



Essential Features of a Defensible Autism Program

Module 1: Learning Environments

OVERVIEW

The APERS assessment looks at key parts of the learning environment for autistic students. Safety focuses on removing hazards and having clear emergency plans. Organization checks that the space is neat, easy to use, and predictable. Materials are reviewed to make sure they are in good condition and appropriate. Visual schedules are checked for clarity and consistency to help provide structure. Transitions are reviewed to see if they are smooth and supported with helpful strategies.

THE PURPOSE

An organized, safe learning environment with quality materials is crucial for autistic students as it reduces sensory overload and anxiety. Visual schedules and structured transitions provide clear expectations and routines, enhancing their ability to manage their day and engage effectively in learning and social interactions.



SUBDOMAINS

- Safety
- Organization
- Materials
- Visual Schedules
- Transitions

WHAT TO LOOK FOR

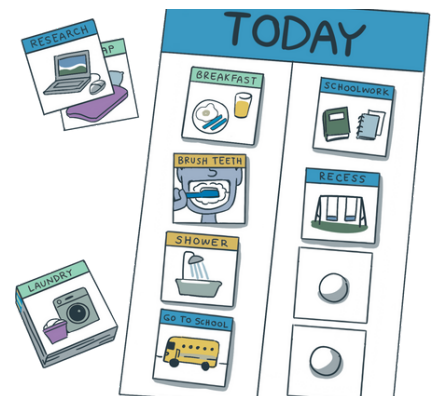
SAFETY : The environment is free of hazards, indoors and outdoors. The environment must be safe, supervised, and designed for clear visibility. Staff prevent safety issues and support school-wide safety systems. Students are taught hygiene skills, which are reinforced in daily routines and community activities, with sanitation maintained at all times.

ORGANIZATION: The classroom has clearly labeled, age-appropriate storage that students can access independently. The space is large enough for all materials and furniture. Clear physical boundaries define each area, showing students what activity belongs there, and be adjusted based on the needs of autistic students.

MATERIALS: All materials are organized, in good condition, and available in enough quantity for every student. Learning activities include real-life, age-appropriate materials.

VISUAL SCHEDULES: Schedules are used consistently by all staff, provided in formats that fit each student's needs. Students have portable schedules to support independent transitions.

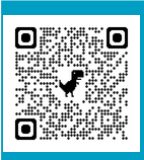
TRANSITIONS: Staff use consistent strategies to prepare students for transitions and changes. Students are taught how to handle unexpected transitions and unstructured times independently.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



The Autism Helper.



GET CONNECTED!



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