



WEST METRO
LEARNING CONNECTIONS, INC.

Developing Social Understanding and Skills Since 2001

Client Handbook

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West Metro Learning Connections, Inc.

Developing Social Understanding and Social Skills Since 2001

Serving clients ages 3-30 with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and other Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs, such as ADD, ADHD, Anxiety, Depression, Reactive Detachment Disorder, and Sensory Processing Disorder.

- * Evaluations/FBAs
- * IEPs
- * Community Integration
- * Information & Support
- * Life Skills Training
- * Skill Enhancement
- * Social Interaction Activities
- * Social Skills Groups
- * Seminar & Therapy Space Rental
- * Presentations
- * Consultation
- * Supports to Schools

Administrative Staff

Debra Schipper, M.Ed., ASD Specialist—Founder, C.E.O, and Executive Director.

Executive Manager: Dan Von Bargen

Operations Manager: Kacey Reece

Project Manager: Tomasina Uttecht

Director of Admissions & Educational Placement: Mary Wyatt

Director of Social Skills and Day Camp: Jessica Peters

Director of School Services / Lead ASD Specialist: Nancy Olson

Mission Statement

West Metro Learning Connections, Inc. (WMLC), will enhance the quality of life for individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder, and other Social, Emotional, and Behavioral Needs by developing individuals' social understanding and social skills and by providing professional support services to schools and the students they serve.

Vision: Individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder will flourish as happy, successful, confident people, fitting in wherever they go, while also “shining” in exceptional ways.

Curriculum

Material is designed developmentally and draws from many sources, including from Debra and her staff's own extensive experiences working with students identified on the autism spectrum, with ADHD, and with other social, emotional, and behavioral needs. Therapeutic games, social skills, and other curricula are foundational for social skills therapies, but they are expanded with a wide variety of strategies and functional and practical experiences. All social skills therapies are supported visually, include sensory interventions, begin with a feeling check in, and include a reinforcement system. Social skills videos and videotaping are sometimes used as instructional tools, and all therapies provide for extensive skill rehearsal. Clients receive curriculum supporting materials for practicing and reinforcing the new skills in their homes, schools, and communities. We tailor our instruction to meet individual client and group needs using dynamic curricula that blend proven methodologies from multiple ASD experts.

West Metro Learning Connections, Inc.

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POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Communication

Intake Conference: Prior to starting at WMLC you will attend an intake conference with the Director of Educational Placement. The purpose of this conference is to establish understanding, cooperation, common goals, appropriate course placement and consistency between the home, school, and WMLC's program.

Ongoing Registration: Registration is not guaranteed without completion of a registration form each term unless client is registered for multiple terms in advance. In order to ensure the best educational experience for each client, class size limits and client to staff ratios need to be maintained. All classes are filled on a first-come first-served basis.

Welcome Packet: Prior to the start of term parents will receive a welcome packet via e-mail (unless otherwise noted). This packet serves as your child's confirmation of enrollment. It contains information regarding your child's class, outings, and what to expect at WMLC.

Daily Feedback: Contact between parents or guardians and staff is a vital part of WMLC's dedication to high quality services. By sharing information concerning each child's activities and performance, WMLC works together with parents to meet the needs of the whole child. Staff will provide parents or guardians with daily written notices describing the events of their child's experience, skills to practice, and behavioral performance. This information is placed in client's mail box after each group meeting and it is important that parents check mailboxes each time they visit WMLC.

End of Term Conference: At the end of each term, the Lead Teacher will provide parents/guardians the option to sign up for an over the phone or in-person conference. The Lead Teacher will discuss each child's social and emotional development and will recommend the next course of action. Parents/guardians receive an end-of-term progress review summary which is a rating scale and a summary of each child's individual performance and progress toward meeting course goals. Parents are strongly encouraged to share this information with their child's school, other therapists, and anyone else that may benefit from having the information.

School Visit and IEP Meeting Attendance: All registered clients are allotted one complimentary school visit by a WMLC staff member in addition to attendance at one annual IEP meeting, provided the client is enrolled in the current term. WMLC's role at IEP meetings is to answer questions and share information about child's programming at WMLC. Additional services may be available for an hourly fee.

Visiting: We discourage parents from observing their children's class, outing, or activity. Having unexpected guests distracts and sometimes upsets your child and their friends from the enjoyment

and fun of participating. Most children also exhibit different behaviors when they are around their parents, so they may not get the full benefit of the WMLC experience when they realize that their parents or someone else's parents are watching.

Client 1:1 Support

If a client needs 1:1 support, WMLC has staff available to fill that role for an additional charge of \$20.00 per hour. If a client already has his/her own professional PCA, the PCA may in some cases attend with the client after receiving training from WMLC. WMLC reserves the right to deny or to terminate a PCA's involvement at anytime if WMLC determines that his/her presence is negatively impacting the client, other clients, the group, or does not follow WMLC policies and procedures. If the PCA is a parent or guardian of the client, his/her support is prohibited for the reasons stated above under visiting. The need for 1:1 support is continuously evaluated and a recommendation to cut back or add support may be considered at any time.

Payment Policy/Payment Options

Clients will be billed directly and will be held liable for all charges unless they notify the office in writing upon registration that invoices are to be sent to another party. WMLC accepts payment by cash, check, (bank draft, and all major credit cards—processing fees or surcharges may apply.)

If a client has case management from his/her county through either Developmental Disabilities or Mental Health, they may be able to pay for WMLC services with a Consumer Support Grant, a Family Support Grant or one of the following **consumer directed** waivers: Consumer Alternatives for Disabled Individuals (CADI), Developmental Disability (DD) or Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI).

A school district may pay for WMLC's social skills services if a child's team agrees to as part of the IEP Process. This could occur for Extended School Year (ESY) or as part of a settlement arrangement. WMLC will not bill a school district without its direct consent. WMLC also has a Level IV alternative placement day program called Lotus Specialized Learning Center, which operates under the supervision of local school districts.

Third party funding: If payment arrangements are made with a third party through an agreement such as with county funding, those funds generally will not cover absences. Therefore, **parent is responsible to make personal payment for any missed groups**. Multiple client absences could affect receiving funding for future terms. This does not apply to classes that have been made up.

WMLC is always an out-of-network provider. WMLC does not accept insurance. It is our policy to **bill the client, and the client must pay WMLC directly.** The client may elect to receive prior authorization from their individual insurance plan and submit a reimbursement claim. This procedure usually requires a prescription from the client's doctor and for the doctor to supervise the treatment plan, which involves an initial consultation and a review at the end of the treatment period. The treatment has typically been categorized as Outpatient Mental Health, using **CPT code 90853—'Group Psychotherapy'**. **It is critical to specify that services are provided at a 'Master's degree level' with Modifier – HO. An additional Modifier that may be used is 'Child/Adolescent' – HA.**

Unless payment has been confirmed and is being made through a third party vendor, full payment is preferred at registration and is due by the term start date or the day of a special activity or service. **A late fee of \$25.00 per week will be applied to all unpaid balances at the end of the term. If payment is not received by the first day of class, the client will not be able to attend.** Payment options for social skills groups are:

1. *Pay in full by the first day with no extra fee.*
2. *Pay 1/3 on the first day of class, 1/3 by the 4th class and 1/3 by the 7th class. There will be a \$30 processing fee.*
 - a. *This option must be secured by a bank draft. We will need a voided check and a signed authorization form provided by WMLC to approve the amounts and dates that the money will be drafted from your bank account.*

If payment has not been received by the last day of term, accounts are considered past due, and parents/guardians are subject to a handling charge of \$50.00 and collection procedures after six weeks. Collection may involve small claims court. Clients are responsible for any and all costs necessary for the collection of any amount not paid when due.

Any check returned by the bank as unpaid will be assessed a \$35.00 check return charge.

No reports, records, videos, or CD's will be released until payment in full is received. Payment in full must be received before beginning a new term.

Client Discounts

Clients may receive a 10% discount on the lower priced group if registered for more than one social skills group per term. A client may also receive a 10% discount when siblings are both registered for classes. The 10% discount is taken off of the lower priced group and the discount is then divided between the siblings.

Therapeutic Recreation/Spending Money

Admission fees included:

Kids Chat 'N' Chill and Teens Talk Teens Rock groups both have a similar class structure where a lesson is followed by a community outing. During this community outing, WMLC covers the cost of admission. However, WMLC does not cover additional spending money for snacks or food unless indicated on the Therapeutic Recreation outing schedule. Additional spending money is not encouraged because all families do not have the same resources available.

Day Camp during the summer also includes all admission fees for community field trips. Additional spending money is not encouraged because all families do not have the same resources available.

Admission Fee not included:

Meet & Mingle group. The participants in the group decide as a group what outings to attend at the beginning of the term keeping a budget in mind. It is the responsibility of the participants to bring the appropriate amount of money each week.

WMLC hosts a sleepover once a month for clients to enjoy a fun outing and sleep at one of the centers. All fees and spending money are the responsibility of the participants and may be looked up on the sleepover flyer.

Friday Excellent Adventures (FEA's) are a great opportunity for WMLC clients to participate in the community with peers on field trips to locations such as Valleyfair, waterparks, and other fun activities. Admission fees are not covered by WMLC and it is up to the client to have the appropriate fee along with any additional spending money they may want. There will be an e-mail sent for each FEA indicating the required admission fee.

Attendance/Make-up Sessions/Cancellations

One of WMLC's main goals is to provide clients with consistency and to facilitate relationship building among clients. For this reason, clients are committed to attend the entire term in which they are enrolled and are responsible for the tuition for the entire term. **No refund shall be made**, except due to the prolonged illness of a client or relocation. A written statement must be provided by a medical doctor with the specific reason(s). WMLC reserves the right to consult with the professional and deny the request if it does not meet the above requirements. If request is approved, 100% of the prorated amount shall be refunded to the client.

Social Skills Courses: If a client misses a session, make-up work will be provided to take home and complete. The make-up work will reflect the skills focused on during the missed session. We regret

that we are unable to provide in-person make-up sessions. No make-up or refund will be provided for Meet & Mingle.

Summer Day Camp and Friday Excellent Adventures: Prior to registering for Day Camp, it is the client's responsibility to ensure the dates are correct and the client is able to attend. Once the invoice has been sent, **no refund shall be made**. If a client misses a Day Camp or Friday Excellent Adventure session, there will be a week to make up missed days at the end of the term.

Supported Employment Experiences: If a client misses a supported employment shift, there will not be a make-up opportunity. Supported employment dates are real work shifts that the client has been hired to accomplish. If a client needs to miss work for any reason including sickness, it is up to the client to communicate that clearly. The client needs to either notify their job coach or direct supervisor if they know of the absence in advance or call the WMLC main office in the case of an unplanned absence due to illness and WMLC will notify staff involved.

WMLC Cancellation Policy

Class Placement: If three or fewer students register for a class, the class may be canceled. The Director of Educational Placement will make every effort to place the enrolled clients in an equally appropriate group. If this cannot be accomplished, clients will receive a credit for the next term or a refund will be made. WMLC reserves the right to change instructors and to cancel or reschedule a class in the event of unforeseen circumstances.

Parent Cancellation

A termination a fee of \$250.00 will be assessed if an enrolled client chooses to cancel the WMLC social skills group enrollment agreement later than one week prior to the beginning of term. Late fees and possible collection services will apply.

Therapeutic Recreation: Day Camps, Friday Excellent Adventures, Kool Connections, Sleepovers, etc. require a forty-eight hour cancellation notice. If notice is not given forty-eight hours prior to activity, **client will be responsible for a \$25 cancellation fee.** This is necessary to ensure appropriate staff to client ratios. If WMLC has to prepay a non-refundable activity fee in advance to reserve a seat, ticket, room, etc., for your child, the activity fee will be charged regardless of time of notice unless WMLC is able to recruit another client from the waiting list to take your child's place.

Arrival/Departure Policy

It is the responsibility of the parent or guardian to accompany their child into and out of the center. The parent or guardian should wait with the child until the session begins and should be available to meet them as the session ends. **To prevent having to take time away from group, we request that parents/guardians accompany their child to and from the restroom before class.** For safety reasons, clients must be supervised at ALL times by their parents/guardians when not in class, regardless of

their age. Parents or guardians will accept full responsibility for the client until their session begins and when it ends. Parent or guardian will be responsible for any damage caused to WMLC's property by children outside of their scheduled class time.

If a participant is not potty trained we ask that a caregiver remain on the premises during group.

If you have important, timely information that you need to share, please call or email ahead or arrange for an extra moment, so that another staff person can be called in to cover if needed. Also, if any of the information you need to share could potentially embarrass your child if he/she/or a friend hears it, please request a private spot to talk.

Pick-Up Policy

We request that clients are picked up promptly at the end of their group. Our staff are often required to prepare for another class. Clients will have a five minute grace period, WMLC reserves the right to enforce a late fee of \$10.00 for each 5 minutes (or portion thereof) that clients are picked up past the grace period.

If you wish to have someone other than the individuals listed on the authorization form to pick up your child, please call and notify the office. The person picking up your child will be required to show photo identification. Note: Copies of legal documents must be provided to WMLC before any staff person can actively prevent non-custodial parents from picking up their child.

No client will be released to any person who appears obviously under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Client Form Updates

All information on the **Enrollment and Emergency Forms** must be kept current. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to inform WMLC of changes such as:

- A. Phone and address changes of emergency contacts.
- B. Name, address, and phone numbers of client's physician.
- C. Any changes in the home situation or unusual events in family life.
- D. Any dietary or allergy changes.
- E. Any other information about your child that would aid the staff in caring for and teaching your child.

Transportation

If client will be relying on medical transportation, it is up to the parent/guardian to make sure that it is pre-authorized and written into their waiver budget and that it will be covered by MA, since WMLC is not a licensed medical facility and does not employ licensed medical professionals. WMLC does not bill or collect payment for transportation provided by third parties.

WMLC is not a MA provider; questions related to transportation should be addressed with your county social worker.

Snacks

Clients may receive snacks as part of their program. Parents or guardians are responsible for notifying WMLC of any dietary restrictions. Parents may provide snacks from home if they choose, but WMLC will provide gluten/casein free snacks for those with known dietary restrictions.

Please notify your child's teacher in advance if you would like to bring a treat for a birthday or other special occasion so that we may prepare accordingly.

Electronics Policy

The use of electronics may discourage socialization with peers and interfere with course objectives, so WMLC requests clients leave electronic games at home or in the car.

Although we prefer clients do not bring them, they may have their cellular phones/I-pods with them but they must be out of sight and they may not use them during their WMLC scheduled time. If a client requires the use of an iPod to listen to music for sensory/behavioral reasons during van rides, this should be discussed with the lead teacher and an electronics policy form may be filled out by the parent/guardian.

Due to client confidentiality, pictures and/or videos may not be taken of other clients while attending any WMLC event.

Hat/Hood Policy

Hats and/or hoods may not be worn during any indoor activities.

Data Privacy

All client information is kept confidential. The only persons permitted to see files will be the parent or legal guardian, legal representative, and authorized WMLC employees unless the parent or legal guardian has given written consent, or as otherwise required by law.

Illness and Sick Child Policy

WMLC uses the following guidelines for the health safety of our clients and staff, which supports the Health Services Policies for many of the school districts we serve:

- If client has a fever of 100 degrees or more, the client should stay home for 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal.
- If client has vomited or had diarrhea, the client should stay home until 24 hours after the last episode.
- If client has a contagious illness he/she should not come to WMLC until he/she has been on antibiotics for 24 hours.

- If client has any rash that may be disease-related or the cause is unknown, parents need to check with their family physician **before** sending the client to WMLC.

If client is ill at home, their parents are to call the office 2 hours prior to group or activity start time, to report the absence. WMLC will notify the appropriate staff.

WMLC Closing

Weather Policy: WMLC may be closed in the event of severe weather. WMLC Executive Director will make the decision when to close for weather-related reasons. Weather related closures will be reported on WCCO—Channel 4 and WMLC staff will attempt to call scheduled clients if it is necessary to close for weather related reasons. The decision to close will be made two hours prior to the start of group.

Holiday Closures: WMLC will be closed on the following holidays: New Year's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve, and Christmas. Please refer to the term calendar for current information.

Activity Changes: If planned activity changes, WMLC will attempt to notify clients at least two hours prior. See proposed alternative plans with Outing Descriptions in the Welcome Packet.

Emergency Procedures

Procedures for tornadoes and fire evacuations will be posted in each area of the building. Fire drills may be conducted once every term. Tornado drills may be conducted at the beginning of spring and summer terms.

Accidents

Should an accident or injury occur, staff will act immediately to administer emergency procedures and implement existing policies.

Procedures:

1. The Lead staff will carry out immediate first aid and will contact the parents or guardians.
2. If the parents or alternate emergency caregiver cannot be reached, the Director will call 911 for treatment and/or transportation to a hospital. A staff member will accompany the injured client or drive independently to the hospital and stay until the parent or guardian arrives.

In some emergency situations, the staff may be required to contact the local emergency unit before calling the parent or guardian, e.g., cessation of breathing.

Injuries that occur to clients, staff, or visitors must be reported on an Injury Report Form. WMLC will keep a copy so that it can be placed in the client's permanent file.

Parents are solely responsible for any expenses that may result from emergency medical care.

Medications

If a client needs to have prescriptions while receiving WMLC services, a permission form needs to be completed and the original prescription bottle must be provided. All medications are stored in locked containers. Medications are inaccessible to children. Medication is disposed of if it has expired.

Epi-Pen Administration in the Event of a Severe Allergic Reaction: Upon administration of Epi-Pen, WMLC staff will stay with client constantly in order to observe for any change in status and notify client's parents/guardians of incident. A WMLC staff member or supervisor will call 911 as soon as possible after the Epi-Pen has been administered. The used Epi-Pen will be sent with emergency medical personnel in its original container. Staff will document Epi-Pen usage in the medication log and will complete an Incident/Injury Report Form.

Drug and Alcohol Use Policy

Clients who wish to attend WMLC activities are prohibited from engaging in the use of, possession of, distribution of and sale of alcoholic beverages, controlled substance and other drugs. If at any time a client violates this policy he/she will no longer be permitted to attend WMLC activities.

Positive Behavior Intervention Plan Policy

Given positive interventions and strategies that staff has implemented, if a client has demonstrated throughout a group session that he/she cannot maintain safe and cooperative behavior, they will stay at the center and participate in an alternative 1:1 activity with staff instead of going into the community.

While out in the community or while in-center, if a client's behavior escalates to a point where he/she is a danger to themselves or others, clients will be asked to take a break. In the event behavior escalation continues to the degree of the client being a danger to self or danger to others, staff with Nonviolent Crisis Intervention Training (CPI) and/or Professional Crisis Management Training (PCM) will intervene. Staff will only implement physical restraint as a last resort, after less-restrictive methods of intervention have been exhausted. Parents/guardians will be notified by the lead teacher of any incident requiring hands-on support from staff, physical intervention, injury to self or others, or property damage. WMLC staff will also fill out the appropriate incident report, with one copy going home to parent/guardians.

Typical Peers

WMLC has neurotypical children who are either volunteers or paid employees in as many social skills groups as possible to model appropriate social skills and friendship behaviors. If you happen to discover the identity of a typical peer, please do not disclose that information to your child. WMLC is not responsible for typical peer interactions outside of WMLC service time.

Calling WMLC

Class is often held outside of typical business hours, parents are encouraged to call during weekday hours. Please limit calls to staff cell phones only to times when they are in the community with your child and you need to coordinate pick-up or transportation.

Property Damage

If property damage over \$350 occurs while WMLC is providing appropriate supervision, WMLC will ask parents to cover the cost of damages.

Animal Policy

According to 28 CFR 36.104, a service animal means any dog that is individually trained to do work or perform tasks for the benefit of an individual with a disability, including a physical, sensory, psychiatric, intellectual, or other mental disability. Other species of animals, whether wild or domestic, trained or untrained, are not service animals for the purposes of this definition. The work or tasks performed by a service animal must be directly related to the individual's disability.

An employee or client who requires the help of a service animal will be permitted to bring a service animal to the office, provided that the animal's presence does not create a danger to others and does not impose an undue hardship upon the company. In addition, the following animals may not be brought to the workplace: sick animals; animals with fleas or any disease that is communicable to other animals in the office or to humans; animals that have not been properly vaccinated, or that have internal or external parasites; dogs that bark or behave aggressively; or animals that foul the inside or outside of the building.

All animals must be leashed at all times. All animals must be in the continuous full control of their owners. Owners are expected to clean up, completely and immediately, after their animals. Any individual who brings an animal to WMLC is completely and solely liable for any injuries or any damage to personal property caused by the animal. Any repair or cleaning/maintenance costs incurred because of an animal will be charged in full to the owner.



Policy Statement

I acknowledge that I have read and understand all policies and procedures found in the Client Handbook of West Metro Learning Connections, Inc. I understand that I am agreeing to abide by the following policies and procedures:

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| Communication | Illness and Sick Child Policy |
| Client 1:1 Support | WMLC Closing |
| Payment Policy/Payment Options | Emergency Procedures |
| Therapeutic Recreation/Spending Money | Accidents |
| Attendance/Make-up Sessions/Cancellation | Medications |
| WMLC Cancellation Policy | Drug and Alcohol Use Policy |
| Parent Cancellation | Positive Behavior Intervention Plan Policy |
| Arrival/Departure Policy | Typical Peer Policy |
| Pick-Up Policy | Calling WMLC |
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| Transportation | Animal Policy |
| Snacks | |
| Electronics Policy | |
| Hat/Hood Policy | |
| Data Privacy | |

WMLC is always an out-of-network provider with health insurance plans. WMLC does not accept insurance. Clients must pay tuition in full directly to WMLC on or before the first day of the term.

Parent or Guardian's Signature: _____

Parent or Guardian's Printed Name: _____

Client's Name: _____

Date: _____

Signature of Witness: _____