Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center (DDDC)

An integral part of the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University-New Brunswick since 1972.

2020 - 2021
This Annual Report reflects the outcomes achieved at our center over the past year and affirms our mission as an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program serving the autism community.

The world has faced an unprecedented global health crisis because of the outbreak of COVID-19. Since March 2020, this pandemic has posed unique challenges for individuals with autism and their families in New Jersey and beyond through the impact it has had on access to information, services, and supports.

The DDDC has continued to fulfill its three-part mission during these challenging times. We have kept our commitment to training and research to support individuals with ASD, and we have made a number of programmatic adaptations and added new services to support the treatment and education of people with ASD.
The Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center (DDDC) is an integral part of the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology (GSAPP) at Rutgers University-New Brunswick. The DDDC has been serving the needs of people with autism spectrum disorders, their families and their schools since 1972. As an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) program, we use these principles to organize our delivery of services. We recognize our responsibility to work collaboratively with the families of the children and adults we serve, and with the agencies that fund their treatment.

As a university-based program, our commitment includes the education of undergraduate and graduate students and the dissemination of knowledge through research, training, and consultative services. We also provide information about the treatment and education of people with autism spectrum disorders to the professional community and the general public. Our mission of service to people with autism spectrum disorders, their families and their schools is carried out through the following services and programs:

- The Douglass School
- Douglass Adult Program
- Outreach Services

# ABOUT US

**The Douglass School**

Douglass Adult Program

Outreach Services

**RESPONDING TO THE COVID-19 CRISIS**

**INFORMATION AND RESOURCES RELATED TO COVID-19 WEB PAGE**

The DDDC vetted trust-worthy resources from New Jersey and around the country to provide accessible COVID resources to support individuals with autism as well as their parents and siblings. Resources supporting the management of challenging behavior, the practice of self-care, access to health and emergency planning resources, and access to online activities were housed on the DDDC’s Information and Resource Related to COVID-19 web page. [https://dddc.rutgers.edu/news-events/covid-19-information](https://dddc.rutgers.edu/news-events/covid-19-information).

**AUTISM SERVICES NETWORK**

The Autism Services Network (ASN), an extension of GSAPP’s Psychological Services Network, offered free tele-support and resources to families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Services were provided by Rutgers-affiliated Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), clinical psychologists, and supervised trainees with experience in ASD. The program provided individualized resources, supportive short-term coaching and guidance, and referrals for more intensive and long-term service arrangements.

"One in 32 children is diagnosed with an ASD in New Jersey. We wanted to make sure we could provide support for those families during this especially challenging time,” said Lara Delmolino Gatley, clinical professor, and director of Applied and Academic Autism Services at GSAPP. "We hope to help foster independent activities and routines at home, promote social engagement and offer support to foster leisure and vocational skills."

**100+ COVID-19 RESOURCES**

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SUPPORTS FOR FAMILIES
The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on everyone. However, those with ASD and the individuals who care for them are among those disproportionately impacted by it. The DDDC provided monthly parent support groups to parents of our DDDC community as well as siblings support groups for siblings of individuals with ASD from the broader community. When center operations were impacted by the pandemic, Dr. Fiske restructured these support groups using a virtual format to ensure that those in need of support were not neglected during this especially difficult time. The DDDC’s flexibility and adaptability also ensured the continuation of training opportunities for graduates learning to provide these invaluable services to the community.

GRADUATE STUDENT TRAINING: BUILDING CAPACITY
The DDDC’s commitment to graduate trainees was unwavering. Faculty restructured the format of supervision and training activities to ensure a rich training experience despite our reduced center operations. These programmatic shifts ensured a high-quality training experience that prepared graduate trainees to support the autism community despite practicum experiences that have been impacted by this pandemic.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS
The DDDC specializes in providing services to school aged children with autism who also face significant learning and behavioral challenges. Our center is committed to supporting staff who are working under very stressful conditions. The DDDC continues to collaborate with University Behavioral Health Care (UBHC) to provide staff self-care programs. Our collaboration with UBHC began over a year ago with a pilot program offered to our Intensive Support Classroom staff. Our second DDDC self-care program, began on January 19, 2021, for a group of 14 DDDC staff who volunteered to participate. This program is designed to teach strategies to help reduce stress related to working in this challenging field during a challenging time.

“We are embedding health and well-being at the heart of our Center’s goals because our staff are our greatest asset, and we recognize that a healthy happy and committed workforce is vital the success of the individual’s with whom we work.”
One year ago, the World Health Organization declared the spread of COVID-19 a worldwide pandemic. Reacting to the virus, schools at every level were sent scrambling. Institutions across the world switched to virtual learning, with teachers, students, and local leaders quickly adapting to an entirely new way of life. The DDDC was forced to stop traditional services and begin teaching students and clients in their homes through remote instruction. The DDDC mobilized to provide support to staff and caregivers to develop and implement remote instructional strategies tailored to student/client needs and individual family preferences. During the last year, the DDDC:

- Provided resources to staff to develop remote instruction materials & strategies specific to individual students
- Developed instructional materials for home use by caregivers
- Provided training on using technology for instruction
- Supported caregivers for behavior, functional communication, and skills training
- Modeled teaching skills for caregivers
- Provided access to a variety of online resources
- Delivered instruction with a variety of internet platforms and resources
- Increased frequency of communication with staff & caregivers (email/phone calls/video calls)
- Introduced a hybrid model of instruction as of September 2020 that allowed students and clients to return to the DDDC for a combination of in-person and remote instruction.
- In order for the DDDC to have a safe return to in-person services, the administration worked with various departments at Rutgers University to ensure staff access to routine testing, personal protective equipment, and early access to vaccinations. We also received assistance from the university to secure cleaning supplies and other supplies necessary to ensure safe center operations. The center also used space creatively to ensure that physical distancing could be maintained among DDDC students/clients during in-person services. This proactive collaboration among university departments and the DDDC solidified our return plan and gave the DDDC the ability to protect the safety of our students, clients, and staff.
- The DDDC’s school nurses Bethany Carlson and Diana Garces worked every day to prevent the spread of infection at the DDDC. Their preparedness, training, and clinical guidance were helpful for administration, staff, students, clients, and their families and critical to our ability to operate safely.
Small staff to student ratio: 1:1 or 2:1
Class size: 5-6 in preschool/elementary; 6-7 in intermediate/Secondary
Staffing: teacher, lead instructor, speech and language specialist, highly trained paraprofessionals, and consultation by Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBA)
Parent training and family support services (observations, clinics, home consultation as needed)

Full-day, year-round special needs day program

Behavioral Supports
Community-based supports
Community inclusion
Day Habilitation
Pre-vocational training
Supported employment

Assessment of educational programs for individual students or entire classes
Clinical oversight and staff training
Support for learners in inclusive educational environments
Social skills training
Support for reducing challenging behaviors

Douglass School Program
The Douglass School Program serves children ages 3 to 21 diagnosed with an autism spectrum disorders. The Douglass School uses the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) with emphasis on the development and generalization of instructional readiness, self-control, functional communication, social skills, functional academics, prevocational skills, and independent adaptive living skills. Functional behavioral assessment is the cornerstone for all behavior interventions.

The curriculum is linked to the Core Curriculum Content Standards set by the NJ State Department of Education. Goals for preschool students are guided by the Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations Standards of Quality. Also, a full range of ABA strategies are used and may include, but is not limited to discrete trial instruction, natural environment training, incidental teaching, shaping, and chaining. The verbal behavior classification system is a framework for language instruction.

The Douglass School’s curriculum is individually planned, and a primary goal is to prepare students to return to their home schools and to provide them with the skills necessary to function in community settings. Those students who continue to require a specialized setting and remain with us through adolescence are provided with programming for an adaptive living, pre-vocational training, and job sampling, as well as post-secondary transition services.

The Douglass School has preschool, elementary, intermediate, and secondary level classes. Common to all classes is a consistent structure:

Douglass Adult Program
Douglass Adult Program (DAP) established in 1997 as a separate unit of the Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center (DDDC) provides employment and related day services to adults with autism spectrum disorders.

DAP provides comprehensive services to adults age 21 and beyond. A primary programmatic focus is on training the skills necessary for life in the community. Utilizing an Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) model for skill development, the program endeavors to promote learning and work environments that recognize and support individual competencies, encourages skill development, minimize the need for display of problematic behavior, and respects, to whatever extent possible, appropriate consumer choice and control.

DAP is a Medicaid approved provider for the Supports Program and the Community Care Program. Services offered include:

Douglass Outreach Services
Douglass Outreach Services provides the highest quality consultation and training to meet the needs of individuals with autism spectrum disorders, their families and the professional community. Experienced staff and consultants many who hold a BCBA use the evidenced based principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) in the delivery of service.

School-Based Consultation
Assist educational communities in establishing evidence-based programs that allows learners to maximize their full potential. Consultation includes the following:

...and more!

STUDENT TRAINING
The DDDC provided training to 70 university students in the following disciplines during FY2021:

- 5 Psy.D. Psychology Students
- 13 Master’s level Practicum Students
- 35 Undergraduate Fieldworkers
- 2 Psychiatry Fellows
- 6 Family Practice Residents
- 9 Nursing Students

RESEARCH
In FY 2021, the DDDC engaged in the following academic endeavors:

- 3 Peer Reviewed Publications
- 10 Doctoral Student Dissertation Support
- 13 Professional Symposia
- 6 Book Chapters

COMMUNITY TRAINING
In FY 2021, the DDDC provided training to 500 people through:

- 4 Conference Symposia/Papers
- 9 Professional Workshops/Invited Presentations

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE
The DDDC provides training and consultation services in the community.

- School Consultation: 226 Hours
- Home-Based Consultation: 525 Hours
A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR DONORS

Staff

Alex Abrantes
Katie Accordino
Megan Ambrosy
Meredith Bammond
Shelley Bertino
Marlene Brown
Jenna Budge
Nadine Byczkowzki
Bethany Carlson
Robyn Cohen
Jilesa Cowan
Megan Dent
Cat Francis
Dhanalakshmi
Eagambaram
Kate Fiske
Termerra Flournoy
Lara Gatley
Peter Gencarelli
Mike Gianotti
Sharon Grant
Victoria Grenci
Ileana Guerero
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Laura Peterson
Jessica Plucinsky
Jackeline Rodriguez
Ingrid Rodriguez
Jaspreet Singh
Donna Sloan
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Faith Torres
Karly Unger
Renee VanNess
Karishma Vashwani
Cristina Webb

Parent/family members current students/clients

Melissa Alvarez
Christopher Austin
Linda Austin
Stephanie Basile
Jim Christy
Dan Clemente
Kathy Downey
Jen Frantz
Tom Frantz
Donald Gordon
Lisa Horrocks
Ed Jacobson
Matt Mester
Laura/Bill Myers
Leslie Newport
Sue Penyak
William Richardson
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Lisa Singer
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Dion VanderVoort
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Sally Yockman
Layla Zagey

Former Staff

Maria Arnold
Craig Domanski
Robin Hussey
Robert Isenhower
Michele LaRocca
Christopher Manente
Janet Matthews
Jim Maraventano
Josh Milstein
Patrick Nardella
Daniel Park
Kim Sloman
Lisa Toole
Kristina Truet
Jackie Weber

Friends of the DDDC

Emily Accordino
Matthew Ayres
Bruce Bammond
Nick Bammond
Tanya Beauchamp
Joseph Bertino
Jeremy Bond
Tara Mae Budge
Janice Crawford
Siddesh Dabholkar
John Darragh
Mark Darragh
Orion DeChristafano
Kaitlyn Delehanty
Leonard Delmolino
Lorraine Delmolino
Aniket Despande
Claire Drootin
Andrea Escoffrey
Harrison Escoffrey
Garrett Escoffrey
George Escoffrey
WE COULDN'T DO IT WITHOUT YOU!

continued,
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Thomas Francis
Linda Genaselli
Selena Gironda
Michael Gourlay
Barbara Hawke
Cynthia Healy
Nathaniel Hettrick
Daniel Higgins
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Sebastian Patino
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Craig Peterson
Carol Plucinsky
Yigal Rechtman
Marnita Robertson
Michelle Robertson
Sherrin Richards
Glenn Roemich
Benji Rodriguez
Marlon Russo
Michael Rutkowski
Lisa Scalatella
Sandra Scarlatella
Tracey Scatterday
Francis Schwarz
Lisa Shatz
Laura Simone
Michael Storer
Beth Troiano
David Zangaro

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C&C Club (Cultural & Charitable Club of Somerset Run)
Henriquez Family
Franz/Lawrence Family
Jan Handleman/Arlen Families
Mannello Family
Edith Neimark
Sandra Harris
Michael Powers
COMMUNITY PARTNERS

C&C Club of Somerset Run --Somerset, NJ
Barnes and Noble at Rutgers University
Edison Elks Club
Goodwill Industries -- East Brunswick, NJ; Springfield, NJ; Bound Brook, NJ
First Reform Church -- New Brunswick, NJ
Fish Hospitality Program, Inc. -- Dunellen, NJ
Francis E. Parker Memorial Home -- Piscataway, NJ
Longhorn Steak House -- North Brunswick, NJ
Men with Mops Customers: Cedar Village -- East Brunswick, NJ
Global Insurance Company -- Metuchen, NJ
Private Homeowners In Middlesex County
Raritan Valley YMCA -- East Brunswick, NJ
The Farmers Market at Rutgers Garden
Rutgers, Give Where You Live Program
Rutgers Dining Services
Rutgers School of Environmental and Biological Sciences, Horticulture Program

RESEARCH PARTNERS

Autism Partnership
New England Center for Autism
Scott Center at the Florida Institute of Technology
University of Wisconsin
OUR TEAM

Faculty

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