

Parent & Family Training 2025



Birch Family Services is proud to offer free virtual training and informational sessions throughout the year for our staff, parents, families, and community members. These sessions explore a variety of topics and provide specialized strategies to support children, adolescents, and adults with autism and developmental disabilities.

Led by our Workplace Development Department, our robust training program equips participants with tools and resources designed to assist individuals at every stage of life. We invite you to join us in building a supportive and informed community. Together, we can empower families and create brighter futures for individuals with autism and developmental disabilities.

Meet Our Instructors



Margaret Chiara, Senior VP of Workforce Development & Training

Margaret has over 30 years in the field of disabilities. Over her career she has had the pleasure of supporting individuals, their families and staff. She began her career as a Special Education Teacher and then went on to join a training department where she pursued her BCBA, NYS LBA as well as her education administration certificates. Training is her passion where she has the opportunity to meet new staff, work with parents and families and directly impact the individuals Birch Family Services supports.



Lori Volpe, PhD., Autism Coordinator

Lori has 40 years experience working with adults and children with ASD and other developmental disabilities in educational, residential and vocational settings. In addition to her position with BTI, Lori has worked for agencies in the New York area developing and opening programs for individuals on the autism spectrum. Lori was trained in TEACCH at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She holds a BA in Psychology from SUNY at Albany, an MA in Developmental Psychology from Yeshiva University, an MA in School Psychology and a Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology both from Hofstra University.

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SCHEDULE AND REGISTER](#)

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Workshop Series Details

Autism Overview - January 15th at 12:00 PM

This workshop is designed to increase awareness, foster empathy, and promote positive attitudes toward individuals on the autism spectrum. Participants will learn ways to promote acceptance, understanding, and inclusion of individuals with autism.

A Look at Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) - January 28th at 10:00 AM

Gain insights into the everyday consequences students encounter and how these shape, reinforce, and extinguish behaviors. This session will explore the functions of behavior and why understanding these functions is critical to supporting children's needs effectively.

Using Visuals at Home - February 7th at 10:00 AM

Discover the critical importance and purpose of visual structure for individuals with developmental disabilities. This training will cover visual instruction, visual organization, and visual clarity, equipping participants with the knowledge to implement visual strategies at home to support their children.

Understanding Your Child's IEP - February 25th at 10:00 AM

Learn about Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and how your child qualifies for one. This workshop will explain the parent's role in the creation and management of an IEP, what it covers, and when adjustments can be made.

Understanding Developmental Disabilities - March 5th at 11:00 AM

Challenge stereotypes and gain an understanding of the lives of individuals with disabilities, from the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to present day. This session will help you recognize old ways of thinking and embrace more inclusive perspectives.

Understanding Behavior - March 14th at 10:00 AM

Dive into the core principles of behavior by learning about the functions of behavior and how to use data collection and intervention strategies. This workshop focuses on the 'why' behind behavior and provides practical approaches for everyday use.

Communication at Home & In the Community - March 17th at 10:00 AM

Learn strategies to incorporate speech and language activities into daily routines at home and in the community. This workshop empowers parents and caregivers to support children in reaching their communication goals.

Toilet Training - April 4th at 10:00 AM

Gain practical strategies for guiding your child through the toilet training process. Learn how to assess readiness, establish routines, use reinforcement, address sensory needs, and accommodate your child's unique needs.

Autism Overview (Second Session) - April 11th at 10:00 AM

Explore statistics, myths, and facts about autism spectrum disorder (ASD). This workshop dispels common misconceptions, reviews diagnoses and treatment modalities, and helps families understand what an ASD diagnosis means for their child and family.

CLICK HERE TO REGISTER

All sessions are offered remotely on Zoom.