

**MELODY ARONS CENTER  
FOR APPLIED PRESCHOOL RESEARCH AND  
EDUCATION, INC.**



**M.A.C.'S**

**THERAPEUTIC DAY CARE HANDBOOK**

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Please visit us at:

[www.melodyaronscenter.org](http://www.melodyaronscenter.org)

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# Welcome

Welcome to the Melody Arons Center for Applied Preschool Research and Education, Inc., M.A.C. We are a therapeutic day care that accepts and works with disabled infants and toddlers, ages 0-5. MAC is in a renovated home whose bottom two floors are used exclusively by the organization. They contain a large classroom, small gym, music room, kitchen, play center, therapy room, office, two bathrooms, and a large back yard. Class sizes do not exceed five. Parent interviews are required, as well as reviews of school records and any IEPs/IFSPs before acceptance in order to assure the parents that adequate staff is available to meet the needs of the individual child. None of the children in the day care will be part of MAC's research studies without informed, written consent of the parents or guardians. Strong emphasis is placed on parent training, responsibility, and support within and among those who enroll their children in any MAC program.

Please keep this booklet and refer to it as needed. It will explain some of MAC's policies, procedures, and philosophy. We hope that your involvement in our Center will be the beginning of a long and beneficial relationship for you and your child, as well as for us. We encourage you to stay involved here once your child graduates into kindergarten so that MAC's group of active, informed, and supportive parents can help others with similar needs in the future.

Our Center provides individualized care, and works on language development, motor, play skills, and self-regulation through the use of music, dance, and art. There are no computers, no television, and no video games. The children learn that they are their own best toy, using all of their senses to discover themselves and the world around them. Particular care is taken to provide integrated sensory activities throughout the entirety of the program. Our work with toddlers and preschool children is based upon the contents of their evaluations, IEPs, and our own functional assessments, using brain-based, developmental approaches in both individualized programming and small group activities. We will work with other programs and therapists at parents' requests, make on site observations, and provide 1-1 sessions in the afternoon, 5 days per week. A variety of parent training programs are also available.

MAC receives no state or federal funding, so that enrollment is entirely on a fee for service basis. One fully funded scholarship is available each year for the day care component. If you think you qualify, please contact the office. Parents are responsible for transportation.

## LICENSING

The State of New Jersey does not license day care centers whose enrollment is under 6 children at a time. MAC has, however, complied with and exceeded all requirements for personnel, health, and environmental safety.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

- MAC's morning program runs from 8 A.M. to 12 noon.
- Two fully licensed special educators are on staff with one teaching assistant.
- Graduate students from nearby universities may be used periodically.
- No meals are served. Snack time is at 10 A.M. and provided by MAC.
- Occupational therapy, physical therapy, speech/language therapy, and other therapies may be contracted on a consultation basis for individual children in the afternoon.
- A schedule of yearly closings and MAC holiday productions is located at the back of this booklet.
- Promptness in drop-off and pick up is essential. Chronic lateness may result in termination from the program.
- There is a great deal of appropriate physical touching in this program- hugging, kissing, squeezing, with encouragement of the child to reciprocate the affection.
- Parents are encouraged to network with each other for support and information. They are prohibited from discussing other families and/or their children with non-staff.
- Call by 7:30 A.M. if your child will be absent or late.
- Parents are responsible for children when entering and exiting the building.
- Parents must sign children in and out, giving them to a teacher/staff member with a kiss, a bye-bye, and "I love you". Children are released only to adults listed by parents on the initial application form. Names can be added or removed at any time.
- All doors are locked during in-class activities, and a security video system is in each room except the bathrooms.
- Parking is permitted only in the driveway and in front of the Center. Vehicles must be turned off.
- Each child will have a communication book. It goes home at the end of each day with teacher comments. The parents are to use that book for any information or comments they want to share with staff.
- Notices of Center issues and events are posted on the office window, sent via email, and given to parents at pick-up time.
- Accounts must be paid in full at the beginning of each week. If adjustments are needed, the parent will speak with Raymond Arons, MAC's administrator.
- Label all of your child's belongings, including clothes and underwear.
- Take soiled articles home for cleaning each day.
- Children are taken outside daily for walks, play, and language activities, unless the weather is severe. They go out in light rain or snow and sometimes have snow or rain picnic snacks. Therefore, it is important to dress them properly for the season and weather. If they are too sick to go outside, they are too sick to come to the Center.
- No backpacks are permitted. Your child's pillow, blanket and stuffed toy should be small enough to fit in a shared cubby.
- No gifts are to be given to staff.
- There is a three day phase in period for attendance, starting at one hour, and gradually extending the time to three hours before participation in the full morning program. These timelines may change, depending upon the individual needs of the child (ren).

## **THE MAC MORNING**

8-8:30- Drop-off; check communication book; free play  
8:30- 9- Good morning song; circle time  
9:00- 9:30- Arts, crafts, dance  
9:30- 9:45- Job time: Feed the rabbits, fish, make snack, clean up, etc.  
9:45- 10:00- Toileting, wash hands  
10:00- 10:30- Snack and clean up  
10:30- 11:15- Outside walk; activity; wash hands  
11:15- 11:45- Rhythm band, singing/listening to music/ performing  
11:45- 12:00- Bye-Bye song; write in communication book; dress to go home.

The morning schedule is adjusted according to the ages of the children enrolled, their abilities, needs, and interests. Each child receives his/her name rhyme and learns to say it in rhythm to the group. Birthdays and holidays are celebrated, but the food used depends on oral motor, sensory, and other dietary issues. All children must be able to share the food used, so that parents are asked to check with staff before bringing special treats. No toys from home, except a transition object, are to be brought during the first month of enrollment. That transition object cannot be a superhero or a weapon. When MAC asks that the transition object be discontinued, the parent will agree or explain any concerns. Parents can participate in their child's birthday or other holiday festivities.

## **THE MAC AFTERNOON**

12-1- Staff break

1-5- One on one sessions occur for 60 minutes each day from 1-5 P.M. These children are not necessarily enrolled in the morning program and receive a variety of therapeutic, pre-academic, and musical services, depending on individual need. Research studies may also take place during this time period, in addition to small group social experiences in 2-1 ratios.

## **MAC EVENINGS**

One evening per month will be family night, when siblings and parents can come to MAC for two hours of play and an evening of fun from 6:30- 8:30 P.M. \$5.00 per person will be charged. One evening per month will also provide parent training and support, from 7-9 P.M. at a cost of \$10 for MAC parents, and \$20 for non-MAC parents.

## **HENRY BLACK SCHOLARSHIP**

Contact MAC for the eligibility criteria. This scholarship funds one child for the morning program for one school year. Parents are responsible for transportation.

## BITING

With the advent of hepatitis and AIDS, biting can be of great concern to parents. Biting is common among all children, especially the very young with and without disabilities. Biting in MAC's population is carefully examined and addressed through sensory based activities. If the biting continues and does not respond to intervention, the parent will be asked to seek medical advice. In the worst cases, enrollment may have to be suspended until there is a better understanding of what causes the behavior.

## CHILD HEALTH AND ILLNESS

MAC reserves the right to refuse its services to an enrolled child it feels he/she is too ill to attend. All situations are handled by the Director. If a parent is called to pick up a sick child, you have one hour to get to the Center. If no one picks up the child, the Center will notify child services. Please let MAC know of any illness.

- Yearly physical exams are required in addition to comprehensive evaluations to fully assess the area(s) of disability.
- Shots MUST be up to date.
- Colds: If a child's nose is discharging colored mucus, or has a severe cough, the child will be sent home. We may require a doctor's note for reentry.
- State minimum guidelines for exclusion for attendance are:
  - Temperature of 99.9 or higher
  - Vomiting- A child who is vomiting will be sent home immediately and cannot return until the vomiting has stopped for 24 hours.
  - Diarrhea
  - Strep throat- If strep throat is suspected, a doctor's note is required for reentry. Your child is required to be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to the Center.
  - Jaundiced eyes or skin
  - Conjunctivitis- Red eyes with discharge. This eye infection requires that the child be on antibiotics for 24 hours before returning to school.
  - Chicken pox- The child cannot attend the Center for 6 days and/or until the sores have healed over and are no longer open. Please notify the Center immediately so we can inform the other parents. This is a highly contagious virus.
  - Swollen lymph nodes
  - Blood in urine
  - If a child appears not to be him or herself and requires more attention and care than we can provide, a parent is called to pick him/her up.
- When a child is absent due to illness for more than 3 days, a doctor's note is required for reentry that states the child is no longer contagious and may return to school. (We will not accept the child's return unless this is stated by the Doctor in the note.)

- A medical form will be given to each parent, advising them that a designated staff member, not a nurse or physician, will be dispensing the medication. This form must be approved and signed by the child's physician. All medication must have a pharmacy label with the child's name, medication, dosage, and expiration date. A medication notebook will be maintained and referenced prior to dispensing medication.
- It is suggested that every parent have a back up plan in the event of their child's illness.
- MAC is not a peanut free environment.

## **STAFF HEALTH AND ILLNESS**

Every effort will be made to keep the Center fully staffed in a 3-5 ratio throughout the school year. However, in the event that there is illness and no substitute(s) is (are) available, parents will be called by 7:15 A.M. to inform them that the Center will be closed for the day.

## **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

MAC will follow the school closing announcements made by the Teaneck Public Schools. In addition, a recorded message will be left on the Center's telephone answering machine and emails will be sent to each family.

## **TERMINATION**

Termination of enrollment for the following causes includes, but is not limited to, any of the following:

- Excessive absences
- Excessive lateness in drop-off or picking up
- Inappropriate behavior directed toward staff or consultants
- Developmental needs can no longer be met by staff
- Failure to pay weekly tuition

If a parent chooses to terminate the child's enrollment, a written two week notice to MAC is required. Tuition for the balance of the week of termination will not be returned. Refund of the remaining month's balance will be calculated from the first Monday of the remaining weeks of the month.

## **TOILET TRAINING**

Part of child development is toilet training. Children with special needs, and especially those with sensory issues, may have an exceptionally difficult time with toileting. MAC will work with the parent to individualize the child's care on this aspect of development. If we are to assist in toilet training, the parent provides all needed diapers and wipes. A coordinated, written plan must be in place between home, MAC, and school so that there is consistency across all environments in order to achieve beneficial results.

## **INFANTS AND TODDLERS, 0-1**

Therapeutic care of a disabled infant or toddler requires special skill, understanding, and setting. MAC would require all medical records before considering the acceptance of an infant into its current program.

### **A MAC CHILD**

Children who may benefit from placement at MAC are those that enjoy and respond to music, have language and behavioral problems, sensory issues, and difficulties with self-regulation. The program is not designed for children with severe cognitive or motor impairment, brain damage, or those who are not ambulatory.

### **MAC PHILOSOPHY**

MAC's philosophy of therapeutic care is that there is an underlying biological cause of the disability, even though that cause may not be known at the present time. MAC believes that each child in its program has the potential to learn and improve, to engage and initiate, to play, laugh, pretend, create, invent, and to like and enjoy themselves, life experiences, friends and family. It bases its program upon neuroscience, child development, state of the art research, and the results of its five year longitudinal study that examined connections between music, movement, language and self-regulation. Its program is highly structured, yet play-based, and individualized to meet the unique needs of each child. It uses music in all forms, rhyme, dance and art to integrate the senses and to build receptive and expressive language skills through song, experiences, and performance. It believes that the current hectic and fast-paced nature of the daily routine prevents the child's body, emotions and mind from working together in a holistic way so that the child is unable to achieve greater independence and control due to the bombardment of sensory input. It provides appropriate affection in a warm, yet disciplined and supportive way, so that the child knows what is expected and requested, within a family-like setting. MAC groups children developmentally and not according to age. It uses a transdisciplinary approach that simultaneously integrates fine and gross motor functioning, as well as language, with self-regulation. This occurs through the consistent use of name rhymes prior to the use of other rhythmic activities. Each child who enters has his/her own rhyme which he/she learns as a source of identity, language, rhythmic movement, prosody, and old fashioned fun. Performance, use of a microphone, listening, waiting for his/her turn, applause and bowing are all integral parts of each week's activities. No child is forced to participate in an activity.

Working with parents and families is another MAC focus. We understand that parent needs are often as intense as those of their children. Yet, we are not therapists and can only work as special educators. Therefore, we emphasize the need to understand the nature of the child's strengths and weaknesses and not to get confused by a diagnosis or a classification given by a local or state agency. We strongly encourage that parents learn their legal rights under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, form support

groups, and become as thoroughly informed as possible. We may question the findings of various reports, recognizing that there are strong differences of opinions and views on many special education topics, and ask the parent to obtain independent testing if that is needed in order to provide improved therapeutic care for the child. MAC, however, does not provide advocacy services, preferring to empower each parent to serve as an advocate for their child.

MAC also seeks to work jointly with medical and therapeutic specialists who provide corrective or supportive services to those who are enrolled, and/or who are interested in developing transdisciplinary approaches to intervention, care and education. It seeks partnerships with professionals and caregivers who have a creative, reasoned, and disciplined approach and commitment to early intervention, diagnosis, treatment, and enrichment of young children and their families. MAC periodically sponsors or participates in neuroscience research designed to better understand how children learn. No child will be part of any study without the written authorization and informed consent of the parent.

MAC's motto is "Growing, Learning, Loving- A Celebration of Life." For all who work here, learn here, and grow here, we seek to become a better and more effective parent, teacher, clinician and community member for children 0-5. We celebrate the potential of life in experiences of shared joy and pleasure, thereby discovering that these are not achieved without hard work, responsibility, sharing, honesty, and an opened and questioning mind. We are committed to equity, with a genuine passion for the individual welfare of children as both individuals, members of a family, and members of a community.

## **TRANSITION**

At age 2 ½ disabled children are commonly transitioned to a publicly funded program in the local school district. This is a referral from early intervention to the preschool child study team for comprehensive evaluation, eligibility to receive services, the development of an IEP, and placement. At approximately age 4, the next transition occurs in preparation for entry into kindergarten at age 5. If a child has been with MAC at least six months prior to one of these transitions, a MAC representative will prepare for and attend one transition meeting with the parent without cost.

## **DISCLAIMER**

Therapeutic day care is not always the best choice for your child with special needs. The Melody Arons Center reserves the right to terminate its services to any child who continuously causes harm to other children, staff, and/or him or herself. In addition, families who fail to comply with and cooperate with MAC policies and practices, or who demonstrate destructive and inappropriate behavior toward staff, other parents, or MAC children will lead to termination of this placement without notice, to be followed by a written incident report. Any indication of child abuse will be reported.

## FINANCIAL POLICIES

MAC fees for enrollment are calculated on a 10 month school year for 2010-2011. The day rate is \$200.00 for a four hour therapeutic half day, or a total of \$1,000 per week. Afternoon therapy prices are determined by the individual therapist.

- A two week deposit is required for the morning program.
  - Parents must give 2 weeks written notice prior to leaving.
  - After notice is given, the deposit will be used to pay for the last 2 weeks that the child is enrolled in the program.
  - Parents not providing the Center with written notice will have their deposit refunded only if the slot can be filled.
  - Deposits placed at enrollment to hold a slot are NOT refundable.
  - Full payment for each week is due by Wednesday morning of the week prior to service. If payment is not received on time, a letter of intent to terminate will be given to parents.
  - If full payment is not remitted by the subsequent Tuesday, arrangements will be made to replace the student.
  - New students start on Monday, and withdrawals are on Friday.
  - No deductions will be permitted for holidays, emergency closings, or absences.
  - There is a \$40 fee for returned checks.
  - After 1 check is returned by banks for insufficient funds, only cash payments will be accepted.
  - Parents who pick up their child after 12 noon will be given a warning for the first time lateness, charged \$10 for the second lateness, and \$20 for the third unless there is an extenuating circumstance in the opinion of MAC administration. Continued lateness can lead to termination from the Center, as well as chronic tardiness in arrival. Precise scheduling and reliability are important for the child's sense of security and self-regulation.
- \* Credit card payment can be made through Master Card, Visa, Discover, or American Express.

## OVERVIEW OF MAC'S 2010-2011 YEAR

**September- 9/7-8, 10/10; 9/13-30/10**, 18 days of care; Rosh Hashanah

September 7-8, 2010 - Phase in

Creation/use of name rhymes

Themes- My name is

Things I can do

Autumn (9/22/10-First day of autumn)

**October- 10/1/10- 10/29/10**, 21 days of care, No holidays

Themes- Water

Exploring (Columbus day- 10/11/10)

Pumpkins

Halloween (10/31/10). MAC parents have the option of going together as a group from the Center late on Sunday afternoon. Costumes are optional and must consider sensory issues.

**November- 1-23; 29-30**, 19 days of care; Thanksgiving

Themes- Thank you

Leaves

Food preparation

Family/Thanksgiving

**December-1-10-; 14-23**, 17 days of care; Hanukkah, Christmas

Themes- Winter

Light and dark

Giving

Making decorations

\*Free Concert, 12/16/10, Teaneck Library Auditorium, 7:30- 8:30 P.M. *An Evening with Mr. and Mrs. Claus and Friends* (Children participate in the event with parent consent.) There are extra rehearsals for this program and non-MAC children also participate.

MAC School Year 2010-2011 Continued

**January 3-31, 2011**, 21 days of care, No holidays

January 7- Melody's Birthday Party

January 17, 2011- Martin Luther King Day

Themes- Different and same

Snow

Sliding

Footprints

**February 1-28, 2011**, 20 days of care, No holidays

February 14- Valentine's Day Party

February 21- Presidents' Day

Themes- Love

Heart

Sweet and sour

Flavors and smells

**March 1-29; 31, 2011**, 22 days of care, Passover

Themes- Farm animals

Pets

Garden

Bugs

**April 1-29, 2011**, 20 days of care, Good Friday

Themes- Babies

Eggs

Hats

Colors

**May 2-28, 2011**, 20 days of care, Memorial Day

Themes- Mother (Mother's Day, 5/8/11)

Flowers

Vegetables

Games

MAC School Year 2010 Continued

**June 1- 24, 2011**, 18 days of care, No holidays

Themes- Fathers (Father's Day, 6/19/11)

Friends

Vacation

Summer

June 26, 2011- MAC Graduation and Party

MAC will be closed on January 1, 2011, New Year's Day; March 30, 2011, Passover; May 31, 2011, Memorial Day, Rosh Hashanah, September 9, 2011; November 24-25, 2011, Thanksgiving, December 23-31, 2011, Christmas vacation.

# MELODY ARONS CENTER INITIAL APPLICATION

I am interested in enrolling my child in MAC's morning day care program \_\_\_  
1-1 afternoon therapy/music sessions \_\_\_

Child's name \_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ Sex \_\_\_ Current placement \_\_\_\_\_  
Description of disability \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

My child is/has been in Early Intervention. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
My child has an IFSP/IEP. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
My child is in a preschool handicapped program. Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
Home phone number \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Languages spoken in the home \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Father's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Father's Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Father's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
Mother's Occupation \_\_\_\_\_  
Employers' Addresses \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Employers' phone/email \_\_\_\_\_  
Emergency Contact Information:  
Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Relationship \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone/Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Why do you want your child to attend MAC?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Does your child enjoy music? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ Dancing? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_  
When do you want the child to start? \_\_\_\_\_

Once you have submitted this initial application, you will be scheduled for a record review and developmental history with Director, Marilyn Arons. Please be prepared to bring all current evaluations, medical reports, IEPs/IFSPs, and any other information you believe is important in order to have MAC help your child. You will be informed at the conclusion of this meeting as to whether or not MAC is an appropriate choice. Thank you for submitting this application and for your interest in our programs.