



The Intellectual
and Developmental
Disabilities Council
of Tarrant County

Welcome!

Supporting Students with IDD for a Successful Return to School

August 6, 2026

To transform the region into an inclusive community where individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) thrive.

A Community Coalition Increasing Opportunities for People with IDD



Take this opportunity to introduce yourself!

- ❖ Who are you?
- ❖ How can you assist?
- ❖ What might you need assistance with?



Intellectual and
Developmental
Disabilities Council
of Tarrant County

ABOUT OUR PRESENTERS



Lauren Read
Ultimate Caring ABA



Katina Smith
Ultimate Caring ABA



ULTIMATE CARING ABA

Rooted in Care.

WHERE EVERY FAMILY THRIVES

11300 N. Central Expressway, Suite 205 - Dallas, TX 75243

Ready, Set, Thrive!

Supporting Students with IDD for a Successful Return to School

Introduction

Who We Are

Ultimate Caring ABA was built on a foundation of nearly two decades of healthcare excellence — and a deep, unshakeable belief that when care is rooted with the entire family in mind, everyone flourishes.

Lauren Read is a Board Certified Behavior Analyst with nine years of clinical experience who specializes in individualized, assent-based care and the development of strong clinical teams. Katina brings more than a decade of nonprofit leadership and relationship-driven service, having created programs that supported hundreds of children and families. Together at Ultimate Caring ABA, they are committed to helping children thrive through compassionate, family-centered care.



Lauren Read

BCBA, M.A.

VP, Clinical Director Partner



Katina Smith

Director of Community
Partnerships & Executive
Operations



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Rooted in Care.

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Today's Roadmap

1

Understand the transition challenge

2

Prepare routines before school starts

3

Use visuals, social stories, and practice

4

Prevent and respond to challenging behavior

5

Support regulation, independence, and advocacy

6

Strengthen family-school partnerships

Goal: leave with strategies you can use the same week.

Why Back to School Transitions Matter

Students with IDD often rely on predictability to feel safe and successful.

Summer-to-school changes affect routines, sleep, expectations, people, and environments.

Stress may show up as anxiety, refusal, aggression, withdrawal, or increased dependence.

The first weeks of school are an adjustment period, not a “behavior problem” period.

Reframe behavior as communication:
“What support is this student missing right now?”

A predictable start reduces crisis response later.

Common Transition Challenges to Anticipate

Sleep and morning routine changes

New teacher, classroom, peers, or support staff

Increased academic, social, and communication demands

Transportation changes, cafeteria noise, assemblies, or schedule shifts

Reduced access to preferred activities compared with summer

Difficulty separating from caregivers or returning after a long break

Planning question

Which part of the school day is most likely to be hard: arrival, transitions, lunch, recess, specials, dismissal, or homework?

Start there. Build support around the highest-risk routine first.

Start Before the First Day

Shift bedtime and wake time gradually before school begins.

Practice the morning sequence: dress, breakfast, backpack, shoes, leave.

Preview the school route, drop-off, pick-up, or bus routine.

Visit the classroom, playground, office, or cafeteria when possible.

Introduce staff through photos, short videos, or quick meet-and-greets.

Prepare regulation or comfort items that are allowed at school.

**Keep practice short and successful.
One smooth 5-minute rehearsal is
better than a long stressful one.**

**Home practice should look like
school expectations, but with
flexibility and reinforcement.**

Build a Predictable Routine Map

Home

Wake up
Bathroom / hygiene
Dress
Breakfast
Backpack
Leave

School

Arrival
Put items away
Morning work
Instruction
Lunch / recess
Dismissal

Bridge

Same language
Same visuals
Same reinforcement
Same regulation plan
Same communication options

Consistency does not mean rigidity. It means the student knows what to expect and how to ask for help.

Visual Supports: Reduce Anxiety by Making Expectations Visible

Visual schedule: shows what happens now, next, and later.

First/then board: clarifies the next demand and upcoming reinforcer.

Checklist: supports independence and task completion.

Timer or countdown: prepares the student for transitions.

Choice board: gives appropriate control within adult expectations.

Break/help cards or AAC buttons: make replacement communication accessible.

Visuals should be used before escalation, not introduced only after behavior has already intensified.

Match the visual to the student: object, photo, icon, written word, or full checklist.

Social Stories and Transition Practice

Use simple, positive language to preview unfamiliar or stressful routines.

Include what the student will see, hear, do, and how they can get support.

Practice through modeling, role-play, rehearsal, and feedback.

Read the story when calm, not only when a problem occurs.

Update the story when routines or staff change.

Sample language

“When I get to school, I will walk to my classroom. If I feel nervous, I can ask for help or take a break. My teacher will show me what comes next.”

Make practice predictable, brief, and reinforced.

Preventing Challenging Behavior During Transitions

Identify likely triggers before the first week begins.
Give transition warnings and enough processing time.
Break hard routines into smaller, teachable steps.
Offer structured choices: "Walk or carry the schedule?"
Alternate difficult tasks with easier or preferred tasks when possible.
Reinforce flexibility, communication, and calm re-engagement.

**Proactive support is not "giving in."
It is teaching the student how to be
successful before behavior becomes
unsafe.**

**Prevention target: increase
successful transitions, not just
decrease behavior.**

Responding When a Transition Becomes Difficult

Stay calm and reduce verbal overload.

Use brief, clear prompts and allow processing time.

Prioritize safety and avoid unnecessary power struggles.

Prompt a replacement response: “help,” “break,” “more time,” or “I don’t understand.”

Reinforce recovery, communication, and re-engagement.

After the student is calm, review what worked and adjust the plan.

What to avoid

Long lectures

Repeated questioning

Escalating demands

Public correction

Withholding communication tools

The goal is safe recovery and return to routine.

Supporting Emotional Regulation

Teach regulation skills when the student is calm and available to learn.

Help the student identify body signals and emotional states.

Create a calm-down routine that is consistent across settings.

Use sensory, movement, breathing, quiet space, AAC, or break options proactively.

Practice returning to the routine after using a regulation strategy.

Regulation support sequence

**Notice → Name → Support
→ Re-enter**

Example: "Your body looks tense. Let's take 2 minutes in the calm space, then we will check the schedule."

Promoting Independence and Self Advocacy

Teach students to request help, breaks, more time, clarification, or sensory support.

Use least-to-most prompting to avoid unnecessary dependence.

Reinforce attempts, not only perfect independence.

Give students meaningful choices within routines.

Support access to AAC, visuals, or other communication tools throughout the day.

Self-advocacy phrase bank

"I need help."

"Can I have a break?"

"I need more time."

"Can you show me?"

"That is too loud."

Independence grows when support is predictable and then carefully faded.

Family-School Communication and Collaboration

Start communication before concerns escalate.

Share the student's strengths, motivators, triggers, and effective calming strategies.

Clarify communication methods: email, notebook, app, scheduled check-ins, or meetings.

Align supports across settings while respecting differences between home and school.

Use data and specific examples rather than general labels like "good" or "bad day."

Useful daily note format

1. What went well
2. What was hard
3. What helped
4. What to try tomorrow

Partnership goal: shared problem solving, not blame.

Creating Welcoming and Inclusive Classrooms

Build relationships before increasing demands.

Use strengths-based language and presume competence.

Prepare the environment with clear routines, visuals, and accessible communication.

Offer multiple ways to participate in learning and social routines.

Teach peers and staff how to support inclusion respectfully.

Celebrate small wins during the adjustment period.

Inclusion is not just physical placement.

It is belonging, access, participation, and support.

A welcoming classroom lowers anxiety and increases readiness to learn.

Action Plan: What Will You Use First?

Choose one strategy for each area:

Before school starts: one routine to practice

During school: one visual or communication support to add

When behavior happens: one replacement response to prompt

After school starts: one communication system to maintain

Small, consistent supports create a more confident start.

The best plan is one the team can actually use.

Questions and Discussion

Discussion prompts

What transition is most difficult for your student or classroom?

What strategy from today feels most realistic to implement first?

What support do families and school teams need from each other?

Thank you

**Ultimate Caring ABA
Katina Smith & Lauren Read**

Come learn, connect, and help
build inclusive communities
where students with IDD thrive.

Welcome

MEMBERS

- **Individual Members:**

- Cynthia Rodriguez
- Theresa Moffitt
- Ranella Franklin
- Sandra Rodrigo
- Gwen Li
- Amber Luckey
- Don Gilley
- Richard Garrett
- Trelawny Jones
- Audra Ressel
- Joseph Barbarito
- Teresa Briscoe
- Susan Cole
- Kayla Glover
- Leah Whitworth
- Julia Chalker
- Iris Tule
- Shelly Lemman
- Carrie Tunson
- Erin Fogarty
- Whitney Dragon
- Meagan Bordelon
- Steve Brooks
- Brittany Rudd
- Deborah Norris
- Mihstiegh Boggs
- Mari Flores Gonzales

- Cody Turner
- Renae Arledge
- Katrina Willie-Musoma
- Stephanie Morris
- Monetta Smith
- Courtney Caraway
- Liliana Zumba-Acevedo
- Sarah Stuckel
- Stephanie Stone

- **Premier Partners:**

- Tarrant County, the office of Judge Tim O'Hare (Founding Partner)
- Fort Worth ISD (Founding Partner)
- My Health My Resources of Tarrant County
- Cook Children's Health Plan
- Cook Children's Medical Center

- **Elite Members:**

- Berry Family Services

- **Organizational Members:**

- United Healthcare

- **Sponsor Members:**

- Green Oaks Education and Support

- **Professional Members:**

- Community Options, Inc.
- Center for ASD
- Monica Santiago, 3-in-1 Advocacy

Your Name/Organization Belongs Here

www.IDDCouncil.org/join-us



JOIN A COMMITTEE

- ❖ **COMMUNICATIONS & PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE:** Identifies and schedules topics of interest for Council events and helps create and distribute information important to members of the Council and community through written and electronic media. Meets hybrid as needed.
- ❖ **SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE:** Calling all party planners, entertainers and creative thinkers! Let's plan programs that add value to the community, advocates and creates awareness of IDD. The committee is looking for parents, providers, community leaders and event planners to join us in finding and creating new opportunities. Meets hybrid as needed.
- ❖ **TRANSITION COMMITTEE:** Provides educators the opportunity to collaborate and discover resources to share with families in the path to adulthood. The committee consists of school counselors, transition specialists, parents and advocates interested in establishing or advancing opportunities for people with disabilities after high school. Help develop strategies that support families and students in schools and secondary education. Meets the 2nd Friday of the month from 9-10:30 a.m.

SPONSORSHIP: BE SAFE SCREENINGS

An interactive training designed as a unique safety event that brings together LEO's & transition students to learn from each other and how to interact safely with police.





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SHOUT OUT TO LAST MONTH'S AMAZING DONORS!

thanks
FOR YOUR
Support

- Ranella Franklin (Annuities donor)
- Kenzie Harris (July donor)
- Audra Ressel (July donor)
- Bryan Cotton (monthly donor)
- Mike Anderson (monthly donor)
- Macy Davis (June donor)

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(www.IDDCouncil.org/gift)



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SHOP, EAT AND SUPPORT THE IDD COUNCIL



amazon
wishlist

Kroger Shopper Card Community Rewards: <https://bit.ly/2Sw9WX1>

Rosa's Cards \$20 value / \$20 each: Email request with Qty: Rita@IDDCouncil.org

More info and ways to support our mission: <https://www.iddcouncil.org/partners>

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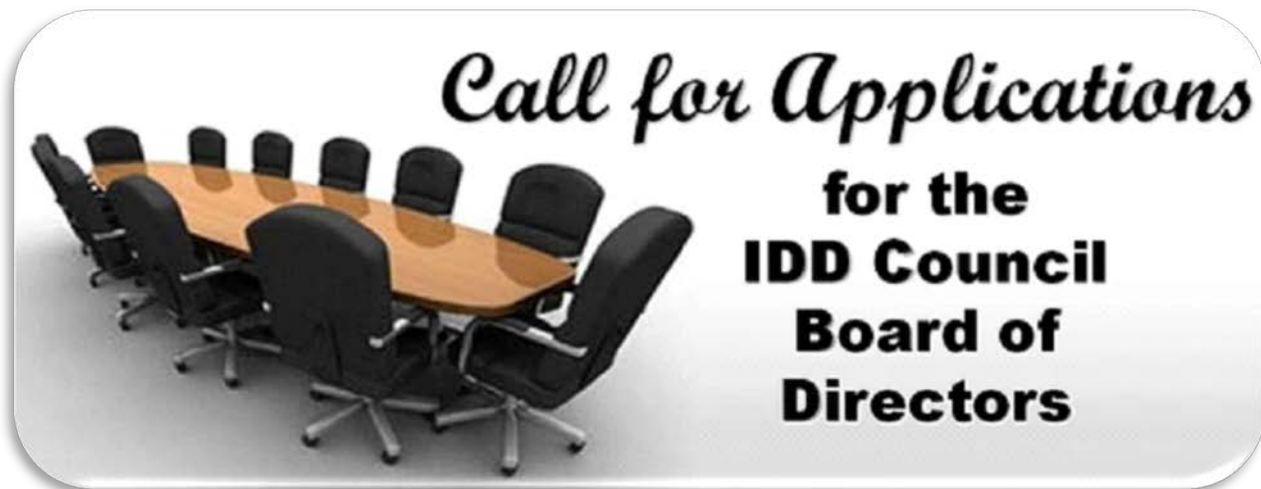
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The IDD Council is accepting applications from outstanding leaders, self-advocates and caregivers to serve as Board members. Help us to grow and prosper in our work.

<https://www.iddcouncil.org/board-member-info>.



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UPCOMING EVENTS



MONTHLY MEETINGS

1ST THURSDAY EACH MONTH 9-10:30 a.m.

3136 W. 4th Street, Fort Worth

September 3 – An Overview of CCHP Services

October 1 – Work Without Worry: Understanding
SSI, SSDI & Work Incentives

November 5 – Exploring the benefits of chiropractic
care for people with neuromuscular disorders,
sensory sensitivity, Autism & other IDD diagnoses

TRANSITION COMMITTEE MEETINGS

2ND FRIDAY EACH MONTH 9-10:30 a.m.

(location varies)

August 14 - 3136 W. 4th Street, Fort Worth

September 11

October 9



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FREE

MAKING CONNECTIONS CENTRAL TARRANT

COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR ALL AGES

*The IDD Council is proud to partner with Fort Worth ISD
to host **MAKING CONNECTIONS CENTRAL TARRANT***



SATURDAY, OCT. 3, 2026 • 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

McLean Middle School • 3816 Stadium Dr., Ft. Worth, 76109

Resources for:

- Medicaid Waivers/Social Security
- Guardianship/Supported Decision-Making
- Behavioral Health
- Transition & Employment Services
- College Programs
- Assistive & Adaptive Technology
- Special Needs Trusts / Wills
- Homelessness
- Assisted Living / Housing
- Financial Planning
- Recreation & Leisure
- Therapy & Camp Providers
- Respite/Day Habilitation
- and more!



Resources & Exhibitors



Free Childcare
(advance registration required)



Breakout Sessions

Schedule, Session Details, Childcare Registration, Exhibitor and Sponsor

Registration: www.iddcouncil.org/makingconnectionsfw



The IDD Council's **Making Connections Disability Resource Fairs** bring together the disability resources in our community to one, easily accessed location for families and caregivers to collect information and learn about benefits and services each provide. **Making Connections Disability Resource Fairs** are held throughout the year in various Tarrant County locations.