



Main Street Community Services (MSCS) Summer Social Skills Camp and Developmental Summer Day Program

MISSION

Main Street Community Services is a registered and incorporated non profit agency working in partnership with other distinguished community organizations such as Main Street Medical Centre which provides comprehensive social and health services. We are committed to the vision of empowering children, youth, individuals, families and communities to achieve whole health, social well being and community collectiveness.

INTRODUCTION

Most of us would agree that the most rewarding investment in our future is that of our children. Today more and more children and youth are becoming disenfranchised as a result of the lack of available social programs, especially for those who are challenged by a disability or an exceptionality including; ADHD, Autism, Aspergers Syndrome, Down Syndrome, Pervasive Developmental Disorder and Learning Disabilities. As a result, we at Main Street Community Services have been inspired to create an innovative program such as our Summer Day Camp for children and youth to help bridge the gap. Research has proven that these programs can improve the quality of a child's life through building self-confidence and positive self-esteem. More specifically, our **Social Skills Day Camp and our Developmental Day Program** can provide opportunities for skill development, healthy relationship building and recreation. All of which are critical for children with Disabilities.

Using a pro-active and cognitive-behavioral approach to learning, the **social skills day camp** enables children and youth to develop satisfying interpersonal relationships by enhancing skill proficiency in a variety of areas that foster social competency. Throughout each camp session, children and teens will be provided with a fun, safe and therapeutic environment where their individuality and uniqueness is respected and nurtured. Each child and youth will be provided opportunities for sports, recreation, arts and crafts, relaxation, yoga, martial arts, swimming and much more.

Our **Social Skills Camp** ran for 7 weeks in 2006 and will be doing so again this year. Last year we provided a specialized therapeutic program to over 150 children, which has doubled from the previous year. We take great pride in a staff to camper ratio of between 1:3 to 1:4 at all times. The campers are primarily special needs students having Asperger's Syndrome (a communication disorder), AD/HD, Learning Disabilities, delayed cognitive functioning, or Down's Syndrome.

Our **Developmental Day Program** was created to service children with higher complex needs such as non verbal children with Autism, Acquired Brain Injury and Developmental Disabilities. This program focuses on identifying the individual child's needs and strengths. In a highly structured, supportive and predictable environment, children will have opportunities to develop qualitative play skills and daily living skills by enhancing communication, socialization and decreasing challenging behaviours. This program involves a 2:1 ratio, child to camper.

All staff are university/college educated and trained (including dedicated Developmental Service workers, Social workers and Teachers) with several years of direct experience in this field. The Director, a clinical counsellor and a behavioural specialist are on hand at all times and have a Master's level of education.

Our programs run daily from 9 a.m. until 4 p.m. every weekday in Kanata. Staff typically arrives at about 8 a.m. with early drop-off being available for our campers. Late pick-up is also available until as late as 5 p.m. with prior arrangements being made with parents. Below is a sample itinerary based on last year's schedule. Our social skills program and our Developmental Day Program have reversed schedules.

Schedule:

8 - 9 a.m.	Staff Meeting/Early Drop-Off
9 - 9:15 a.m.	Camper Arrival/Greetings/Review and daily planning with the kids
9:15 - 10:00	Social Skills Group /Play Group
10:00 - 10:15	Snack/Break
10:15 -11:15	Recreation/ yoga
11:15-12:00	Arts and Crafts and theme of the week
Noon - 12:45	Lunch Break & Supervised free time
12:45- 1:00	Change for swimming
1:00 - 2:15	Swimming and changing
2:15-3:00	Snack
2:30 - 3:30	Cooperative Martial Arts (4 days per Week) Special guests Friday (ex- Rays Reptiles)
3:30 - 3:50	Relaxation Training
3:50-4:00	Clean Up
4 p.m.	Camper Departure
4 - 5 p.m.	Late Pick-Up/Staff Meeting/Debriefing

Below includes a description and rationale for our program's components

DESCRIPTION & RATIONALE

Social Skills Training

Social Skills training is the core foundation of our program. Each and everyday, children in our camp will learn many essential social skills such as, understanding and expressing feelings, conflict and resolution, and problem solving. Using a proactive, positive and cognitive behavioural approach to learning, daily sessions and all our activities will enable children to build self confidence and develop satisfying relationships by enhancing skill proficiency in areas that foster social competency.

Play Group

Children with high needs including non verbal children in the autism spectrum do not play in the same manner that is beneficial to skill development. The Play Group Model, which is based on aims to improve the social and symbolic play skills of children. In addition to addressing skill deficits, we also emphasize developing the intrinsic desire to play. With this group, it is important to differentiate between social skills training which involves direct skill instruction.

Recreation

Recreation is a critical component of our program. Throughout each day, the children will engage in ongoing recreational activities. They include: soccer, basketball, Frisbee, tennis, swimming and much more. Children with exceptionalities often find themselves with limited opportunities to fully enjoy leisure time. A lack of perceptual, motor, memory, linguistic, or organizational skills may cause them as much difficulty for leisure as they have at school or work. Fear of failure may limit their reaching out to access recreational activities. Just as we teach children with dyslexia to read, those with math disabilities to understand math, those with linguistic problems to better comprehend and use language, we must teach skills and provide practice so children with exceptionalities can achieve some recreational proficiencies.

One benefit is learning from the experience. When the recreation activity experience has captivated the participant, this individual brings particular personality styles of learning, motivation, and expectations about the experience to the setting. The person faced with a specific environment, interpreted by the person or not, promotes one or more learning experiences. These learning experiences can be motor learning, understanding game directions, or performing a skill, all to meet the demands of that setting. These experiences may come from involvement in a structured recreation program and may be exhibited as part of the information outcomes of participation. More specifically, the incorporation of recreation into our camp facilitates not only enjoyment but also behaviour change and skill learning, direct visual memory, information (factual) learning, concept learning, schemata learning, metacognition learning and attitude, and value learning. Noted psychological benefits of recreation activity, which is critical for our children include a perceived sense of freedom, independence, and autonomy, an enhanced self-competence through improved sense of self-worth, self-reliance, and self-confidence, better ability to socialize with others, including greater tolerance and understanding, better ability to socialize with others, including greater tolerance and understanding, greater adaptability and resiliency, and heightened creative ability (Academy of Leisure Sciences & Driver, 1994).

Martial Arts

There are numerous and therapeutic benefits from martial arts. One reason martial arts may now be used for exceptional children is because its popularity is rising and many are becoming aware of its benefits including self discipline and control, faster thought processes, personal development, fitness, confidence, relief from stress, self-defence, and fun. For example, children diagnosed with ADHD or ADD are often unorganized. They also have difficulty following instructions or directions, struggle to maintain focus and often have social deficits that interfere with their ability to engage in sporting activities. By integrating Martial arts into our Camp, Children with ADHD and other exceptionalities will increase attention span, decrease distraction, develop motor and behavioural control, improve self-esteem, and build positive peer relationships.

Arts and Crafts

Arts and Crafts is another important facet to our program. Children in our camp are afforded daily opportunities to engage in arts and crafts. The benefits derived from this activity go beyond just

enjoyment. Children with exceptionalities are often faced with motor and perceptual deficits that create significant difficulties when engaging in these activities.

By including arts and crafts we are able to identify the child's individual strengths and draw upon them when learning to do arts and crafts. This will not only decrease anxious tendencies that are often associated with arts and crafts but it will also provide a venue for strengthening their motor and perceptual skills.

Relaxation Training

Relaxation Training is provided on a daily basis. For children with exceptionalities, this is an important component to our program. By teaching relaxation, we are able to help the children improve skills in related areas such as mental imagery, focus and shifting focus. By developing these mental skills, children will be better able to positively influence their own health, mood, performance, and the direction of their lives. They will become increasingly aware that they have the capacity to control their own bodies, their own focus, their own stress and their own performance. They will also become more skilful at doing so in a fun filled, supportive and therapeutic atmosphere.

At Main Street Community Services, we take great pride in providing quality, research based and effective programs to children. More specifically, the dedication of everyone at MSCS has allowed us to play a pivotal role in supporting children to reach their full potential. Unfortunately, the decreased commitment to social programs, make our programs at an increased demand. It is in great hopes that we will be afforded the opportunity to work with these amazing children without jeopardizing the integrity of our programs as a result of a lack of funding. It takes believing in these children to realize the impact the community can have and that is why at Main Street Community Services, Achieving is Believing!

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