



**SEPTEMBER 2020 NEWSLETTER**

# **BACK TO SCHOOL**

[rcghealthnetwork.com](http://rcghealthnetwork.com)



# **IN THIS ISSUE:**

- What's new at RCG?
- Team Member Spotlight
- A note from the CARE Team
- Let's hear from the Clinical Team
- RCG Observed Holiday: Labor Day



WHAT'S



AT RCG

### **Team Member Birthdays**

9/1 Aaron Kendrick  
9/13 Grover Thrower  
9/15 Nikki Clowser  
9/17 Rebekah Brown  
9/21 Brandon Taylor  
9/22 Savannah Mann  
9/25 Kara Herring  
9/29 Hannah Buchanan  
9/30 Mary Wells

### **Team Member Anniversaries**

#### **1 year**

- 9/16 Valerie Dobyns
- 9/16 Kevin Loving
- 9/30 Lakendra Elliott
- 9/30 William Ruffin

#### **2 years**

- 9/5 Zachary Lewis
- 9/10 Erin Jones

#### **3 years**

- 9/5 Brittany Dugas
- 9/11 Tiara Gordon
- 9/20 Emily Nardi

#### **4 years**

- 9/20 Chloe Bailey
- 9/29 Megan Ponder

#### **5 years**

- 9/8 Jamie Melhorn

#### **8 years**

- 9/23 Stephanie Johnson

### **New Team Members**

Maya Wright  
Laura Danial  
Natasha Miller  
Savannah Mann  
Olivia Wiloughby  
Lindsey Olsen  
Cydney Koger  
Raven Carter  
Payton Palmerton  
Abigail Shoun  
Shanice Benn  
Kiara Williams  
Dana Sheehy  
Yisela Vaquez-Perez  
Kristen Houghton  
Aman Shelka

### **New Job Titles & Roles**

- Angel Williams - Administrative Specialist
- Jamilya Brown - Family Engagement Coordinator
- Mari Loving - Billing Compliance Coordinator
- Katie Albaugh - Senior Accounts Receivable Specialist
- Leslie Fogg - Accounts Receivable Specialist

**CELEBRATE  
EVERYTHING**

RCG TEAM MEMBER  
SPOTLIGHT

*Emily  
Nardi*



**Q: How long have you been at RCG?**

A: I have been with RCG for 3 years on September 20th!

**Q: What is your favorite memory from elementary school?**

A: My favorite memory from elementary school was having a gingerbread man hunt in Kindergarten. The whole class decorated a gingerbread man, then the teacher went to bake it. She set it up so that it looked like the gingerbread man had run away, just like in the story. We searched the whole school finding clues along the way. I was the one who found him in the pretend oven in our classroom! Back then, I was incredibly scared, because I was convinced he was real by the end of the hunt. I refused to eat him! I laugh at the memory now.

**Q: What motivates you to stay positive?**

A: My response to what motivates me to stay positive is a bit heavy. I have found that in 2020, my life has been especially overwhelming with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as experiences in my personal life. Something that motivates me to stay positive is recalling my strength and my dedication to myself and my work. I'd like to offer encouragement to co-workers, clients, and families with the following quote, "The one who falls and gets up is so much stronger than the one who never fell." -Roy T. Bennett.



A NOTE FROM THE RCG

# CARE Team



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



Jamilya Brown  
Family Involvement Coordinator

We know we are all about to embrace the virtual world soon with clients and our own kids. RCG's CARE team continues to CARE by staying Committed to Assisting our team and families with their needs while providing Realistic Expectations.

We are grateful for your flexibility during this delicate time. We encourage you to stay focused and dedicated to your passions and purposes and we will continue to provide helpful resources as we FLEX Forward with CARE.

You can expect to see survey's in the coming weeks to help us better support you. We ask that you please fill those out as they are vital to ensuring we have the most accurate information.

Please feel free to reach out to [careteam@rcghealthnetwork.com](mailto:careteam@rcghealthnetwork.com) with any questions you may have.

Here are some resources for both home and work:

[Student & Parent Tutorials](#)

[Teacher Tutorials](#)

Please remember that we are available to help wherever we can.

## Your CARE Team

**Jamilya Brown** has been with RCG for 4 years, most recently serving as School Prep Operations Coordinator.

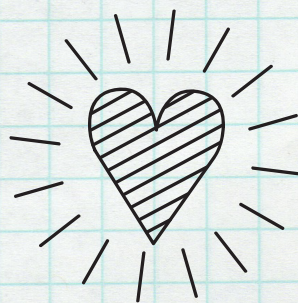
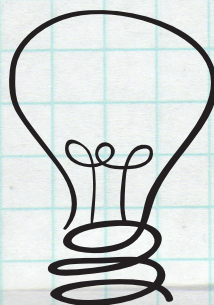
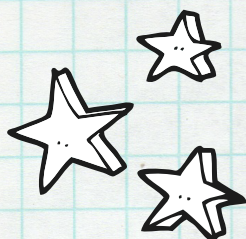
She has already been a vital part of helping new families feel welcome and informed but we are excited to announce her new role of **Family Involvement Coordinator**.

This role was created to provide families at RCG with resources related to advocacy, goal setting, and general support, and also encourages enhanced parental involvement to RCG clients and families.

Jamilya will provide training, support, and resources to RCG Team Members related to family engagement.

She will have an intricate role in building a community presence for the organization, establish and maintain relationships within the community, and generate referrals for services offered. She will partner with referral sources to grow agency census and provide excellent care.

LET'S HEAR FROM THE  
*clinical team*



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

# training/assessment

Written by: Courtney Bise, M.Ed., BCBA, LBA  
Training and Professional Development Senior Manager

Salutations, parents and families! Before digging into the return to “school,” I’d like to take a minute to commend all of you. It has been a wild few months and in talking to some of you and my fellow RCGer’s, I have seen so much creativity, support, humor, highs and lows, and sheer determination and grit. We have all made it this far, and that deserves some recognition! Regardless of what your school situation is looking like, please know that we are here to support you all and help you navigate this uncharted territory.

For those of you whose children will be attending school completely virtually, check out this article below for further ideas about setting up a designated space, a schedule, and what materials to get. Alley Hart, a Maryland public school teacher, lays out some fantastic (and relatively simple) ideas for setting up a learning environment for your child.

ARTICLE: [Distance Learning Ideas](#)

Instagram Accounts:

@alleyhart

@teachfromthehart



Another way to encourage positivity is to give positive praise ANYTIME you see your child doing something well (working hard, following directions, staying focused, using kind words, using manners, having a calm body, etc.). Some children require tangible stickers or reusable charts to help them visualize this positivity (if you have questions about this, message me), but most children will be satisfied with a simple compliment from someone they love. Encourage them. Tell them you are proud of them. Smile at them. It makes a difference!

For those of you with children returning to school physically:

[THIS](#) is a great article about those with IEP’s.

First steps are requesting an IEP meeting and addressing what additional services might be needed based on what has occurred since school closures in March.

In the article, Denise Marshall states: “If some services have to be modified due to the coronavirus — agreeing to two days a week of virtual instruction, for example — details about that arrangement should be included in an addendum to the IEP along with a date or juncture at which the adjustment will be reviewed again.”

Another consideration for IEP teams is how school closures in the spring affected the student.

“If students were not provided services, if there was a regression and/or failure to make progress, then we should be looking at what additional services might be needed,” Marshall said.

The Center for Disease Control has published a great checklist that can be found [here](#).

It includes tips for handling in person classes, talking to your child about the coronavirus and precautions, planning for possible school closures, masks, mental health and social-emotional well being. There is also a whole section for virtual learning.

Regardless of what school scenario you and your family are facing, we are happy to identify supports and resources to navigate this school year. Check in with your therapist and supervisor with any questions or concerns you have, and please let us know what other resources would be helpful at this time.

# early childhood



## Getting Started with the IEP Process

Written by: Rebekah Brown, BCaBA, LABA  
Clinical Supervisor II

It's never too early to begin researching and looking into resources for starting your child's initial IEP process before entering school. Here are some helpful tips as well as an overview of the initial IEP process via Autism Speaks!

### The IEP timeline:

#### 1 - Request Evaluation to Determine Eligibility

This is an important first step in the IEP process. Your child's school district may request an evaluation before you do, however, it is recommended that you reach out to the school system first, when possible. You will be required to provide written consent to begin the evaluation process, and the school must let you know in advance so you are aware of the testing and observation steps your child will undergo.

#### 2 - Prepare for Evaluation

It is important to remember that you have the right to suggest changes to the evaluation plan if you feel your child should undergo additional testing. You may also wish to meet with your child's evaluator prior to the testing and observation, to get additional information on the tests that will be conducted.

#### 3 - The Evaluation

The initial evaluation must be completed within 60 days of the school receiving your written consent.

#### 4 - Prepare for Initial IEP Meeting

Some things that would be helpful to prepare for the IEP meeting include:

1. Gather and list out your child's strengths and challenges.
2. Do research regarding programs, placement options, and supplemental aids that may be appropriate for your child's needs.
3. Reach out! Talk to and connect with other parents who have children who have an IEP. It can be helpful to learn from other parents who have been through the process, even though each student is unique in their needs.
4. Develop and determine goals that you would feel to be appropriate for their school year, as well as their future. Write out and jot down some supports that you would feel would help aid your child in meeting these goals.
5. You know your child the best! Be clear with the team on what you feel would be appropriate for your child, while at the same time being respectful of the opinions and determinations of the school professionals.

#### 5 - Initial IEP Meeting

At the IEP meeting, the IEP team will review your child's current performance at school, their educational goals, and services and supports the school has put into place to ensure these goals are met. Be sure to bring your prepared notes and talking points as it can definitely be helpful when trying to organize your thoughts during the meeting. You may also invite additional parties to the IEP meeting, such as a close friend, doctor, or ABA Therapist who knows the child well and can provide helpful information to the team.

#### 6 - Review and Modify IEP, Monitor IEP, or Dispute IEP

Your child's IEP will be put into writing, and any additional meetings to make changes, updates, etc. will be scheduled. When the IEP is complete and all parties are comfortable and agree with what was prepared, it will be signed and put into action! It is important to remember that you have the option to request modifications and updates to the IEP at any point in your child's school year.

#### 7 - Annual IEP Meeting/Update

The IEP team should meet annually to review and make updates!

For more helpful tips, videos, and resources, visit: <https://docs.autismspeaks.org/iep/getting-an-iep/>



# school age



## Back to School Tips

Written by: Hannah Buchanan, M.A., BCBA, LBA  
Clinical Supervisor II

- Prepare your child(ren) for what to expect with the transition back to school. If you can, talk to them about what to expect prior to the transition. Make sure to give me multiple reminders of the upcoming change. It may be helpful to use visuals or even do a mock run through of what the day may look like. If possible, try to set up a meet and greet with the new teacher or people at the school that your child(ren) may interact with.
  - Create and reinforce the new school routine. Again, you may want to practice this prior to the routine actually starting. Make sure to reinforce appropriate behaviors. Visuals may be helpful for creating and maintaining the routine.
    - Visual supports may include: first/then boards, visual schedules, pictures, sticker charts/token boards, rules, etc.
  - Review and/or update your child's IEP (Individualized Education Plan). Remember, you know your child(ren) best and you are their best advocate! If you have questions, concerns, or want to make updates to the IEP, you can request an IEP meeting at any time.
- \* Reminder: The RCG Clinical Team can collaborate with the school team by:
- sharing treatment plans
  - attending meetings
  - and/or conducting school observations.

Additional Resources:

[Autism Society of Central VA Covid-19 Resource List](#)

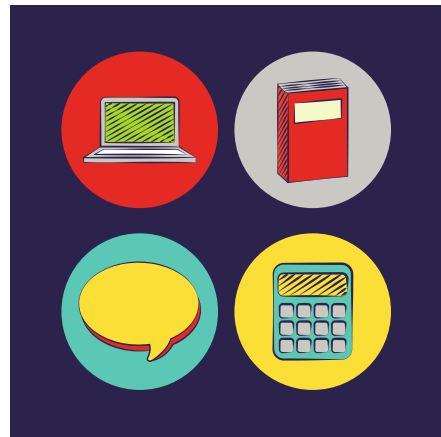
[Autism Speaks Helpful Information](#)



# life prep

## Tips for Balancing Schooling in a Home Environment

Written by: Jamie Bass, M. Ed., BCBA, LBA  
Life Prep Senior Clinical Supervisor



For most of us, at least some of our kid's education is going to happen in the home environment this fall. This is a new experience for most of us and can feel overwhelming to parents. However, you can help set your child up for success by proactively creating a virtual learning space for them. Below are tips on making this space personalized to your child while also being an enriching environment for learning.

- **Set a Routine:** It's very tempting to stay in our pajamas all day when working from home, but it sets the day off on the wrong foot (as many of us may have already discovered). Treat virtual instruction the same as if you were getting on the bus that day - get up at the same time, put on school clothes and eat breakfast before classes start. This will also make transitioning to in-person schooling easier.
- **Choosing a space:** Having an area to learn separate from where you play will be crucial this fall. This doesn't mean you have to buy all new furniture or even have a dedicated room for virtual learning. The space could be a side table in the corner of the living room or one half of the dining table. However, when it is time for class to start, this space can only be used for school. If it is a shared space, consider a nice pair of headphones that are comfortable enough to wear for several hours. Try to not have the space move from day to day, which will also help reinforce setting a routine.
- **Personalize the space:** Work with your kid to make the space their own. Help them organize the space, but let them lead. Add a poster of their favorite game on the wall, place their favorite action figures on the ledge, and so on. Of course, you will want to pick items that aren't too distracting, but it'll be nice having Captain America cheering you on throughout the day. The more the space is theirs, the more buy-in you will get.
- **Have fidget items available:** This is so important! Have a bin nearby with all kinds of fidget items - putty, stress balls, fidget cubes, koosh balls, tangle toys and so on. There are so many items that can be effective fidgets. Consider adding a whiteboard and markers, which is helpful for school work and for doodling when feeling restless.





## Speech Language Action Tip

### Tips for Going "Back to School"

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

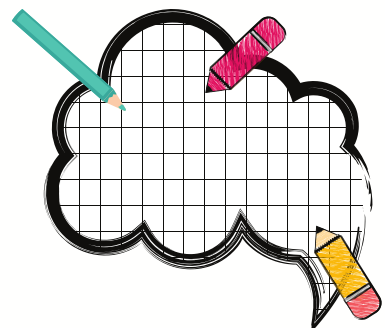
This year, going "back to school" is different than it has ever been before. Given the many uncertainties with virtual learning, the American Speech-Language Association (ASHA) is offering advice for parents of the more than 1 million U.S. children who receive school-based treatment for speech and language disorders to help their children perform and adjust to new virtual and modified in-person learning environments. This article outlines the many identified challenges and gives ideas on how parents can help.

#### [How Parents Can Help Children With Speech and Language Disorders in Virtual and Modified In-Person Classroom Settings](#)

Additionally for those receiving or considering virtual treatment sessions, this infographic reviews some excellent basic considerations:

1. Troubleshoot technology ahead of time.
2. Find a dedicated quiet spot to participate in the session.
3. Model flexibility for your child. Be patient with progress.
4. Keep the lines of communication open with your child's SLP.

And most importantly, **be sure to ask questions if you have them!** Asking questions keeps you involved in the treatment and makes you better at supporting the session and generalizing the skills at home. If you have ideas to share about making the session more effective for your child, please share them with the therapist in your child's virtual session.



# occupational therapy



SERVICE AT RCG

We have added **Occupational Therapy** to the services we provide.

Occupational Therapy services support the development of independence in daily living. OT is offered as a stand alone service or in conjunction with other services.

## **What does occupational therapy address?**

Occupational therapists work with clients and their families to develop goals to improve skills used in daily life. Areas that are evaluated include self care, feeding/eating, sensory processing, cognitive skills, play skills, and motor skills.

## **What is sensory processing?**

Sensory processing refers to the way the brain receives messages from the senses (touch, sight, smell, etc.) and turns them into responses. If there is sensory dysfunction, a person will respond inappropriately to common sensory stimuli. This can lead to difficulties engaging in daily activities such as eating, dressing, grooming, and playing.

## **How will an occupational therapist address sensory processing?**

An occupational therapist will work with the family and client to establish realistic methods to improve sensory processing. This could include a program of sensory activities, environmental accommodations, and/or gradual desensitization.

Although we specialize in serving children with autism and developmental differences, our occupational therapy team can provide services to children, adolescents, and young adults with many different needs and diagnoses.



**Lindsey Olsen** received her Master's in occupational therapy from Loma Linda University in 2014. Prior to working with RCG, Lindsey has worked in an ABA clinic, schools, early intervention, and outpatient clinics. Lindsey has worked one-on-one with children and adolescents with a wide range of disabilities and/or delays, including rare genetic disorders, orthopedic impairments, Down Syndrome, ADHD, Sensory Processing Disorder, and Autism Spectrum Disorder. She has received training in sensory integration, the Sequential Oral Sensory approach to feeding, and Handwriting without Tears. Lindsey's favorite aspect of being a part of the RCG behavioral health network is the value that is placed on collaboration between therapists and the family.

MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2020



IN OBSERVANCE OF LABOR DAY, OUR FACILITIES WILL BE CLOSED. WE WILL RESUME NORMAL BUSINESS HOURS ON TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8TH.

WE HOPE YOU HAVE A SAFE AND ENJOYABLE HOLIDAY.

