

Sensory Escape: Official Parent & Family Handbook

Line Spacing: 1.15

Section 1: Our Mission and Educational Philosophy

Sensory Escape is a premium, ODJFS-licensed Early Educational Center uniquely designed for neurodivergent learners. Our philosophy is rooted in sensory integration, structured play, and the mastery of Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). We do not believe in forcing children to conform to a rigid, seated environment. Instead, we adapt the environment to the child. Through the use of visual schedules, heavy-work sensory gyms, and co-regulation spaces, we provide an elite educational experience that supports each child's Individualized Education Program (IEP) while fostering deep, meaningful independence.

Section 2: Operating Hours & Financial Policies

Hours of Operation

Sensory Escape operates Monday through Friday, from 7:00 AM to 5:30 PM. To ensure the safety of our classrooms and the integrity of our morning regulatory routines, all students must arrive by 9:00 AM. Arrivals after 9:00 AM disrupt the visual schedules of the classroom and will not be permitted unless accompanied by a doctor's note or prior therapy appointment verification.

Tuition & Payment Structure

- **Pre-K Core Tuition:** \$350.00 per week.
- **Wrap-Around Care:** \$150.00 per week.

Tuition is billed on a weekly basis and is due every Friday prior to the upcoming week of care. Because your child's enrollment reserves a highly coveted seat and guarantees our strict teacher-to-student ratios, tuition is not prorated for sick days, family vacations, or unexpected closures due to severe weather. A late payment fee of \$25.00 will be applied to any account not paid in full by Monday at 12:00 PM.

Late Pick-Up Policy

Our staff works incredibly hard and deserves their scheduled time off. If a child is not picked up by 5:30 PM, a late fee of \$5.00 per minute will be charged to the family's account. This fee is strictly enforced and must be paid before the child can return to the center.

Section 3: Curriculum, ADLs, and Potty Training

Activities of Daily Living (ADLs)

Unlike traditional preschools, Sensory Escape considers self-care to be a foundational academic pillar. Our daily curriculum integrates ADL blocks. Your child will be actively taught and encouraged to participate in zipping their own coats, opening their lunch containers, washing their hands using sensory-friendly soap, and managing their shoes. We view these skills as critical milestones for neurodivergent independence.

The Potty Training Protocol

We do not require children to be fully toilet trained to enroll in our Pre-K program. We view toilet training as a collaborative class, not a prerequisite. Our staff utilizes visual schedule cards, timer watches, and positive reinforcement to guide children through the toileting process. Parents are required to provide an adequate weekly supply of pull-ups, wipes, and at least three complete changes of seasonally appropriate clothing (including socks and shoes) to support this learning process.

Section 4: The External Therapy (1099 Push-In) Policy

Sensory Escape is proud to operate as an Intervention Hub. We welcome your child's private Occupational Therapists, Speech-Language Pathologists, and Physical Therapists to conduct sessions within our facility during operating hours. To protect the security and routine of our classrooms, the following rules apply to all external providers:

1. **Scheduling:** Therapists must submit a recurring monthly schedule to the Center Director. Unannounced therapy visits will not be permitted into the classrooms.
2. **Integration:** Therapists are encouraged to utilize our gross motor sensory gym or designated push-in therapy stations. However, therapists may not pull a child from the classroom during dedicated meal times, ADL training blocks, or rest periods.
3. **Documentation:** All external therapists must provide the Director with a copy of their state license, liability insurance, and a cleared BCI/FBI background check before they will be permitted past the lobby doors.

Section 5: Behavior, Sensory Regulation, and De-Escalation

Our Approach to Dysregulation

Because we specialize in neurodivergent populations, we understand that sensory meltdowns and dysregulation will happen. We do not utilize punitive "time-outs." Behavior is communication. When a child becomes overstimulated, our staff is trained to utilize co-regulation, deep pressure therapy, and redirection. Children will be safely guided to our Sensory Library—equipped with fiber optic waterfall lights, weighted lap pads, and

noise-canceling headphones—to decompress.

Aggressive Behavior & Parent Partnership

While we expect and accommodate sensory meltdowns, the physical safety of all children and staff is our absolute highest priority. If a child engages in behavior that draws blood (e.g., severe biting) or exhibits a meltdown that lasts longer than 45 minutes without successful de-escalation, the parent will be called for an immediate early pick-up. This is not a punishment; it is a neurological reset for the child.

If aggressive behavior becomes a chronic danger to the classroom, a mandatory IEP/Care Plan meeting will be scheduled with the parents, the Director, and the child's therapists to adjust the JFS 01236 (Medical/Physical Care Plan). Gabby's Sensoryscape reserves the right to suspend or terminate enrollment if the center can no longer safely meet the child's needs.

Section 6: Health, Illness, and Medication

The 24-Hour Rule

To protect our medically fragile students and our staff, we enforce a strict ODJFS illness policy. A child may not attend the center if they exhibit any of the following: a fever of 100 degrees or higher, diarrhea, vomiting, unexplained rashes, or yellow/green nasal discharge.

Children must be 100% symptom-free and fever-free for a full 24 hours **without the use of fever-reducing medications** (like Tylenol or Motrin) before returning to the center.

Medication Administration

Per ODJFS regulations, our staff will only administer medications if a fully completed **JFS 01217 (Request for Administration of Medication)** is on file. Prescription medications must be in their original pharmacy packaging with the child's name, dosage, and physician's name clearly printed on the label. We will not administer over-the-counter medications for the purpose of masking a fever or illness.

Section 7: Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Protocols

The physical safety and emotional security of our students is our highest priority. Gabby's Sensoryscape strictly adheres to the emergency protocols mandated by the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS). A copy of our comprehensive **JFS 01242 (Medical, Dental, and General Emergency Plan)** is posted visibly in every classroom.

Because we serve a neurodivergent population, we recognize that emergency situations—and the loud alarms associated with them—can trigger severe sensory dysregulation. Our emergency response plans are uniquely tailored to mitigate this trauma.

1. Fire and Evacuation Procedures

In the event of a fire or a mandatory building evacuation, our primary goal is to exit the building swiftly and safely.

- **The Sensory Protocol:** We know that flashing lights and blaring fire alarms are incredibly painful for students with auditory and visual sensitivities. Every classroom is equipped with an "Emergency Go-Bag" that includes noise-canceling headphones, tactile fidgets, and visual emergency schedules. Teachers are trained to deploy these headphones immediately as they guide the children out of the building.
- **Evacuation Location:** If the building is deemed unsafe, staff will escort the children to our designated off-site emergency rally point. Parents will be notified immediately via our parent communication app to arrange for pick-up.
- **Drills:** Fire drills are conducted monthly so that our students can practice the routine in a controlled, predictable manner.

2. Severe Weather and Tornado (Shelter-in-Place)

In Northeast Ohio, severe weather is a reality. In the event of a tornado warning or severe weather threat, all staff and children will immediately move to the interior, windowless "Utility Core" of our building.

- Children will be positioned in the "turtle tuck" position to protect their heads.
- To reduce anxiety, staff will utilize portable fiber-optic lights, sing familiar regulatory songs, and use deep pressure therapy to keep the children as calm as possible while we wait for the all-clear from local authorities. Tornado drills are conducted monthly during tornado season (March through September).

3. Lockdown and Active Threat Protocols

In the highly unlikely event of a neighborhood threat or an active intruder, Gabby's Sensoryscape will initiate an immediate building lockdown.

- Our facility is equipped with biometric security gates and reinforced commercial doors.
- Children will be moved out of sightlines to the safest area of the classroom. We understand that requiring neurodivergent children to remain perfectly silent can be challenging; our staff is trained to use silent visual redirection, weighted lap pads, and enclosed sensory tents to keep the children secure and regulated until law enforcement clears the building.
- **During a lockdown, no one—including parents—will be permitted to enter the building until police have given the official all-clear.**

4. Loss of Power, Water, or Heat

Per ODJFS regulations, Gabby's Sensoryscape cannot safely operate without running water, functioning plumbing, or adequate climate control (heat in the winter, AC in the summer). If a utility outage lasts longer than two hours, or compromises the immediate safety and hygiene of the center, an emergency closure will be initiated, and parents will be required to pick up their children within one hour of notification.

5. Medical and Dental Emergencies

In the event of a severe medical or dental emergency, staff will immediately administer First Aid/CPR and dial 911.

- A staff member will remain with the child at all times, including riding in the ambulance if transport to a local hospital is required, until a parent or legal guardian arrives.
- Less severe injuries will be treated on-site, logged on an ODJFS **JFS 01299 (Incident/Injury Report)**, and communicated to the parent at pick-up or via a phone call, depending on the severity.

6. Emergency Parent Communication

During any emergency, our first priority is securing the children. Once the children are safe, the Director or designated administrative staff will issue a mass alert to all parents via our digital communication app and email. Please ensure your emergency contact information, as well as the information for your authorized backup pick-up contacts, is updated in our system at all times.

Section 8: Meals, Snacks, and Nutritional ADLs

Our "Safe Food" Philosophy

At Sensory Escape, we understand that for many neurodivergent children, eating is not just about hunger—it is a highly complex sensory experience. We deeply respect "safe foods" and recognize that food aversions, texture sensitivities, and Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder (ARFID) are incredibly common. Our staff will *never* force a child to eat, bribe a child with food, or shame a child for their dietary preferences. Mealtimes are designed to be low-pressure, positive experiences that double as Activities of Daily Living (ADL) training.

Parent-Provided Lunches

To ensure every child has access to the foods they are comfortable eating, all families are required to provide a daily packed lunch for their child.

- **Preparation:** Please pack foods that your child typically enjoys. If your child's safe food is currently dry cereal and a specific brand of crackers, that is exactly what you should pack. We offer a zero-judgment environment.
- **Storage and Heating:** Per ODJFS regulations, all lunch boxes must be clearly labeled with the child's first and last name and the current date. Please include an ice pack in your child's lunch box to keep perishable items cool. Our staff is able to briefly warm up items in a microwave, but please ensure foods are packed in microwave-safe containers.
- **ADL Practice:** Lunchtime is a core ADL learning block. Our teachers and therapists will actively work with your child on independent feeding skills, such as opening their own Tupperware containers, unzipping their lunchbox, and using utensils.

Snacks

Sensory Escape will provide two scheduled snacks per day (one mid-morning and one mid-afternoon).

- We will provide a monthly snack calendar featuring predictable, sensory-friendly options (e.g., plain crackers, fresh fruit, pretzels).
- If your child has specific dietary restrictions or severe texture aversions to the scheduled snacks, parents are highly encouraged to pack two additional "safe snacks" in their child's daily lunchbox. Staff will gladly substitute the center's snack with the parent-provided alternative.

Strict Allergy Protocols and Medical Care Plans

The safety of our children is non-negotiable. Sensory Escape is a **STRICTLY NUT-FREE FACILITY**. Please check all ingredient labels carefully before packing your child's lunch. Items containing peanuts, tree nuts, or peanut butter will be immediately removed, sealed, and sent back home. We recommend using alternatives like sunflower seed butter (SunButter). If your child has a diagnosed food allergy (e.g., dairy, egg, gluten) or requires an EpiPen, ODJFS mandates that we have a completed **JFS 01236 (Child Medical/Physical Care Plan)** on file prior to your child's first day. This plan must outline the exact allergy, the symptoms of exposure, and the emergency medical steps our staff must take. All staff members are trained in EpiPen administration and emergency first aid.

Hydration

Parents must provide a clean, spill-proof water bottle labeled with the child's first and last name every morning. Water bottles will be kept accessible in the classroom at all times to encourage constant hydration. Water bottles will be sent home daily to be washed and sanitized.