



BLESSINGS

DECEMBER 2020



Recognizing Children's Gifts
Behavioral Health Network

rcghealthnetwork.com

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WHAT'S NEW AT RCG

Welcome to the RCG Team:

- Taylor Tindell-Returning to RCG
- Precious Rowe
- Alicia Dowdy

Look who is celebrating a birthday in December:

- Raven
- Eric
- Roger
- Bria
- Lydia
- Timothy
- Marian
- Christen
- Sarah
- Chloe
- LaDonna

Happy RCG-versary to:

1 year

- 12/2 - Maria Razo Barron
- 12/18 - Jennifer Fofi

2 years

- 12/13 - Leo Rodriguez

4 years

- 12/12 - Nikki Clowser
- 12/12 - Meara Kelley
- 12/12 - Norma Robinson

CARE Team

Our RCG Team, Families, and Clients are a Blessing!

Yes, we have approached the most wonderful time of the year, the time to share with family and friends. We are aware of the unlikely stress and pressure the world brings during the holidays, especially this year. As your CARE Team, we know that the highest form of being blessed is to be a blessing to others. You may be pleasantly surprised that being a blessing is not always tied to something monetary or substance.

Our team members have enjoyed the amazing feedback and comments clients and families have been sending. You can send your feedback to the admin@rcghealthnetwork.com, email as well as clicking the [link in at the bottom signature block of our email](#). Did you know you can also share your experiences by posting a google review? You have tons of ways to share, so keep them coming in!

We are looking ahead and believing that 2021 will be a year of hope, unity, and filled with good health for all.

Please enjoy this holiday season with your family while staying safe-physically distant but remain socially connected.

RCG's CARE team continues to CARE by staying Committed to Assisting our team and families with their needs while providing Realistic Expectations.

- LaDonna Branson, Supervisor of Administrative Services
- Leo Rodriguez, Operations Analyst
- Angel Williams - Administrative Specialist



CARE TEAM

Phone: 804-897-1753 option 9 Fax: 888-857-8088
careteam@rcghealthnetwork.com

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

Family Engagement-The Gift of Family and Friends Is A Blessing

As we approach the holiday season and prepare to celebrate with family and friends let us reflect on the gift and presence of those who are in our lives. This is the last month of 2020 and this year has gone by very quickly. There have been so many different emotions and circumstances for families all over the world and right in our very community. But we have much to appreciate and be thankful for at this moment!

I hope each of your families will still be able to celebrate with your close friends and family whether it's with a phone call, face-to-face visit while social distancing, FaceTime, Zoom or by driving by their homes to wave and smile. Please be safe!



jbrown@rcgstateservices.com

Jamilya Brown BS,
Family Engagement Coordinator

WHO DO I CONTACT? WHEN DO I CONTACT?



- **RCG**-if you have recently moved (to update your contact information; including phone and email address, doctor changes, medication changes/updates, and if your child's insurance has recently changed. We want to ensure services continue and we have the correct method to communicate with your family.
- **Social Security Administration**-800-772-1213 (be sure to contact your local SSA if you move, any updates regarding medical diagnosis, or changes in income). If your child is currently receiving SSI Disability Benefits.
- **Department of Medical Assistance**-To apply for Medicaid (click link). Update your mailing address and contact information any time it changes.
- **Insurance Carrier**-Any time you move or contact information changes.
- **Medicaid Waivers**-Contact your local Community Service Board for your county list below. Be sure to reach out to your child's Support Coordinator on a monthly basis if your child is currently on the waiting list or receiving services through either the DD, IFSP, and or the CCC Plus waiver. Please keep that line of communication open to ensure services continue and your family has access to services and support. Please remember to update your CSB if you move, or if your contact information changes, etc.
 - Chesterfield County-(Chesterfield Mental Health Support Services (click link))
 - Henrico County-(Henrico Area Mental Health & Developmental Services)
 - Richmond City-(Richmond Behavioral Health Authority)
 - Hanover County-(Hanover Community Services)



FAMILY FUN ACTIVITIES FOR THE HOLIDAYS!

1. Boost your family's well-being by making a craft or ornament from nature!
2. Decorate gingerbread houses (step away and let your kid do it all by themselves!)
3. Take a drive to see Christmas lights and decorations.
4. Make Christmas Popcorn ([click here](#))
5. Practice Mindfulness Activities ([click here](#))
6. Have a holiday movie binge-a-thon





LET'S HEAR FROM THE
CLINICAL
TEAM

Training/Assessment - Early Childhood - School Age - Life Prep - Speech - OT



Training & Assessment



The Gift of Mentorship

In the field of ABA or healthcare in general, mentorship and training of new staff is critical to a company's growth and success. Just like a new nurse or physician needs hand-on experience to be successful, so do our behavior technicians. At RCG we provide a comprehensive training package that includes a mentor therapists' role. These individuals help provide in-person, hands-on training to new employees. This training plays an integral role in shaping new employees' knowledge and understanding of ABA!

Having worked in this field for a few years, oftentimes you notice that it takes a lot of training over an extended period to feel comfortable working with this population, especially when it comes to challenging behaviors. That is why we provide the "gift of mentorship" and created a mentor therapist role.

Mentorship improves staff knowledge and helps new employees feel comfortable. It also provides a bridge for new employees to feel included and meet current staff members. Mentorship helps provide a sense of belonging within a company and decreases turnover in a field strained by high turnover and burnout of employees.

Our mentors provide initial training throughout our onboarding process and will typically work with a new employee for their first full month. They review a list of competencies with a new employee, subsequently checking off skills once mastery is accomplished. We also utilize mentors if current staff members need a refresher, extra support, or a lapse in services occurs-they can do it all!

If you are new to the RCG family or a longtime member, know that our mentor therapists will be there to support you and your child's therapist and help make the most out of your ABA experience with us!



Jamie Melhorn, RN, RBT
Onboarding Coordinator

Early Childhood



The Gift of Early Intervention

The Early Education Program is a gift that I am honored to be a part of each day. Our program specializes in the facilitation of learning goals for young children before they reach school age. Parents who seek out our services at an early age can begin to see the development of their young child and observe as their skills are maintained as they begin to grow. On a daily basis I come into contact with parents who are reaching out for assistance on how to help their young ones develop the appropriate skill set to begin living a rewarding childhood. We work with parents on teaching their children on making eye contact, gaining attention, parallel play with other children, and following directions. Being able to talk with these parents, hear their concerns, and then begin to develop age appropriate goals for their children is a reward that drives me each day. Witnessing a young child go from only interacting with themselves to begin seeking interaction from their parents, is exactly why I worked so hard to gain a position within this field.

The Early Intervention Program has many gifts that we are proud to provide to each client. Young children within our program receive interventions such as Natural Environment Teaching, Pairing/Building Rapport, Functional Communication skills, and Behavior Modification Interventions. I am personally most excited about implementing Behavioral Modification skills. These interventions range from planned ignoring, redirecting inappropriate behaviors, differential reinforcement, and waiting strategies. While these interventions are not usually the easiest to implement, they provide many rewarding consequences when used by staff and each child's caregiver.

When referring to behavioral modifications, a variety of challenging behaviors are focused on. Challenging behavior such as tantrumming, aggression, property misuse, and elopements are all behaviors we would like to see our children decrease. In order to take on such difficult behaviors, it is important for our program to understand why the child is displaying them in the first place. Once we are able to understand why the child is 'upset', we can then begin to implement interventions that will assist in decreasing the severity and likelihood of them continuing. There may be times, when as a supervisor, therapist, and parent you are required to ignore a child crying/whining due to wanting to a preferred item. During this time, it can be uncomfortable to witness the child in a 'frustrated' state. Our goal is to stop acknowledging the whining and replace it with something more appropriate for the child. Instead of having them cry for a piece of candy, we are excited to teach them how to say the word, sign the word, or even choose it from an array of pictures! In these times, it is important to remember the long-term goal we have for our learners. When we can focus not on their crying, but the fact that we would like for them to speak instead, we can begin to implement our interventions easier; knowing that the temporary uncomfortableness will be outweighed by the long-term communication success of the child. Each day I work within the program to help children lead the most successful lives possible. With the holidays right around the corner, it is important to remember life's gifts. The Early Education Program at RCG is one of my personal favorites!

Lydia McCormick, BCaBA LABA
Training Supervisor



School Age



Family Engagement is a Blessing

Family engagement is an incredible blessing, and such an important part of effective ABA Therapy. Where do I even begin to touch on what a beautiful blessing family engagement is for us here at RCG? Let's talk about just a few reasons that highlight the impact of family engagement:

Family engagement fosters a therapeutic relationship:

Throughout the rigorous process of intake, completing a Functional Behavior Assessment, and completing other various assessments to begin targeting goals in ABA Therapy it may seem like we clinicians have a game plan set into place for your child's therapy. While we may have suggestions, strategies, and interventions in mind for your child we rely on family communication to provide the best possible services. Family engagement helps us all understand that we are working together as a team to promote success for your child! There are some things that, well you know, parents just know best about their child- regardless of the letters after a clinician's name. We thrive off of this collaboration to have a teamlike relationship as we work towards your child's ABA goals!

Promotes lasting, meaningful behavioral outcomes: Research is increasingly consistent in finding that higher amounts of family engagement yields an improved child outcome. Though sometimes I wish behavior functioned more like a computer so when something is fixed "voila!", it's fixed! However, behavior is more complicated than that, right?

Even if a behavior may be "fixed" by changing for the better in one setting, that doesn't necessarily mean it won't carry over to the next setting (have you ever wondered why your kids are so good at the house, and then the second you take them out in public they act up? Or the other way around?...you're not alone!).

School Age, cont'd

Since behavior is ever-changing, it relies on involvement from the long term support system for that individual. Our goal is to work ourselves out a job! The hope is for you to become just as confident and knowledgeable about implementing behavioral strategies as we are with your child- but with even more of a leg up, cause you're the parent!

Helps assure you, the family, is getting what you want out of therapy: Every family, parent, caregiver, and child are unique- and that is a beautiful thing! At RCG we hope to provide unique, individualized treatment for every child that walks into our building. Who better to collaborate with than the families themselves to help ensure that we are creating a uniquely impactful treatment plan for the child?

As clinicians we foster a relationship with your child that teaches us about your child's likes, dislikes, and other individual differences. However, nearly every time I discuss a curriculum or treatment plan with parents I learn so much I wouldn't have otherwise known. This helps clinicians create curriculum goals that target important areas in your child's home environment (I may not know that brushing teeth or getting ready for school is a struggle!). This open collaboration through family engagement is a huge blessing to clinicians, but also for our families to see the outcome they hope for from ABA therapy!



Eleni Meister, MS, BCBA, LBA
Clinical Supervisor



Life Prep



Collaboration Benefits Us All

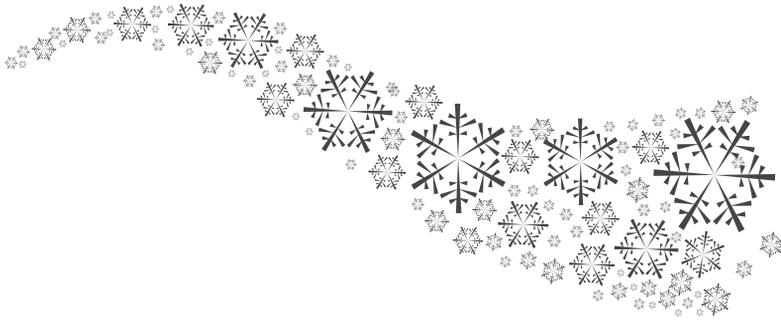
There are so many benefits of collaborating with other professionals who provide services to an individual with Autism. By meeting and collaborating with other professionals, it helps us to broaden our perspectives and be flexible on how to best support the individual while continuing to stay within our fields of expertise.

Most importantly, every individual we serve has specific goals that are individualized to fit their needs. By collaborating with the other professionals and working together, not only are we able to increase our knowledge about the individual, we are able to combine all of our skills from our respective fields and reach our original goal: Support the individual and their family in achieving meaningful outcomes. Teamwork really does make the dreamwork!



Tara Lamm, BA, BCaBA, LABA
Life Prep Clinical Supervisor





Speech Language Action Tip

The gift of Interprofessional Practice

Being part of a team is one of the greatest gifts I can imagine as a professional. It is so amazing to watch ideas grow and change as more team members are inspired to express their input. As a speech-language pathologist, I have had the opportunity to learn about the importance of interprofessional practice (IPP), also known as interprofessional collaborative practice, through the American Speech-language-Hearing Association (ASHA). Providing services through this model welcomes the expertise of multiple service providers from different professional backgrounds providing comprehensive services by working with individuals and their families, caregivers, and communities in order to deliver the highest quality care across settings.

In our current reality of separation and isolation, it is a comfort to know that we can still connect and work together as a team even in a virtual environment. Working in a virtual setting requires a different type of communication, with a greater focus on elaborating what is happening behind the screen. We can continue to share information about what we observe during sessions to other members of the team in order to provide supports where our clients need them. Let this be a reminder to share your thoughts, observations and questions with all members of your team whether you are a parent, caregiver, or service provider. Working within this model may seem overwhelming to parents and caregivers, but it is important to understand that it is the parents and caregivers who are able to provide professional experience in what it is like to live with and constantly interact with the client - this perspective is invaluable!

Interprofessional collaborative practice is alive and well at RCG and it's something we strive to continue to grow and develop. We are excited to work in teams that can include the professional knowledge of applied behavior analysis, speech-language therapy, and occupational therapy. When combined with parents and caregivers, our interprofessional team members have the opportunity to see our clients and their progress in a different way. These different perspectives can align and create a path forward that paves the way for continued progress. We all benefit by working together and sharing our individual professional gifts in order to fully recognize the gifts in our clients.

If you are interested in learning more about this model of service delivery, please explore these websites:

[Interprofessional Practice in Occupational Therapy](#)

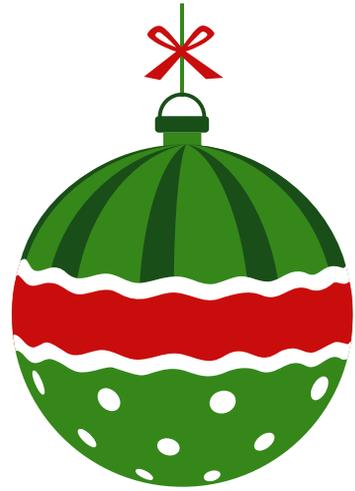
[Interprofessional Practice in Speech-Language Therapy](#)

[Interprofessional Practice in ABA, Collaboration with SLP](#)

Sarah Shreckhise, MS CCC-SLP, BCBA, LBA
Lead Speech-Language Pathologist



Occupational Therapy



The Gift of Play

The job title of occupational therapist can be confusing, often people believe that occupational therapy is meant to help people find jobs or to return to work. While this may be the case in some settings this doesn't apply with pediatric clients. Occupational therapy became a profession in the early 1900s and the term occupation refers to “everyday activities that people do as individuals, in families and with communities to occupy time and bring meaning and purpose to life.”

An everyday occupation of a young child should be play. Play is necessary because it helps develop foundational social, motor, and sequencing skills that can be used in other activities of daily living (such as academic learning.) Play should be both structured and unstructured to assist in developing attention, problem solving, and flexibility . Often I have found that my clients are more willing to engage in skill building activities when it is presented as play. I emphasize interaction between myself and my client through a shared activity to build communication and social skills. More information about the benefits of play and play milestones can be found in the link below.

Reference: [Pathways.org](https://www.pathways.org)



Lindsey Olsen, MOT
Occupational Therapist





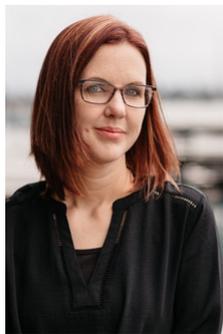
To allow our team members to spend time with their families this holiday season, our offices will be closed:

- Christmas Eve, Dec 24th
- Christmas Day, Dec 25th
- New Years Day, Jan 1st

We hope you have an enjoyable holiday season filled with many **BLESSINGS**.

Behind the newsletter

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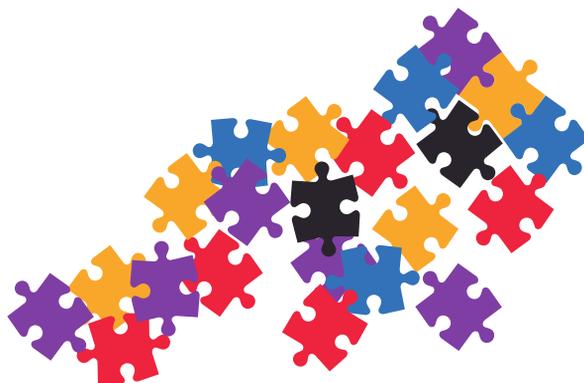
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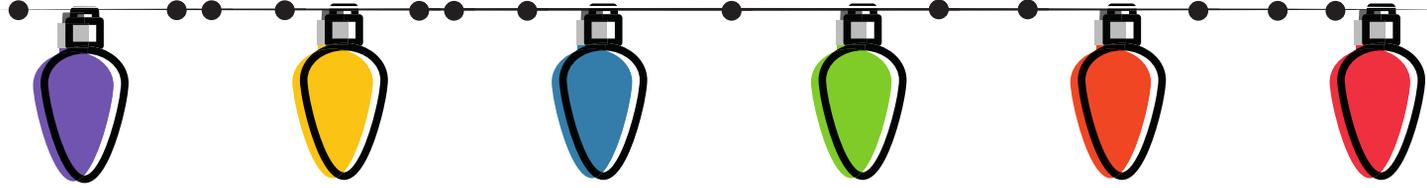
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