

## **Turning Pointe Autism Foundation Career College Program Description**

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### History

In 2012, Turning Pointe Autism Foundation launched a pilot program called Career College. The focus of the pilot was to prepare students for independent employment. Through the support of initial partners Dan Wolf Automotive, Walgreens and OfficeMax; students were trained for positions prior to interviewing for the job. The model gives students a competitive edge in the job market - *improving the dire statistics of adults with autism typically under or unemployed*. Career College continues to evolve its curriculum to stay aligned to best practice in the field and expand its list of Employment Partners.

### Mission

Turning Pointe Autism Foundation creates opportunities and programs to educate individuals with autism through proven interventions to increase independence, encourage meaningful lifelong pursuits and enrich the community at large.

### Purpose and Scope

Our program is designed to teach and develop a reliable system of communication, organization, positive behavior supports, emotional regulation, social skills and sensory regulation to individuals with autism spectrum disorder, social and communication challenges, and other learning differences. Students come from a wide range of backgrounds and ability levels.

Turning Pointe utilizes a 5-strategy interdisciplinary approach that supports the core deficits of autism spectrum disorder through Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) and assists students as they grow and learn to manage everyday challenges. Communication, organization, positive behavior supports, sensory and social skills (COPES) is our overall program model that guides student programming, data collection procedures and implements EBP's. This model uses the latest research and clinical expertise to help students develop new skills and enhance personal talents and strengths as they navigate towards independent thriving futures.

### General Program Overview

Turning Pointe Career College is an educational opportunity for individuals impacted by Autism Spectrum Disorder, social and communication challenges, and other learning differences. The program is open to post-secondary students. Students are seeking to improve their skills in the areas of independent living, social communication and employability skills. Turning Pointe partners with local employment partners to provide students access to hands on training opportunities in real and mock work settings.

Turning Pointe Career College operates from 9:00am–3:00pm Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from August to May. In the summer, the Career College typically hosts a 6-week summer COPES course. Post-secondary students that attend Summer COPES often return for the full program in the fall. Summer COPES runs Monday, Wednesday, and Friday from 9:00am–11:30am.

### Admission Process

The Turning Pointe Career College Admissions Process is similar to a traditional college. Students and families tour the Career College. If they are interested in admissions they complete the application. Then a pre-admission interview is conducted with the Career College team and the student. Parents/guardians may or may not be present during the interview. If the student is an appropriate fit for the Career College they receive and acceptance letter and then go through the

registration process. Student and their families will participate in an Orientation day prior to the first day of call.

### *Classroom Structure*

The Career College classroom is structured with a high staff to student ratio, which fosters a learning environment conducive to individualized instruction for our students. It is anticipated that a candidate will be able to achieve a certificate of completion within one school year.

All staff are certified or licensed according to their position and highly trained. Our multi-disciplinary team approach includes the following qualified professionals:

- Special Education Teachers hold a Professional Educator License (PEL) and a Learning Behavior Specialist I (LBSI) endorsement
- Instructor/Trainer and Employment Partner Coordinator have extensive experience in this field and a degree in a related field
- Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)
- Administrator who hold a Master's degree in a clinical field related to autism
- Registered Nurse (RN) - consult
- Occupational Therapy - consult
- Speech and Language Therapist leads team

### Related Services

Therapeutic services at Turning Pointe can be provided directly from a provider, as consult services, as well as being woven into our program throughout the day. Programming is monitored for fidelity as students' progress through the Career College curriculum. The Career College has access to a full-time Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA) for both skill acquisition and behavior reduction programming and a Speech Language Pathologist (SLP) to target functional communication skills.

### *Behavior Intervention*

Behavior Interventions are founded on the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA). ABA is a treatment approach that applies principles of learning theory to produce positive and meaningful changes in behavior. Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) utilize function-based interventions to decrease maladaptive behaviors, increase socially appropriate behaviors and promote skill acquisition. Replacement behaviors are taught proactively to increase student success. Interventions are customized, adjusted as needed, and created in conjunction with evidenced-based practices.

### *Speech and Language Services*

Certified speech and language pathologists work to help students increase functional communication and overcome other language barriers to actively participate in everyday life. Multimodal communication assessments are conducted to determine communication modalities and deficits in receptive and expressive language. Therapy programming focuses on individual students' needs to request wants and needs, initiate and respond to social interactions, and protest or comment about the environment with multiple communication partners in various settings.

### *Occupational Therapy - Consult*

Our certified occupational therapists are available to the Career College team on a consultative status to provide insight and functional programming within all areas of functional/independent living, Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) and sensory regulation related to the work place and job readiness.

## Curriculum and Program

The following subjects make up the Career College Curriculum. Content within each of these courses is modified to meet individual student needs. Each course has prerequisite skills that are added to instruction when students display deficit in these areas. When students excel they are given enrichment instruction to advance their current skill and knowledge base.:

- *C.O.P.E.S.<sup>™</sup>*: This course allows students access to effective communication skills, organizational skills, positive behavior supports, emotional regulation strategies, social skills, and sensory awareness. Every Career College student will participate in the C.O.P.E.S.<sup>™</sup> course and develop a system for communication, while recognizing their own challenges and needs in the areas of social awareness, organization, and behavior. Students will identify triggers that cause maladaptive responses or reactions and learn about the sensory system and how to identify needs.
- *Social Communication*: Students will develop skills as they relate to social communication, forming and maintaining relationships both inside and outside of the workplace and appropriate boundaries. This course covers topics ranging from personal space, managing conflict, navigating social situations, socially appropriate behavior, and negotiating skills. The students will focus on conversation skills, non-verbal communication, and critical skills needed to work alongside others, including managers and supervisors. The course will allow student to develop the skills they need to make meaningful connections with others in their personal lives and in a work environment. Other class topics will include interpersonal relationships and appropriate electronic communication (i.e. e-mail, texting, social media etc.). Students will have the opportunity to practice these social skills during regularly scheduled community-based activities throughout the year.
- *Independent Living*: This course covers skills that will promote and support independent living or living arrangements with a roommate. Students will develop skills that result in a high degree of independence in the area of household management, daily chores, shopping, food safety, and food preparation. Students will also learn information on banking and money management skills. These skills will promote their ability to manage their personal finances. Students will complete regular volunteer work to increase their exposure to different work environments. In addition, student will engage in community navigation opportunities to increase their understanding of public transportation within the community. The overall goal of this course is to promote students' ability to live and function as independently as possible.
- *Employability Skills*: This course is designed to prepare students for independent employment. Students will align their personal skills, strengths and abilities with appropriate workplace demands and responsibilities. They will research and be exposed to a variety of different work environments. Instruction will be provided in the areas of job searching, resume writing, interviewing, appropriate workplace behavior/protocols, and how to advocate for yourself in the workplace. Hands on training opportunities will be provided for students throughout the second semester in various settings (i.e. food industry, retail, warehouse, etc.)

## *Curriculum Resources & Assessments*

Turning Pointe uses a wide variety of materials to accommodate every student's individualized needs. Materials, lesson plans, and community-based instruction are all adapted to fit the needs of each student.

- *Essentials for Living (EFL)* – The Essential for Living assessment tool and curriculum is one of the resources used to determine current levels in the areas of communication, behavior, and functional skills.
- *The Assessment of Basic Language and Learning Skills (ABLLS-R)* – This assessment tool and curriculum guide assists in identifying language and other critical skills that are in need of intervention in order to develop an educational program that helps the acquisition of new skills.
- *The Assessment of Functional Living Skills (AFLS)* – The AFLS assists in evaluating, tracking, and teaching functional skills to help individuals become more independent at home, school, and in the community. This system assesses the following skills: basic living, home, community participation, school, vocational, and independent living.
- *PEERS for Young Adults (PEERS)* – Social skills training for adults with autism spectrum disorder and other social challenges. This is used as an evaluating and teaching tool for individuals in the areas of social communication. Teaching strategies and step by step guides for students are provided by PEERS.
- *PEERS Curriculum for School Based Professionals* – Social skills training for adolescents with autism spectrum disorder. This is used as an evaluating and teaching tool for individuals in the areas of social communication. Teaching strategies and step by step guides for students are provided by PEERS.
- *TEACCH Transition Assessment Profile (T-TAP)* – Comprehensive formal assessment that assesses strengths, interests, and abilities in the areas of: vocational skills and behaviors, independent functioning, leisure skills, functional communication, and interpersonal behavior both in the home and school environment.
- *Social Skill Checklist* – Qualitative checklist completed by multiple communication partners to help evaluate social skills, such as: conversation skills, problem solving, understanding emotions, complimenting, and flexibility.

Turning Pointe Career College is committed to providing ongoing services to our students to assist them in reaching their goals for adulthood.

#### *Evidence-Based Practices*

Evidence-based practices (EBPs) include empirically supported techniques found within research journals, textbooks and accredited education programs. EBPs utilized by Turning Pointe may include but are not limited to:

- Antecedent-based
- Differential Reinforcement
- Communication Systems
- Task Analysis
- Visual Supports
- Prompting
- Video Modeling
- Precision Teaching
- Functional Communication Training
- Structured Teaching
- Behavior Skills Training

## Clinical Model

Turning Pointe utilizes a 5-strategy interdisciplinary approach that supports the core deficits of autism spectrum disorder through Evidence-Based Practices (EBP) and assists students as they grow and learn to manage everyday challenges. Communication, organization, positive behavior supports, sensory and social skills (COPES) is our overall program model that guides student programming, data collection procedures and implements EBP's. This model uses the latest research and clinical expertise to help students develop new skills and enhance personal talents and strengths as they navigate towards independent thriving futures.

**Communication** – Communication is reciprocal process that involves listening and speaking in equal measures. Key strategies, such as Augmentative Alternative Communication (AAC) and Partner Augmented Input (PAI) are utilized to address communication/deficits in expressive, receptive language and social communication. Communication programming is developed by the adult services team in conjunction with relevant research and assessments.

**Organization** – The arrangement and preparation for the day in order to provide structure to help students cope with interruptions in routines and successfully execute the day. Schedules and routines are tailored and flexible to meet each student's unique and changing needs. Age appropriate scheduling supports and proactive teaching are used to support students to appropriately interact, pay attention to detail, reduce maladaptive behaviors, and increase independence. Organization supports students to navigate transitions successfully and stay on track within the real-world setting.

**Positive Behavior Supports** – Individualized behavior intervention plans are developed which provide tools and strategies to replace maladaptive behavior with positive behaviors and increase socially significant skills. A protocol is outlined for staff to respond effectively to our students' needs and implement the plans consistently and with fidelity. Positive Behavior Supports programming is developed by the BCBA and adult services team in conjunction with relevant research and assessments.

**Emotional Regulation** – Self-management programs are tailored to each student to identify escalation from a calm organized "green" state to a disruptive and nonresponsive "red."

**Sensory and Social** – Sensory dynamics and social skills is a component that teaches processes to receive and organize information through the senses and how to use them successfully to participate in everyday activities and respond appropriately in social situations. Sensory and social programming is developed by the adult services team in conjunction with relevant research and assessments.

## Programmatic Outcomes

All students that have attended Turning Pointe Career College for one year will maximize independence by mastering 80% of skills trained. Independence will be measured based on current level of performance and subsequent skill mastery in the following three areas: social communication, independent living, and employability skills based on Career College's Course Outlines.

Student data will be collected bi-weekly and analyzed both program wide and per individual student quarterly.

### Data Collection

Continuous student specific data is taken for all Turning Pointe Career College students on program outcomes and course objectives. Data collection procedures may be outlined by specific curriculum resources and/or assessments or created by Turning Pointe specialists. Data collected in all area is analyzed regularly to maximize instruction and behavioral interventions and also used to make adjustments to student programming as necessary.

### Student Grades

Student grades in each course are based on individual student mastery of learning objectives. Each lesson plan is based on specific objectives with a mastery criteria. Student progress is tracked daily in each class. Skill mastery is reported in a progress report on a quarterly basis.

### Certificate of Completion

Students will be enrolled for full-time coursework. Upon completion of all required coursework, students will have the opportunity to interview with an Employment Partner. Certified students will be eligible for Career Mentor Support.

### Career Mentor Support

The Career Mentor Program is designed to provide on-the-job support to students in their transition from classroom to career. The program provides one-on-one support in the work environment after the individual has been hired. Career Mentor Program hours are dependent upon the needs of the student, with the end goal of complete independence on-the-job. The Career Mentor Program is offered to students who have completed all required coursework and their tuition payments are in good standing.

### Family Partnership

Family partnership is a key component of the Turning Pointe philosophy. The involvement of parents and families in the education process is critical to students' success. Parents are active participants in their child's education through meetings and student conferences, and on-going collaboration. Students communicate their progress to their parents on a bi-weekly basis via email. Staff facilitate and assist with these emails as needed for each individual student. Staff communicate with students and families via email and newsletters on a regular basis. Remaining connected is essential to maintain program consistency and work together towards student progress and accomplishments.