

The Vista School[®]
Educationally-Integrated Behavioral Support Program

Admission Criteria and Process

The Vista School[®] holds paramount meeting the needs of our enrolled population. To continually realize this objective, Vista seeks to enroll students fitting certain educational, behavioral, medical, and parental profiles that permit our resources to optimally benefit our students.

Program Description:

The Vista School is designed for children and adolescents living with autism who require specially designed learning environments, structured interventions, the development of socially relevant skills, the minimization of errors, increased independence of functional routines, planned generalization from the onset of treatment, the replacement of undesirable behaviors and the use of a broad-spectrum of empirically-validated behavioral procedures to facilitate skill acquisition, and behavior modification utilizing the process of Applied Behavior Analysis.

Admissions Criteria:

Referral packets received by The Vista School/EIBS must meet the following basic criteria:

- Have a (Primary) Axis I diagnosis of an Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Be between the ages of three to 21
- Be mobile
- Not require skilled nursing care
- Family accepts home-based treatment component and demonstrates a willingness to implement the home/community component under the guidance of Vista staff. Post admission, parental involvement is a consideration as part of continued stay criteria for the student
- Family must be available for multidisciplinary team meetings regarding educational planning and behavior support
- Eligible for Medical Assistance

Referral packets meeting the above basic criteria are pre-screened based on the following additional criteria:

- Students who receive services at Vista typically present with moderate-to-severe symptoms of ASD. They may display a combination of the following:
 - Significant and severe delays and deficits in communication, speech and language
 - Challenging behaviors (aggression, self-injurious behaviors, property destruction, etc.)
 - Problematic behaviors (self-stimulatory behaviors, high levels of distractibility, difficulty with changes and novelty, etc.) or behavior that causes the individual to be unavailable for learning
 - Dependence upon caregivers for activities of daily living
 - Inability to independently structure free time or independently complete simple tasks
 - Difficulty participating and/or learning new skills in a group setting
- Students further display needs in developing the following repertoires:
 - Participation in instructional conditions
 - Appropriately responding to environmental demands and stimuli
 - Controlling of aggressive/self-injurious behaviors that disrupt the environment
 - Controlling of problematic behaviors (self-stimulatory or off-task) that disrupt the environment

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- Communication skills that are used to access/accept/reject and escape items in the environment
- Communication skills that are used to request help/answer questions/solve problems
- Ability to focus on independent activities without close supervision and in absence of interfering behaviors
- Ability to react in socially acceptable ways to peers or adults within differing environments (instructional conditions, free-play, structured games, social games)
- Ability to access community environments (through lessons being taught within the actual community environment) by exhibiting “appropriate” behaviors to allow the lesson to occur
- Interacting with peers (giving/accepting of items, simple social exchanges, turn-taking)
- Responding to directions while in a group of peers

During the pre-screening review, referral packets that include the following may not be appropriate:

- Students who are diagnosed or function as having High Functioning Autism or Asperger’s Syndrome
- Students who benefit or would benefit from consistent interactions with non-disabled peers
- Students who have a documented disability linked with emotional disturbances whose manifested symptoms of the emotional disturbance overshadow autism related needs/symptoms
- Students who are extremely medically involved
- Students with parents who are unwilling to fulfill obligations related to participation in educational and behavioral program planning and follow through of clinical recommendations
- Students with parents who do not maintain Medical Assistance coverage
- Students geographically located at a distance that is prohibitive of fulfilling home programming or participation of parents in on-site meetings or activities; this distance is typically locations more than an hour traveling distance from the facility.
- Students who cannot safely participate within a classroom environment (i.e. the presence of peers sets the occasion for dangerous behaviors)
- Students who frequently or routinely require significant behavioral support (greater than 1:1)
- Students who frequently or routinely require segregated instructional environment

Screening Procedures:

Referrals to The Vista School/EIBS are received from the local education agency, typically the school district in which the child lives. Parents may submit a referral to Vista; however, school district participation is preferred. Referrals are pre-screened against admission criteria, generally within 14 school days. Following pre-screening, Vista will conduct a phone interview with the parent and school district to obtain additional information and to assess the IEP team’s consideration of a Vista placement. Information gathered from the referrals and interviews is used to score each potential student. If an opening exists for whom the referral is an appropriate candidate, an onsite screening of the student and family is scheduled. In the instance when an entire classroom is being added (i.e., a planned opening of multiple slots), Vista will accept and review referral packets through mid-April and finalize enrollment decisions by mid-May. Referral packets received beyond this date will be taken into consideration if an insufficient number of appropriate candidates complete the screening process or if any additional slots become available throughout the school year.