

**CHILDREN AT RISK  
SOCIAL SKILL GROUP  
APPLICATION & SELECTION PROCESS**

As many of you know, one of Children at Risk's supports is our Social Skill "Friendship" Therapy Groups, designed to address the deficit of social skill development that is apparent at all levels of the spectrum (high-needs to high-functioning) for children diagnosed within the Autism Spectrum Disorders. This support has been identified as being critically important for ASD children, but not widely available through many sources of Autism services in our community.

Children at Risk offers a minimum of 3 sessions of Groups – Fall, Winter and Spring. Groups can run from 8 weeks or more, running usually once/week with each meeting 1½ to 2 hours in length. The ratio of child/adult can vary with the type of group offered. We try to offer age ranges from 4 years to preteen/early teen, as well as Moderately-Functioning to High-Functioning (Asperger Syndrome) group outlines. With this are Life-Skills focus and Outing-Based groups, as well. Groups are facilitated by experienced staff that have strong backgrounds in Autism and Behavioural Therapy.

Prior to Group Registrations, we publish the number of Groups, age range and focus for each session. However, what we can offer is limited to funds available (Groups are subsidized in direct costs 1/2 to 2/3 with fundraising and donation dollars). Also, the age range and Group focus can change with the availability of children on certain nights/days.

Unlike registering your child for a recreation program, an application for the Social Skill Groups does NOT guarantee that your child can participate. While we do our best to accommodate new Referrals, as well as having children return for Groups, the success of the Groups is based on the matching of children within each Group to ensure the Group is interactive and functional. Factors that are considered are: Age, Level of Functionality, Verbal Skills, School Grade, Personal Interests, Personality (i.e. introvert/extrovert), Behavioural Issues and more.

Walking you through the process of application for the Social Skill Groups ...

- Groups being offered are published by Children at Risk.
- Families are encouraged to contact CAR if they are interested in their child participating.
- 

If your child is already on file, an email or telephone call is requested.

If your child is new to our charity, we ask that you complete a Referral Form (parents can self-refer) – usually provided with the Group Publication and/or available on our website at [www.childrenatrisk.ca](http://www.childrenatrisk.ca).

- New Referral Forms are gathered and a day set aside for an Interview or "Meet & Greet" with our Head Facilitator – this meeting is usually about 30 minutes with parent and child. The meeting is twofold: it allows the parent/child to ask more about the groups and decide if this is the support they are seeking, plus it allows our Head Facilitator an opportunity to profile your child for group participation.
- After all the Requests and New Referrals have been established, an internal meeting takes place to decide the matching of children within each group. While we do our best to accommodate New Referrals and cannot guarantee back-to-back sessions for children, not all Requests can be filled. This service is not on an individual basis, which means that some children's needs cannot be met at that time and/or in a group setting.
- Families are contacted to offer your child a group. Due to staffing limitations, follow-up contact cannot always be made with each family. We encourage families to contact us by email or telephone on the status of their Request.
- Group costs vary with the type of Group and length of session. As a charity, we must charge a fee for Groups, but some insurance and Special Services at Home funds can be used to finance the cost.
- Once your child has been interviewed, we will keep them on file in our data base for consideration of Groups each session. However, we also encourage families to keep in touch with us to express interest. We may also request another interview if there has been a passage of time between the initial meeting and/or group participation, recognizing that our children change in their development as they grow!

I hope this helps to explain the processes that take place with the Children at Risk Social Skill Therapy Groups. The Group availability is also subject to location space and the Facilitators that are available for each session. Please keep in mind that Children at Risk does NOT receive government funding and must rely on fundraising, donations and foundation applications to finance ALL of our programs and services. This factor overall is the determining one for the amount of supports that can be offered by Children at Risk, Ottawa!

Brenda Reisch

---