SAVE THE DATE!
Eden II & Genesis Foundation Golf Outing is July 22nd at Silver Lake Golf Course.
Dear Friends:

There are typically three phases to a crisis: Respond - Recover - Thrive. In March of 2020, our world as we knew it at Eden II changed in ways we simply never could have imagined. Our doors closed and our students and adult participants were left without in-person programs almost overnight. Our residences were faced with unimaginable challenges in dealing with getting sufficient PPE and learning how to care for participants with COVID. I reflect on those first few months and I can say that although it was probably the worst time of my career at Eden II, it was also the time when I felt the most pride in how the team responded. The education staff pivoted immediately to providing virtual instruction to our students. Our residential staff took on the job of healthcare workers, direct care workers, and family (as families were not allowed to visit in person).

It is almost surreal that we have been “responding” to this pandemic for two years. It has been a rollercoaster ride of changing rules and guidelines along with COVID surges and changing variants. I know for many of our participants and their families, this time was especially difficult. Testing requirements, mask-wearing, and what seemed like endless closures just added to the everyday challenges that families deal with when raising a child with autism.

It is my hope and belief that we are now in the “recover” phase. We must learn from the past two years. I tend to be that person who sees the glass as almost always half full. I try to find anything positive that may have come out of these past two years that we can use to make us even better and let us get to the “thrive” stage as fast as possible. We have learned things. We have learned that we can get through almost anything if we work as a team. We learned that a lot can actually be done using technology and in the long run, will make us more efficient and effective. We learned how to adapt as needed. We held re-imagined events, as well as outdoor and virtual fundraisers. We learned that we can count on our community in a time of crisis and make contacts and connections that will be vital to us going forward.

I know that this has been a tough couple of years. I also know that as we move forward to recovery, it will be in stages. We begin with reflection - examining what went well and what didn’t work. We will need to re-engage and ultimately recommit to our mission.

Although we have spent the last two years responding to this crisis, we have also been planning. We have been planning for growth and for innovation. I look forward to this time ahead as we move toward the recovery and thrive stages. We have a lot to do and thankfully, I believe we have the team to get it done. I hope to see so many of you in person again in the upcoming months!

Joanne Gerenser, Ph.D.
Executive Director

THE MISSION OF EDEN II PROGRAMS IS TO SUPPORT PEOPLE WITH AUTISM THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES TO ACHIEVE THEIR FULL POTENTIAL THROUGH SERVICE, SCIENCE, & PASSION.

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Associate Executive Director of Education and Adult Services

Contributors


ON THE COVER
ANTHONY CELEBRATING WORLD AUTISM MONTH.

A Message From The Executive Director
The Path to Recovery: Leading with Resolve
Eden II School for Autistic Children, Inc.  
(Formerly Eden II Programs)  
Financial Information for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2021

Statement of Activities

Revenue & Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Programs &amp; Public Support Services</td>
<td>$30,549,468</td>
<td>94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grants and Contract Services</td>
<td>1,176,213</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and Other Revenue</td>
<td>652,825</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Revenue &amp; Support</td>
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Expenses

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<tbody>
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<td>Residential Services</td>
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<td>Adult Day Habilitation Services</td>
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<td>Family Support Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Community Outreach</td>
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<tr>
<td>Management &amp; General</td>
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<td>Fundraising</td>
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<td>Total Expenses</td>
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Net Assets

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</thead>
<tbody>
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Balance Sheet

Assets

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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
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<tr>
<td>Program Services Receivables</td>
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<td>Grants and Contract Receivables</td>
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<td>Other Assets</td>
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<td>Total Assets</td>
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Liabilities & Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Amount</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Donor Restricted Net Assets</td>
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<td>Total Liabilities &amp; Net Assets</td>
<td>$32,260,171</td>
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Independent Auditors: MARKS PANETH, LLP

To receive the complete Eden II School for Autistic Children, Inc. audited financial statements, please send your request via email to: info@eden2.org.

THANK YOU

Thank you to all our donors for your tremendous generosity. Your donations are essential to our programs, and we greatly appreciate your contributions.
How to advocate for your child:

- Never stop learning about Autism and ABA. You live it each day, but your child will grow and change. Attending webinars about topics that may not seem important now might be very important in the near future. Eden II hosts a variety of webinars that are free to our staff and parents. Visit www.eden2.org/webinars for more information on upcoming webinars.

- Learn about OPWDD services. (Office for People with Developmental Disabilities). These are services outside of school hours and when your child transitions to adulthood. For contact information, please visit https://opwdd.ny.gov/

- Schedule a meeting with me and our Coordinator of OPWDD Programs & Transitional Services, Andrew Saenz! We can virtually meet anytime to discuss transitional services for your child and ask questions so that you can be better prepared for your child’s next step: jpanni@eden2.org/asaenz@eden2.org.

- When you hit a roadblock or a difficult situation with which you are not happy, it is always important to “Avoid the Blame Game.” Regardless of how you feel, blaming others does not solve anything; it creates difficulty when trying to have effective and open communication.

- Be proactive and be a problem solver. If you have a desired outcome for your child, then realize that there is a process for everything. Talk to your child’s teacher or provider and develop a plan.

- Give yourself a break! I feel like I am constantly telling parents this. You are parenting, working, taking care of everything else you need to do in a day, so it is essential that you take small moments to breathe. No one expects you to be a perfect parent/caregiver. You can only do your best.
HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INVOLVED WITH EDEN II?
I was a pre-school teacher at Rosemary Kennedy School (RKS), Nassau Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), from 1992-1996. Dr. Joanne Gerenser was a consultant to the program. Many of my students needed more intensive ABA programs and worked with Joanne and Dr. Mary McDonald. Their families hoped to open a school in Long Island like Eden II. With the help of Joanne and Mary, the families started the Genesis School in 1995. I participated in professional development activities and conferences with them during that first year. I loved the mission and the vision, and then resigned from my public-school position and began working as the Director of Inclusion at the Genesis School in 1996.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO WORK WITH INDIVIDUALS WITH AUTISM?
My first special education teacher position was at a BOCES program for students with severe and multiple disabilities. I was excessed from the job after the first year due to budgetary reasons. The only vacant position was a transfer to RKS to work with preschoolers with autism. I had no experience with this age group or with the diagnosis of autism. My students and their families taught me so much in a short period. I loved and still love everything about working with children and adults with autism and their families.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE MEMORY WHILE WORKING AT EDEN II?
Well, it’s not a memory, but it’s more of an appreciation for the relationships I developed at Eden II. I have traveled nationally and internationally to ABA and autism conferences with colleagues I have worked with for close to 3 decades. I was star-struck when I met famous researchers like Dr. Lovaas, known to many as the “father of ABA,” and influencers like Catherine Maurice, author of “Let Me Hear Your Voice: A Family’s Triumph Over Autism.”

WHAT IS THE MOST REWARDING THING ABOUT WORKING WITH OUR PARTICIPANTS?
From hearing first words to running in the first mainstream race to dance recital performances and job placements, it’s been a true blessing to be a part of the lives of my students and their families. I have close connections to all the students and families I began working with in the 90s, many of whom are still part of Eden II. My favorite part of Eden II is the lifelong commitment to all the students, families, and staff.

HOW WOULD YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY DESCRIBE YOU?
Some would say OCD – others would say organized, goal-driven, determined, and passionate.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU AREN’T WORKING AT EDEN II?
In no particular order (smile):
- Run (I’ve completed 20 full marathons and thousands of races around the country, many of which I raised money for Eden II and other autism organizations)
- Golf (It became reinforcing and less frustrating because it’s always paired with good friends, nature, and often fundraising for autism.)
- Clean (I use at least one roll of paper towels a day, go through a bottle of Windex and a can of Pledge each week!)
- And my most recent passion (which is surprising to people who <think they> know me well) is my 16-month-old Sheepdoodle Clara! She is super cuddly, playful, and energetic. She’s always willing to walk and run with me on the Boardwalk in Long Beach, where we live!
TELL ME HOW YOU FIRST GOT INVOLVED WITH EDEN II?

I’ve been a long-time supporter of Eden II Programs and have attended the organization’s fundraising events for many years before joining the development team. I transitioned from supporter to staff during the height of the pandemic in November 2020. Working collaboratively with the various Eden II departments and our Staten Island and Long Island communities throughout the pandemic has shown a deep commitment towards our organization’s mission. I feel privileged to be a part of that impact and look forward to raising funds to further our mission.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY ABOUT NONPROFIT FUNDRAISING?

Getting to know our participants, families, friends, and supporters isn’t only cultivating relationships to build donors. I enjoy meeting new people and forming genuine friendships while simultaneously sharing my experiences with Eden II Programs. By sharing my own stories and commitment to Eden II, I hope to inspire them to continue and expand their relationships with our organization.

WHAT WOULD YOU TELL SOMEONE WHO IS THINKING ABOUT GETTING INVOLVED WITH EDEN II?

Whether your involvement is donating funds, volunteering your time, offering your expertise, or working as a staff member, you’ll directly enhance someone else’s life. I’m incredibly proud of the responses I receive when I explain my role at Eden II and how our organization supports people with autism. Becoming involved with Eden II will be one of the most rewarding activities you will ever participate in, and you’ll gain more from your experience than you’ll anticipate.

WHAT HAS SURPRISED YOU MOST ABOUT WORKING WITH EDEN II?

The most surprising thing I’ve found in the past year working with Eden II has been the seamless transition. Starting during the pandemic, I met the development team through zoom, and we didn’t meet in person for several months. Even without physically being together, we were able to plan fundraising strategies, get to know each other, and truly become a team. I’ve learned so much during the past year, from the executive team’s leadership to the history of our organization to our mission-motivated decisions, and I can’t wait to see what lies ahead!

HOW WOULD YOUR FRIENDS AND FAMILY DESCRIBE YOU?

My friends and family would describe me as helpful. I’m the first to volunteer to help, and I’m relentlessly dedicated to the project or problem until the situation is solved with the best possible outcome for all involved. I think they’d also say that I’m organized and live by my to-do lists, budget book, and google calendar.

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOU AREN’T WORKING AT EDEN II?

When I’m not working at Eden II Programs, I’m volunteering to make my community a better place for my family and neighbors. I’m on several fundraising committees, including the Pride Center golf committee and the Bridge Preparatory Charter School gala committee. Additionally, I’m a member of Soroptimist International, Chamber of Commerce’s Young Professional Group, Staten Island Not for Profit Association, and the Staten Island Economic Development Corporation. I’m also a proud board member of the Lathrope Voorspuy Memorial Scholarship Fund and serve as the newly elected Board President for Staten Island Business Outreach Center. My favorite titles are mom, wife, daughter, sister, and friend. I love spending time with my daughter, Madison, my husband, John, and our rescue dog, Bailey. Our favorite thing is to take the hour-long drive from Staten Island to NJ, with a pit stop at Wawa for my favorite coffee, to visit my parents, sisters, and in-laws. Together we spend a lot of our time going to the movies, binging Netflix series, enjoying tons of Staten Island restaurants, planning vacations, and loyaly watching the Jets ever slowly rebuild their team.
COMEDY EVENT BRINGS LAUGHTER & $10,000 IN FUNDING FOR EDEN II’S GENESIS PROGRAMS

Ernie’s Auto Body, located in Hicksville, NY, recently hosted a comedy night fundraiser at the legendary Governor’s Comedy Club, with proceeds benefiting Eden II’s Genesis Programs.

Ernest Demarco, the owner of Ernie’s Auto Body, was joined by comedians Carie Karavas, Matt Burke, Eric Haft, and Amy Miller. The sold-out event raised $10,000 for the Genesis Programs for vocational education and supplies.

Dr. Mary McDonald, Associate Executive Director for Long Island Services, shared, “With this generous donation, Ernie and the family at Ernie’s Auto Body have truly impacted the lives of the participants we serve. We are beyond grateful that they chose to support our programs.”

Ernie’s Auto Body is the 4th generation family-owned & operated business with over 60 years of experience, providing 24/7 towing, auto bodywork, dent removal, painting, restoration, frame straightening, glass replacement and repair, wheel alignment, custom airbrush, and motorcycle painting to Hicksville, NY, and surrounding areas.

To learn more, visit their website at www.erniesautobodyny.com or call (516) 938-2929.

EDEN II PARENT GENEROUSLY DONATES DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC $20,000+ TO BENEFIT OF OUR DAY HABILITATION & RESIDENTIAL PROGRAMS

In 2020, Tamio Spiegel, parent of Eden II participant Miranda, decided to spread positivity during the COVID-19 pandemic, selling $20,000 in stocks to donate to Eden II to benefit our Day Habilitation and Residential programs!

Tamio shared the following on the donation, saying, “I was fortunate enough to keep working throughout the pandemic. I had some money in the stock market, which was doing well. Expenses were down since we weren’t going out, entertaining, traveling, etc. All this time, my daughter, Miranda, is at an Eden II residence, receiving great care and attention. Once I began to consider how long-term the COVID-19 situation would be, I started thinking about the impact it was going to have on Eden II and its funding sources. If I, as a parent, don’t step up, who else will? Making a substantial donation before the end of the year was an obvious thing to do.”

Tamio’s generosity did not stop there. In 2021 he made additional donations, the first in honor of Miranda’s birthday and the second in recognition of the care Miranda received immediately following September 11th, mainly by staff member Suzy Pepitone.

Tamio shared memories of those days, saying” “Miranda had already been dropped off to Staten Island (from Manhattan). The bridges closed, and uncertainty and confusion reigned. We eventually received a phone call that Miranda would stay in Staten Island, for that night, at her teacher’s house— the woman we knew as ‘Suzy Pep.’

Miranda stayed with Suzy for three days.

Tamio recalled, “Miranda staying with Suzy is something I won’t forget. Occasionally, her name even comes up in Miranda’s conversations and monologues. What Suzy and Eden II did twenty years ago is not something I take lightly or for granted. I wanted to make this donation to recognize another instance of Eden II taking care of our family and saluting the one and only Suzy Pep!”

In response to this article, Suzy shared, “I want to take a moment to say thank you for sharing your daughter with me. I have the sweetest memories of the time we spent together. We laughed and learned, and it was a privilege to watch her grow into the beautiful woman she is now.”
Eden II Programs announces the appointment of five new members of its Board of Trustees: Michael Arvanites, Janet Barsky, Denise Bianchi, Stephanie Dussel, and Brendan Lantry.

Members of Eden II’s Board of Directors are charged with bringing their unique experiences and perspectives to enhance the agency’s mission and provide diligent fiscal and programmatic oversight to the agency’s work. Eden II Programs’ Executive Director, Dr. Joanne Gerenser, shares “Our newest board members embody the spirit of community and bring talent, expertise, and energy to the table. With the support and collaboration of our board members, we will continue to grow and further Eden II’s mission to support people with autism throughout their lives to achieve their full potential.”

Michael Arvanites is a native Staten Islander, serving as Staten Island’s Trustee to the City University of New York. He is the Head Surveyor for the New York City Board of Elections. He has served as Deputy Chief of Staff for Assemblyman Eric Vitaliano, Councilman Michael McMahon, State Senator Diane Savino, and Liaison to City Council Speaker Christine Quinn. Michael provided safety, training, and advocacy to the transportation and construction industries, serving as VP of Operations for the Black Car Fund and CEO of the Safety Professionals Association. Michael, an Eagle Scout, started volunteering very early in life for On Your Mark and Eden II Programs, where his brother, Steven, is a participant and lives with autism. Michael also serves as the Red Cross Ambassador to Staten Island and is a team leader for the Annual Bread of Life Food Drive.

Janet Barsky currently serves as Senior Counsel at Locke Lord. She focuses her practice on independent contractor compliance and litigation. Janet has enhanced independent contractor compliance for over 60 companies across the country in dozens of industries, ranging from Fortune 500 companies to medium and smaller ones. As an experienced labor and employment lawyer, Janet also works on special projects involving employees, such as wage and hour, workplace harassment, and Fair Credit Reporting Act matters. Janet is Managing Editor of the Independent Contractor Misclassification and Compliance Blog, the only legal blog in the country dedicated to that subject. In addition to her work as an attorney, Janet continues to serve as a Trustee of the East Meadow Public Library and a Chair of the Cornell Alumni Admissions Ambassador Network.

Denise Bianchi has a son, Andrew, an Eden II school program graduate, who currently attends the Eden II DXT Adult Day Hab program. She has over 25-years of experience in the Investment Banking industry. For 8-years, beginning in 2008, Denise worked for AutismSpeaks as a Family Services Coordinator. She was also involved with fundraising, grants, special events, advocacy, walks, and social media. She helped create "World Autism Awareness Day" (every April 2nd) and the 'Light it Up Blue Campaign.' In 2016, she returned to investment banking and is currently an Assistant at Cantor Fitzgerald. She has been involved with Eden II's fundraising, including the annual Gala and other events. In 2017, Andrew was honored as 'Participant of the Year' for his achievements. Denise, her husband Michael, Andrew, and daughter Danielle reside in New Dorp.

Stephanie Dussel has previously served on the Eden II Board as a parent member. Her daughter, Samantha, is a graduate of the Genesis School program and currently attends the Genesis Adult Day Hab. Samantha has resided at one of the Eden II Long Island residences since 2005. Stephanie, a registered nurse, graduated from Stony Brook University, where she earned her BSN. Her nursing background includes critical care, quality management, and health care consulting. Stephanie is an employee of BKD CPAs & Advisors, where she works as a Managing Consultant in the Health Care Division. Before joining BKD, her work experience included St. Mary’s Hospital for Children and Loeb & Troper Health Care Consulting. In 1998 she joined Eden II in their endeavor to open the first residence on Long Island and actively participated in all aspects of the project until it opened in December 2005.

Brendan Lantry has spent his career serving the Staten Island community and representing clients in a variety of important legal matters. As Counsel at Menicucci Villa Cilmi PLLC, Brendan focuses primarily on civil litigation, including commercial and personal injury litigation, as well as election law matters and commercial and real estate transactions. Brendan is a former Assistant District Attorney in the Kings County District Attorney’s office. He also served as Counsel to former New York City Council Minority Leader Vincent M. Ignizio, Legislative Aide to Senator Andrew Lanza, and District Director to former Congressman Daniel M. Donovan, Jr. Brendan received a bachelor's degree from St. John’s University – Tobin College of Business and graduated with a Juris Doctor degree from St. John’s University School of Law.
WE ARE HIRING

Join our Staten Island & Long Island Families!
We are currently hiring for the following positions:

- Teaching Staff
- Psychologists
- Behavior Analysts
- QIDPs
- Registered Nurses
- Direct Support Professionals

Excellent benefits offered, including:
- Family Medical & Dental Plan
- Generous Paid Time Off
- Retirement Plan
- Employee Life Insurance
- LTD Insurance
- Flexible Spending Account
- Paid Training
- Tuition Reimbursement

Apply now at eden2.org/employment
Michael is a Vice President at J.P. Morgan in Agency Securities Finance. He joined J.P. Morgan in 2006 as a senior trader on the U.S. Fixed Income Lending Desk and manages the lending of US Corporate Securities. Michael has over 30 years of experience in the Financial Industry. Michael is very involved in advocacy and has lobbied in Washington D.C. and Albany on autism topics ranging from increasing funding for research, family services, insurance reform and adult issues. He serves as the Autism Speaks Advocacy Ambassador for New York State. He is also a Trustee of the ELIJA School which is a private school for children with autism. Michael has received the 2012 J.P. Morgan Good Works Volunteer of the Year and was recognized by President Barack Obama. He was also named the 2013 Person of the Year by the Merrick Herald for his work on lobbying to pass a law requiring companies doing business in New York State to provide autism treatment coverage. Michael, his wife Alison and their sons Michael and Nicholas live in Merrick. Nicholas attends the Genesis School.
Reinforcement of Behavior

Reinforcement of any behavior occurs when the behavior leads to results that are desirable for the individual. Reinforcement is the foundation of all teaching, and effective use of reinforcement results in the increase in desired behaviors the next time a given set of circumstances occurs. For example, if a parent tells a child to clap their hands, and the child gets tickled as a reward, if the child enjoys being tickled, the act of tickling reinforces the action of hand-clapping (makes it more likely that the child will clap his or her hands again in the future in response to being asked to “clap hands”).

Behavior analysts and learning theorists think of reinforcement as anything that occurs in response to a behavior occurring that increases the probability of the behavior occurring again in the future. Generally, desired outcomes (preferred foods or activities, escape or avoidance of non-preferred activities) are reinforcing. If politely requesting ice cream results in a parent giving a child an ice cream, polite requesting will be more likely to occur in the future.

Reinforcement is also the “force” at play in strengthening and maintaining some behaviors we would rather not see occurring (which might be dangerous, might interfere with learning, or might just be restricting access to some environments). The consequences that follow an undesirable or challenging behavior can inadvertently or unintentionally result in an increase in the probability and frequency of that challenging behavior. For example, if crying or whining results in a parent giving a child an ice cream, crying or whining will also be more likely to occur in the future.

As another example, picture a parent sitting beside their child at the kitchen table, about to try to have their child read part of a book. Upon hearing the parent request “Let’s read a few pages together”, the child suddenly grabs the book and throws it against the wall instead. If the parent walks away and does not re-attempt to engage the child in reading the book, then the parent has reinforced challenging behavior (i.e., made throwing the book against the wall more likely to occur in response to a request to read together in the future). Behavior analysts might characterize that behavior as motivated by “escape” or “avoidance; the child engaged in the act of throwing the book against the wall to escape or avoid the reading task.

Functions of Behavior

There are thought to be four main “functions” of behavior:

- Escape or avoidance of a task or unpleasant stimuli
- Access to social attention
- Access to items or activities (often called “access to tangibles” in behavioral jargon)
- Sensory stimulation (often called “non-socially mediated” in behavioral jargon)

The escape/avoidance function is often at play when the individual’s challenging behavior results in them getting out of engaging in a task they don’t enjoy, or a situation they find unpleasant. For example, it is not unusual for a child to scream in a church or a restaurant, and a parent to quickly remove the child from the setting. At that moment, if the child’s screaming has
resulted in them being given an opportunity to leave, and leaving was what the child wanted to happen, then this “escape” reinforces their challenging (in this case, screaming) behavior.

Access to attention is a very common function of behavior, both positive/adaptive behaviors, and challenging behaviors. Many challenging behaviors, including behaviors that bring attention from their peers, will become more prominent as long as the child is receiving attention for those behaviors (either consistently, or just intermittently). It’s important to note that while “positive” forms of attention like praise/laughing/eye contact can be reinforcing, in some cases, also less positive forms of attention such as reprimands and repeated re-direction can also be reinforcing (leading the behavior to be more likely to occur in the future).

An “access to tangibles” behavioral function is when an action results in a preferred, tangible reward or access to it. For example, if a child engages in tantrum behavior in order to gain access to an iPad or a snack, this would be seen as serving an “access to tangibles” function. As another example of a similar function, a child might yell and engage in aggression when a trip to the zoo is canceled. The child may be engaging in the behavior in an attempt to gain access to the preferred place/activities (and/or because their access to the preferred place has been denied).

A sensory (or “non-socially mediated”) behavioral function should be considered when a behavior occurs in the absence of any social reinforcer such as access to attention, escape/avoidance, or access to tangibles. Sometimes the behavior itself may result in pleasurable sensory effects (e.g., auditory, visual, vestibular, olfactory, gustatory, etc.). For example, a child might engage in flapping his or her hands not because it results in attention or access to preferred items, but because this behavior itself gives visual stimulation to the child that they find enjoyable. Importantly, occasionally the behavior itself actually does NOT appear to be pleasurable (e.g., self-injurious behavior such as head banging), but may in fact result in some relief of unpleasant sensations or other physiological impacts that we cannot directly see or assess.

**CONDUCTING DIFFERENT TYPES OF FUNCTIONAL BEHAVIOR ASSESSMENT**

To properly address challenging behavior, finding out the function – why the behavior is taking place – is an important step. If we don’t have a good understanding of why the behavior is occurring, our approaches to treatment may not be effective, or worse, may actually increase the frequency of the challenging behavior. It is particularly important with individuals who have limited functional communication skills that we are conscientious in trying to identify what they are communicating through the behaviors they are engaging in, and, if these behaviors are harmful, help them learn ways to effectively meet their needs and desires.

There are several ways to conduct a functional behavior assessment with a child who is displaying challenging behavior.

**Interviews** - Interviews should be conducted with the child (when possible), the parents, and the teachers. The goal of interviews when conducted as part of a functional assessment process is to find out from teachers and parents when and where this behavior happens most often, and generally, why it might be occurring. (Knowing the events that usually precede the behavior, and the consequences that usually follow it, helps hint at the possible function(s) it may serve.)

**Observations** - An observation comes in the form of carefully studying and taking notes while the child is engaging in challenging behavior. Essential elements are the severity of the behavior and any noticeable triggers that seem always to be present when the behavior occurs. A specific type of observation called an ABC assessment looks at the conditions prior to the behavior occurring (antecedent), the behavior itself, and the consequences that follow it. Recording multiple episodes of the behavior in ABC format can help identify trends that make the function(s) clearer over time.

**Motivation Assessment Scale** - This is a standardized pen and paper evaluation where qualified observers answer a series of questions about how likely the behavior is to occur under certain conditions/situations. The scoring of the results helps to suggest which functions may play a role in reinforcing/maintaining the behavior.

**Functional Analysis** – This is a rigorous experimental procedure in which hypotheses about the functions of the problem behavior are tested by manipulating antecedents and consequences to see what impact they have on behavior.

**IMPLEMENTING STRATEGIES BASED ON FUNCTION**

The information gathered during the functional assessment phase can lead to the development and implementation of several types of strategies.
Strategies to teach an alternative positive set of behaviors that allow the child to get their needs met more effectively than the challenging behavior are essential components of most treatment approaches. For example, parents may try teaching a child to use alternate modes of communication, such as pointing to pictures or using signs, to help the child express his/her needs/wants. These more appropriate behaviors are sometimes referred to as “target alternative behaviors” or “replacement behaviors”. Many effective treatment plans build in choice-making components (for tasks or for reinforcers) so that individuals have options that allow them to have more control over their environment so that challenging behavior is not their “go-to” response.

In an effective intervention, the individual accesses reinforcement (which may be attention, access to tangibles, escape from demands, positive sensory stimulation, or a combination of several of these) for the appropriate replacement behavior, and care is taken to ensure that challenging behaviors do not result in reinforcement. This is sometimes not an easy process (e.g., may require a teacher or parent to continue to work through aggression with a child who engages in aggression to escape task demands) and may require careful consideration and shaping of desired alternative responses and modification of how tasks and instruction are provided.

It should be noted that many behaviors serve more than one function, and functions of behavior may change over time. For example, an individual may demonstrate self-injurious wrist biting that initially served purely a sensory/non-socially mediated function, but over time the individual learned to use this behavior effectively for other reasons as well (e.g., escape from task demands, attention, etc.). Both in the family home, and in educational and program settings, it is important to carefully study the conditions under which the behavior is most likely to occur to get a solid understanding of potential functions, and a strong foundation for an effective treatment approach. There are several function-based treatments for challenging behavior, but it is first important to identify the function of each behavior before treatment can begin. Some behaviors may have more than one function, requiring parents’ attention to all possible reinforcement consequences in that situation where the problem behavior occurs.
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15 Beach Street, Staten Island, NY 10304

LITTLE MIRACLES PRESCHOOL
309 Saint Paul's Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10304

ADULT DAYHAB PROGRAM
94 Wright Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10303

COMMUNITY CENTER
400 Victory Boulevard, Staten Island, NY 10301

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GENESIS SCHOOL, FAMILY SERVICES, ADULT SERVICES, OUTREACH AUTISM CENTER
600 Newbridge Road, East Meadow, NY 11554

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