



Barrier-Free

Create. Express. Achieve.

Life Skills & Social Studio Handbook

Supporting Neurodiversity

Updated April 2024

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Welcome to Barrier-Free's Life Skills & Social Studio!

This handbook serves as your comprehensive guide to our Studio and underscores our mission to foster life and social skills development through an integrated-arts model. We emphasize interpersonal interaction, authentic practice, and group collaboration to enrich our members' experiences.

Disclaimer

As a condition of enrollment at Barrier-Free's Life Skills & Social Studio, all members and families agree to abide by all the policies set forth by Barrier-Free and its staff.

Barrier-Free, reserves the right to terminate any member's membership at any time for violation of policies, misconduct, or inappropriate actions by either the members or their families/legal guardian(s).

Key Contact & Studio Information

Studio Address:

7520 Main Street #103
Sykesville, MD 21784

Website: BarrierFreeMD.com

Email: info@barrierfreemd.com

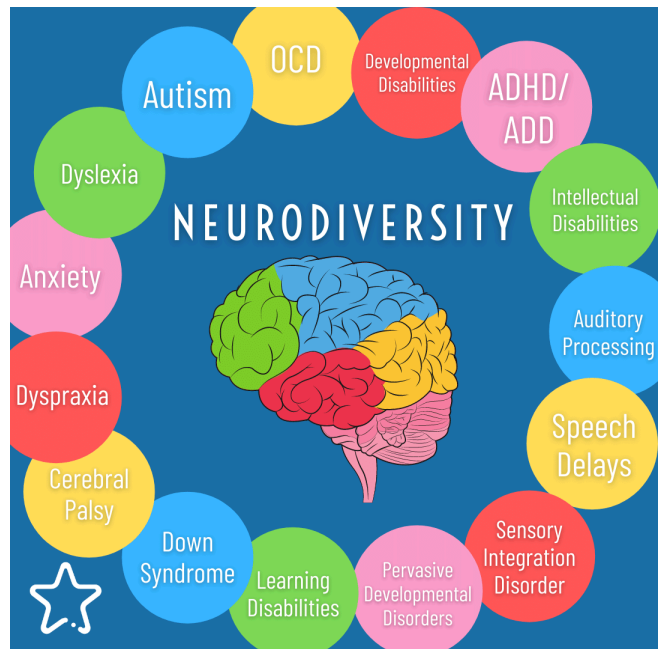
Phone Number: 301-799-8669

Facebook: [Facebook.com/BarrierFreeMD](https://www.facebook.com/BarrierFreeMD)

Instagram, Youtube, TikTok: @BarrierFreeMD

Eligibility

We welcome individuals of all abilities, aged 18 and over, providing a nurturing environment for neurodivergent members. Currently, our programming is not available to individuals under 18.



Studio Team



Britt Burr

Creative Director & Lead Studio Staff
301.799.8669
BrittBurr@BarrierFreeMD.com



Lauren Burr

Executive Director & Lead Studio Staff
301.799.8669
LaurenBurr@BarrierFreeMD.com



Michael Eaton


Studio Assistant



Marie Angier

Studio Assistant & Operations Specialist
MarieAngier@barrierfreemd.com

Studio Policies



SAMPLE STUDIO SCHEDULE

TIME	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI
12 - 1pm	Closed	Nonverbal Communication	Closed	Written Communication	Closed
1 - 2pm		Rhythm & Beats		Community Connections	
2 - 3pm	Conversations 101	Creating a Character	Social Media & You	Lights, Camera, Action!	Professional Writing
3 - 4pm		Besties & Buds Friendship Skills		Scheduling Your Day	
4 - 5pm		Cooking Skills		Community Connections	
5 - 6pm	Community Connections	Dive into Disney	Nintendo Tournament	Phone Calls & Greetings	Storytelling

Barrier-Free Life Skills & Social Studio is open:

Monday: 3 - 6pm

Tuesday: 12 - 6pm, option to attend 12 - 6, 12 - 3, or 3 - 6

Wednesday: 3 - 6pm

Thursday: 12 - 6pm, option to attend 12 - 6, 12 - 3, or 3 - 6

Friday: 3 - 6pm

Community Connections

We offer members opportunities to apply their learned skills within the community, whether nearby or through outings to local events and stores. Transportation for outings is provided, with members and guardians agreeing to this during New Member Intake.

Studio Registration & Tuition Payments

members may register in advance for Studio Sessions on the Barrier-Free website at barrierfreemd.com/studio-registration. If paying via credit/debit card, families may opt for an automated payment plan or may manually register and pay online.

If paying via check, Studio tuition payments must be paid in full by the start of the member's first session within the two-week registration period. Checks should be made payable to Barrier-Free.

Checks may be submitted in person at the start of a Studio session or sent via mail to:

Barrier-Free

7520 Main Street #103

Sykesville, MD 21784

If paying via funding, invoices may be submitted before a member attends Studio sessions or at the end of the month based on attendance. Payments being made via funding sources must be accompanied by a signed contract provided by Barrier-Free.

Current Studio Tuition Rates:

3-hour Studio Session: \$42

6-hour Studio Session: \$74

Studio Trial Sessions

All new prospective Studio members are eligible to receive two FREE Studio Sessions. During the first visit, the prospective new Studio member and/or parent/guardian will meet Studio staff and receive a tour of the space.

A Studio staff member will complete an [Intake Checklist](#) that will be reviewed with the new member and/or parent/guardian at the end of the first session. The checklist includes the criteria for a prospective member to best access the content of our program. Please note, potential members DO NOT have to match ALL criteria to be admitted.

After attending two free Studio Sessions, if the member would like to continue attending and become a Life Skills & Social Studio member, the member and/or parents/guardians must complete the registration packet, review Studio policies & procedures, and sign the Studio Member agreements.

Studio Attendance

Members are expected to attend the Studio sessions for which they are scheduled. We understand, however, that unforeseen circumstances such as illness, sudden schedule changes, or transportation challenges may arise, leading to the need for session cancellations.

In such instances, we are pleased to offer the option to transfer advance Studio payments to a future session or skip automatic payment for any Studio session(s) for the week. Direct refunds will not be issued. To accommodate the unexpected, members may make cancellations with less than 24-hour notice for up to 25% of their scheduled sessions per month. Should you exceed this limit, please note that further changes or cancellations will not be accommodated and the member will be financially responsible for all regularly scheduled Studio sessions.

Chronic Absenteeism

Consistent engagement and participation are key to the success and enrichment of our studio members. A studio member will be deemed chronically absent if they miss 50% or more of their scheduled sessions per month over a three-month period. Such a level of absenteeism compromises the individual's experience and participation, directly affecting the social and educational fabric of our community. Additionally, habitual non-attendance poses financial challenges for Barrier-Free, as it relies on consistent member contributions.

In cases of chronic absenteeism, the member will be obligated to fulfill payment for all scheduled sessions, irrespective of their attendance. To address this issue, the member will be placed on a three-month probation period, during which they must achieve and maintain an attendance rate of 90% or higher. Failure to meet this requirement will result in the termination of the individual's Studio membership. Members under probation will temporarily lose eligibility to participate in Social Clubs.

In the event of long-term elective vacation travel exceeding one month, members will be responsible for maintaining their financial commitments while away to reserve their place in the Studio upon return.

We recognize that extraordinary circumstances may affect attendance. Therefore, exceptions to the Studio Attendance & Chronic Absenteeism policy will be considered on a

case-by-case basis, contingent upon effective communication from the member or their family. Potential exceptions may include, but are not limited to:

- Extended medical leaves of absence (pertaining to the member, their family members, or support staff)
- Extended bereavement leave
- Temporary absence due to transportation challenges
- Financial hardships or funding challenges

These policies are designed to encourage active participation while accommodating unforeseen circumstances, ensuring all members can fully benefit from and contribute to the vibrant community at The Life Skills & Social Studio.

Arrival & Departure

Studio members are expected to consistently arrive on-time for sessions. Members may arrive 15 minutes before the start of each session, allowing members ample time to settle in, e.g., Studio opens at 11:45am, for a 12:00pm session start-time. We kindly request that members arrive no later than 15 minutes after the session's scheduled start time. Should you anticipate arriving later due to pre-existing commitments or unforeseen circumstances, we ask that you notify our staff in advance via email at info@barrierfreemd.com or through a call/text to 301-799-8669.

members are expected to be picked up or to depart promptly at the session's designated end time. A grace period of 15 minutes will be provided. However, should a member remain beyond this period, a late pick-up fee of \$5 per minute will be applied, ensuring that our staff can be compensated for their extended time, e.g., session ends at 6pm, member is picked up at 6:25pm, family is billed for 10 minutes of overtime equaling \$50.

We understand that certain situations, such as traffic conditions, may necessitate regular late arrivals or early departures. In these cases, we request families to engage in dialogue with our team to arrange a suitable plan that accommodates these needs while minimizing disruption to the session's flow.

Inclement Weather & Studio Closure

During times of inclement weather, Barrier-Free will monitor weather forecasts, road conditions, and local agencies to determine the need for Studio session or event cancellations.

Families will be made aware of delays or cancellations via email no less than 2 hours before the start of a session. Notifications will also be available on our website, BarrierFreeMD.com.

Payments made for any delayed or canceled sessions may be applied to a future Studio session of your choice.

Barrier-Free does not always align with Carroll County Public Schools regarding closures. Our sessions start much later in the day, often allowing early-morning road conditions to improve prior to the start of a session.

Above all, our primary concern is always the well-being and safety of our Studio members, team, and families. If you feel as though it would not be safe to venture out in inclement weather, please stay home. We would rather have our members miss a Studio session than risk injury attempting to attend.

Barrier-Free reserves the right to close the Studio at any time, in the event of any circumstances which may arise that prevents the Studio from safely opening.

Parking

The Studio is located in Downtown Sykesville's Historic Carriage House, which has an attached Public Parking Lot, no permits required. In addition, The Studio has 2 accessible handicap parking spots directly in front of our Studio. members/families are free to park in this lot for the duration of a Studio Session.

Parents/Guardians/Counselors

Unfortunately, our Studio does not have a separate waiting area for parents/guardians/counselors. Downtown Sykesville offers a variety of cafés/coffee shops, stores, and outdoor seating for parents/guardians/counselors to use. If a one-on-one support is required, we are happy to review this with your family during the intake process.

Studio Observations

Due to the small size of our Studio, parents/guardians/counselors are not allowed to remain in the Studio and observe sessions. If it is a member's first studio session, a parent/guardian/counselor may arrive early and remain present for the 15 minutes leading up to session start, and will then be asked to leave at the official session start time.

In the event a family would like to request that their son/daughter have a personally arranged third-party observation (personal therapist, speech pathologist, occupational therapist, job coach) be completed during a Studio session, such arrangements must be made ahead of time with Studio staff. Barrier-Free reserves the right to limit such observations depending on the nature/purpose of such observation and to protect the confidentiality of other members.

Snacks & Lunches

Members should bring a snack and/or lunch with them to each Studio Session. Members have full access to the refrigerator and microwave for lunch storage and prep. Barrier-Free will at times, have snacks to share with our members. Members have the right to enjoy or decline any snacks offered.

Daily Spending Money

Members should plan to have \$10 - \$20 in spending money each day. This can be cash and/or debit card. During Community Connections, we may stop by a local ice cream shop, book store, or other business. Members will have the opportunity to make purchases at this time and Studio staff will support members in making these purchases if needed and adhering to a budget if requested by parent/guardian/staff.

What to Wear

Members should dress in weather-appropriate clothing that is comfortable for moving and shoes comfortable for walking. In the event that there is a special opportunity that would require clothing considerations, e.g., gardening in the community garden, members will be notified in advance.

Special Events

Barrier-Free welcomes the celebration of birthdays, graduations, and other special events during Studio sessions! If families would like to supply items for a celebration to occur during a Studio session, please contact us directly and we will be happy to help facilitate.



Photo/Video Consent

All Barrier-Free members consent to being photographed and/or video recorded in an appropriate manner by Studio staff. This consent includes the use of members' names and their images or footage for current and future promotional, educational, and informational purposes on Barrier-Free's website, social media platforms, and other marketing materials.

Illnesses, Emergencies, Allergies, & Medications

Studio lead staff are first aid/CPR certified and will respond accordingly to any illness or emergency. In the event a member feels ill, families/counselors will be contacted immediately. In the meantime, our staff will be able to make the necessary arrangements to care for any ill member.

During registration, members have the opportunity to voluntarily disclose any medical conditions that may require additional considerations, e.g., anaphylactic allergies, asthma seizures.

In the event of an anaphylactic reaction, Studio staff are trained to administer epipens but do not have a Studio epipen on hand. members at risk of such a reaction must bring their own epipen to The Studio.

At this time, Barrier-Free does not supply a certified med tech and cannot directly administer medication to members. Barrier-Free staff are able to help store and remind members to administer their own medications at a certain time if needed.

Elopement

Studio members are expected to reasonably engage in a 1:10 staff-to-member ratio. If, at any time, a member elopes from The Studio, or makes an attempt to elope, Barrier-Free reserves the right to immediately terminate their Studio membership.

Personal Belongings & Cell Phone Use

members may bring and safely store personal belongings at The Studio. Barrier-Free may not be held responsible for any damage to personal property that occurs during Studio sessions.

Members agree to use their cell phones and electronic devices in a responsible manner. During Studio group activities and learning sessions when electronics are not necessary, all devices should be stored in a place that they will not be a distraction to oneself or others. Barrier-Free Studio staff reserves the right to ask a member to turn off and store electronic devices if they are being used in a distracting or inappropriate manner.

Additionally, Barrier-Free members must ask their peers for permission to take photographs before taking or posting pictures. members have the right to respectfully decline being photographed by another member.

Communication

Studio staff may be contacted via email, phone, or text by members or families and will return correspondence within 48 hours. At times, members may want to connect with one another beyond The Studio by exchanging phone numbers, emails, social media friend requests, etc. This is acceptable as a form of social connection and friendship building. members have the right to respectfully decline exchanging information with other members at any time.

Additionally, Barrier-Free embodies the philosophy of “inclusion” and allows its staff the freedom to appropriately communicate with members outside of Studio sessions. This may be in the form of social media friend request acceptances, phone number exchanging, or email exchanging with the intention of forming inclusive bonds.



Damage Responsibility & Billing

We strive to maintain a safe and welcoming environment for all members. We kindly request that members and/or their families take responsibility for any accidental or intentional damage that may occur to our Studio space, furnishings, materials, or equipment.

In the event of damage, members and/or families will be billed for the repair or replacement of the affected items. The billing will be based on a fair market value assessment, taking into consideration the cost of repair, replacement, or professional cleaning, as applicable.

To ensure transparency and fair resolution, any arrangements for damage charges must be made before a member is allowed to resume attending the studio. We understand that accidents can happen, and our priority is to work together to maintain the integrity of our shared space.

In the event of repeated instances of damage, Barrier-Free reserves the right to take appropriate action, which may include the termination of the individual's membership.

Vehicle Damage Responsibility & Billing

As part of our commitment to providing enriching and inclusive experiences, Barrier-Free organizes community outings for our members to enjoy. These outings may involve transportation in team members' personal vehicles.

If a member causes damage both accidental or intentional to a team member's personal vehicle, members and/or families are expected to take responsibility for any necessary cleaning or repairs. This includes stained upholstery or any other damage caused during the outing. members will be required to cover the expenses associated with professional cleaning or repairs to restore the vehicle's condition.

Additionally, compensation for the team member's time in dealing with the situation may be required. Arrangements for damage charges must be made before a member may resume attending the studio. In the event of repeated instances of damage, Barrier-Free reserves the right to take appropriate action, which may include the termination of the individual's ability to attend community outings.

Respectful Language

Studio members must speak to one another with respect at all times both within and outside of The Studio. This includes teasing, excessive joking, exclusion, derogatory language, etc. If disrespectful language is used, Barrier-Free will follow a three-step process:

- First Occurrence: Studio staff will address the member directly regarding any language that may have been disrespectful and work one-on-one to ensure understanding of what has been said and how it could be harmful/hurtful.
- Second Occurrence: Studio staff will address the member directly regarding any language that may have been disrespectful and have a conversation with parent/guardian/counselors (if applicable) regarding the occurrence.
- Third Occurrence: Repeat step two, and the member's membership will be terminated.

Bullying, Intimidation, Harassment

Barrier-Free has a ZERO TOLERANCE policy for any form of verbal, physical, or cyber bullying, intimidation, or harassment amongst members both within or outside of The Studio. If any occurrences or evidence of any such behaviour is reported to Studio staff, Barrier-Free reserves the right to immediately terminate the membership of any member and may not issue a refund for any outstanding sessions.

Termination of Membership

In certain circumstances, when it is in the best interest of one or more members, it may be necessary for Barrier-Free to terminate a member's membership. Every effort will be made to correct a problematic situation before terminating membership.

Reasons for termination of enrollment include the following:

- Disruptive or dangerous behavior by a member or family
- Intentional destruction of Studio property by a member or family
- Speaking negatively of Barrier-Free or its members in a public fashion
- Continued missed tuition payments without communication to Barrier-Free
- The inability of Barrier-Free's Life Skills & Social Studio, to meet the member's needs
- Disrespect of the law, including those laws governing defamation, discrimination, harassment, and copyright and fair use.

Supporting the Studio

Barrier-Free remains committed to being affordable and accessible for all members and families. If you would like to support our Studio, check out our Amazon wish list at amzn.to/3omj3k6.



Additional Questions?

Please direct any questions to Barrier-Free via email at info@BarrierFreeMD.com or 301-799-8669.

