is not limited to, raising funds for specific supplies, professional development, equipment, and/or innovative materials to enhance classroom and teacher support. The group also can hold events for family workshops and services in addition to fundraising events. All events must have printing collateral approved by the board.

Family Fundraising Benchmarks

The saying “it takes a village” holds true at Abi’s Place. The only way we are able to continue the great work we do is through fundraising as a group. It takes much more than tuition to run Abi’s Place and every family’s participation in school fundraising is vital. Each family is responsible for raising \$2500.00 in the Fall and \$2500.00 in the Spring, which goes directly to Abi’s Place. These benchmarks can be accomplished in numerous ways....i.e. donated items, events, matching programs, bingo.

Parent Fundraising for a Specific Child

All fundraising events initiated by a parent for the sole benefit of their own child’s tuition and/or therapy services will not be tracked or accounted for by Abi’s Place. These events must be in the name of the child, family, or trust rather than Abi’s Place. Please remember these funds are considered program services and not donations. Therefore money raised under these conditions cannot and should not be advertised as tax-deductible donations. Funds received must be payable to the parents, or to a trust account of the child. Next, the family or trust protector can allocate funds for these services to Abi’s Place. The organization cannot be responsible for tracking and accounting large number of payments, excess of 25 or more, from these events directly earmarked for one student. Bookkeeping for Abi’s Place is done on a volunteer basis and is not equipped with the time or software needed for this type of accounting.

Donations

Car Donations

Abi’s Place will require a clean title to the vehicle, and cannot accept a vehicle that has a lien. The title must be signed over to the organization as the new owner.

Real Estate Donations

Gifts of real estate should be reviewed by an organization's board of directors or gift acceptance committee before acceptance.

No Donation Policy

As part of the gift acceptance policy, our organization may elect to refuse gifts of cash, securities, real estate or other items of value if it believes that such gifts are incompatible with the mission of the organization, conflict with its core values or would create a financial, administrative or programmatic burden.

Closely Held Securities and Publicly Traded Securities

A qualified appraiser must determine the fair market value of the securities. The organization will explore methods of immediate liquidation of the securities through redemption or sale before accepting the gift

Online Donations

Abi's Place is registered as a non-profit organization on www.igive.com. When you do your online shopping, please go through "iGive" and donations are made directly to Abi's Place for each purchase. Most online vendors are registered here such as...amazon, Gap, retail stores, and many others.

Volunteering and Observation

Family volunteering and observations are always welcome. Parents, families, and outside specialists are welcome to sit in and observe or participate in our activities. While we do have an open door policy, please make arrangements with the school director to ensure you are observing your child at the best time possible.

Overview of Parent Handbook

Dear Parents,

The following is an overview of our Parent Contract. Please review the policies, sign and return the next 2 pages. Just remember, in order to continue to offer our high-quality services at such a reasonable price, we need to work as a team.

1. *Families are required to participate in school fundraising activities and meeting certain benchmarks. You are also encouraged to organize additional activities on your own to raise funds which will be credited toward your child's tuition.*
2. *Therapy services are separate from the day program.*
3. *The school hours at Abi's Place are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Unless alternative arrangements have been made in advance, there will be a fee of \$1.00 per minute paid to the school for every late pick-up after the first three incidents. Late pick-ups require the school to pay staff members to stay later and monitor your children.*
4. *Parent collaboration is imperative if our children are going to make educational and therapeutic gains. As you know, we target functional life skills that must be practiced in a variety of environments for our children to gain independence. If you have any questions, please feel free to ask our therapists and implementers. If activities are recommended to practice at home, please be sure to follow-through. We are here to provide you with as much support as you need, but we will also need your support in maximizing your child's potential.*
5. *If your child appears unusually lethargic, has a runny nose, cough, fever, rash, or has vomited within the last 24 hours, you must keep them at him/her home until health improves. If your child was sent home from school due to a rash or fever, he or she must also have a doctor's note to return to school. This new policy is to help protect our children who have compromised immune systems and have difficulty fighting even the smallest cold.*
6. *Please send an ice pack in your child's lunch box along with pre-cut food. We are able to heat food, but we are unable to prepare food.*
7. *Tuition payments are due according to the tuition payment schedule. If a payment is five (5) days late, a \$25 per day late fee will be incurred.*
8. *A credit card is required to be on file in the school office.*

Parent's Signature of Understanding

This Parent Handbook was created to promote an understanding of the policies and procedures at Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place.

Please remove this page, sign it, and return it to Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place school office. It will be added to your child's permanent file. Your signature means that you have received this Parent Handbook and understand the policies and procedures of Zimmerman School House dba Abi's Place.

- *I/We have read the Parents' Handbook and understand the policies set forth.*
- *I/We also understand that addendum(s) may be added when necessary, and we will be notified of the changes in writing.*

Printed Name

Parent Signature **Date**

Printed Name

Parent Signature **Date**

Printed Name

Director Signature **Date**