

Assent, Choice, and Dignity in Sessions

How we look for your child's willing participation and your family's rights in the process.

Every learner deserves to be treated with respect. This guide explains how the clinical team pays attention to your child's willingness to participate, how choice is offered, and what rights your family has throughout services.

Consent and assent are different

Consent is the legal agreement a parent or guardian, or an adult learner, gives for services and for specific procedures. Assent is the learner's own ongoing agreement to take part, shown through words, actions, or both. The team looks for both.

What assent can look like

- Approaching an activity, person, or material
- Staying engaged and relaxed
- Saying yes, nodding, smiling, or reaching for materials
- Choosing to continue when offered a break

What a pause or refusal can look like

- Turning away, leaving the area, or pushing materials away
- Saying "no," "stop," or "all done," or using a sign, card, or device to communicate it
- Becoming very quiet or still, or showing signs of distress

Every learner shows these signals differently. Caregivers help the team learn what your child's signals look like.

What the team generally does when a learner pauses or says no

- Pause and check in
- Offer a break or a choice
- Adjust the activity, materials, setting, or level of difficulty
- Look at patterns over time with the BCBA to understand what may be getting in the way

Situations involving safety may call for a different response. How those situations will be handled is described in your child's plan and discussed with you in advance.

Services, goals, and progress are individualized. Nothing on this page guarantees a specific result, timeline, or authorization.

Choice in sessions

When appropriate, learners may be offered choices about activities, materials, the order of tasks, and breaks. Offering choice is one way the team supports dignity and engagement.

As unintrusive as possible

Interventions are selected to be as unintrusive as possible while still addressing your child's needs. Before a procedure is used, the BCBA explains what it involves, why it is recommended, possible risks, and alternatives.

Your family's rights

- Ask questions about any part of your child's program at any time
- Observe sessions, in line with clinic policies
- Request changes to goals, procedures, or schedules
- Decline a procedure, or withdraw consent
- Raise concerns with your BCBA or the Clinical Director

You will always be treated with respect when you ask questions, decline a procedure, or raise a concern.

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