

# New Horizons

Housing That Supports Independence



**Tracee Battis**  
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**Present Locations**

Legacy Robbinsville

Project Freedom at Hamilton

Project Freedom at Lawrence

Freedom Village at Woodstown

Freedom Village at Hopewell

Freedom Village at Toms River

Freedom Village at West Windsor

Freedom Village at Westampton

Freedom Village at Gibbsboro

Freedom Village at Town Center South

**Opening Soon**

Freedom Village at Hamilton Woods



***Project Freedom  
Has Been  
Awarded Funds  
to Build 72 Apartments  
In Historic Roebling  
(Florence Twp.)  
Burlington County  
Starting in  
2023!***

## ***Ed Department Wants Expedited Evaluations For Students With Disabilities Who Move***

*Reprinted from DisAbility Scoop | November 14, 2022 by Michelle Diamant*

Citing concerns from stakeholders, federal education officials are telling schools to do more to help students with disabilities who move from one district to another.

Guidance issued this month from the U.S. Department of Education spells out steps schools ought to be taking to ease the transition for “highly mobile children” in accessing special education services. This category incorporates a broad range of kids including those from military families, migrants, homeless as well as foster children.

“While these children often possess remarkable resilience, they also experience formidable challenges as they cope with frequent educational transitions,” wrote Katherine Neas, deputy assistant secretary at the Education Department’s Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, and Valerie C. Williams, director of the Office of Special Education Programs, in their letter to state directors of special education. “These challenges may be especially daunting for children with disabilities and their families and have been compounded by the mental health, academic and other impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

The guidance indicates that highly mobile children should “have timely and expedited evaluations and eligibility determinations.”

Education Department officials said that school districts should try to complete evaluations within 30 days, if possible, coordinating with other districts to quickly exchange relevant records and other information.

In the case of children with individualized education programs, or IEPs, that are already in place, comparable special education services should be provided when they move to a new district whether or not they do so during the regular school year or during the summer when extended school year services are offered.

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, comparable services are provided until a child’s new school districts adopts their existing IEP or creates a new one in the case of an in-state move. If a student moves to a new state, comparable services remain in place until the new school district conducts its own evaluation and implements a new IEP, if appropriate.

“It has come to our attention that when some children transfer to a new school district during the summer, the new school district will not provide those children with ESY services as comparable services, because the new school district believes that its obligation to provide comparable services is limited to those services that the child would receive during the normal school year,” reads the letter from Neas and Williams. “The new school district may not refuse to provide ESY services to that child merely because the services would be provided during the summer. While the determination of comparable services is made on an individual basis, the new school district’s IEP team may not arbitrarily, or due to limited availability, decrease the level of services to be provided to the child as comparable services.”

## ***Delta Works To Make Air Travel More Inclusive***

*By Ebony Williams, Reprinted from The Atlanta Journal-Constitution/TNS | November 10, 2022*

As the holiday travel season gears up, Delta Air Lines is offering resources to travelers with autism spectrum disorder.

Delta is offering an inclusive experience at the Atlanta and Minneapolis airports as part of its Passenger Accessibility Commitment. The PAC will team with TSA to help make accessibility for flights more manageable.

“Because of my personal connection to autism, Navigating MSP is one of the most rewarding things I’ve done. The chance to work with other Delta employees that have the same goal of bringing hope to a large community that thought air travel would be an impossibility is heartwarming,” said First Officer Rich Kargel.

The program will allow families to practice what they will go through while traveling, with tours covering ticketing, TSA screening and boarding the plane. These “familiarization tours” — walking through the steps, familiarizing oneself with the process and spotting any trouble spots in advance — can help those with autism feel safe and calm on the actual travel day.

Airports are increasingly working to make travel more manageable for passengers with autism or other sensory processing disorders. Airports in Seattle, New York, San Diego, Pittsburgh and Atlanta have added sensory rooms that ticketed passengers can access based on their individual needs.

“Delta people have always gone above and beyond to serve our customers, and create inclusive experiences for all,” said Dana Folsom, manager of disability programs. “Connecting the world looks different for every customer, and I am proud to work alongside people willing to go the extra mile to give all our customers that same opportunity for meaningful connections.”



## ***Pediatricians Get New Guidance On Cerebral Palsy***

Reprinted from DisAbility Scoop | November 28, 2022 by Michelle Diamant



Emily Pineda, who has cerebral palsy, walks with the help of pediatric physical therapist Kandis Jones and Trexo Plus, a robotic technology. (April Gamiz/The Morning Call/TNS)

A pair of major health organizations are issuing new guidance to doctors about how to identify children with cerebral palsy and appropriately treat the condition.

In a clinical report and an executive summary published online this month in the journal *Pediatrics*, the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Academy for Cerebral Palsy and Developmental Medicine said it's critical for kids to be screened and identified early to ensure the best outcomes.

Children who are at risk for cerebral palsy due to preterm birth or other medical history should be closely monitored for motor problems, the guidance indicates. But, the medical groups note that many kids with cerebral palsy have no identifiable risks from birth and need to be identified through screening and surveillance.

With that in mind, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all children participate in standardized developmental screenings at ages 9, 18 and 30 months, including a neuromotor examination to assess various milestones and muscle tone, according to the report.

Children diagnosed with cerebral palsy benefit from a multidisciplinary approach with a team of medical and health specialists ranging from their primary care physician to physical, occupational and speech therapists, the guidance states.

Pediatricians should be on the lookout for common co-occurring conditions in those with cerebral palsy including issues with cognition and learning, speech and language, behavior and mental health, epilepsy, sensory impairments, pulmonary problems, sleep issues, nutrition, growth and gastrointestinal troubles, orthopedic complications and more. If kids with the developmental disability experience new symptoms or functional declines, physicians should fully investigate the changes without assuming that they are the result of cerebral palsy, the medical groups said.

"It really does 'take a village' to help children with CP reach their full potential," said Dr. Garey Noritz, lead author of the report and chairperson of the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Children With Disabilities. "Families and physicians share this goal and can partner to improve quality of life by focusing on the strengths of the child and family, providing appropriate services and adapting the environment to the needs of each child."

## ***From Norman's Desk***



“True freedom is to have power over oneself for everything,” wrote French philosopher Michel de Montaigne in 1588. For 38 years Project Freedom has implemented this concept for people with disabilities through our housing and advocacy. This happens through the generous support of friends and contributors during bad times and good times.

This past two years were probably the most challenging of Project Freedom’s history. At times, it was the opposite of freedom and independence and optimism. It was dark and foreboding and a bit scary for months.

Yet, through it all, a glimmer of light from the flame of hope never went out. Our tenants—especially those with disabilities--proved their resilience and strength every day as they dealt with lockdowns and semi-lockdowns. We learned how to help each other stay healthy and safe as we fought off loneliness and isolation through technology.

Project Freedom moved forward with the construction of a new complex and beginning to renovate our first complex to preserve it as our first Legacy.

All the while, we supported the tenants in obtaining the vaccine, donated food, other resources, and cautiously expanded activities whenever safely possible. Our advocacy never ceased. Project Freedom’s impact never wavered.

With your help, our impact will be greater in the next years as we continue to promote freedom through independent living. This is the season for giving, and if you are so inclined to give to Project Freedom, it is not too late to become a 2022 Supporter! Your gift will be appreciated and acknowledged by yours truly.

Project Freedom is also an AmazonSmile charity, and you may select us if you participate in that program as you buy gifts. Go to [smile.amazon.com/ch/22-2532804](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/22-2532804) and Amazon donates to Project Freedom Inc.

Meanwhile, I hope all of my readers have wonderful and joyous holidays, receive the gift of peace and love, and have the companionship of those dearest to you.

Norman A. Smith,  
Follow us on Twitter @TheFreedomGuys  
"Like" us on Facebook.com/ProjectFreedomInc



## ***Words To The Wise...***

December is Safe Toys and Gifts Month. Since December is the biggest gift-giving month in the world, it's important to keep safety in mind as you're shopping for the little ones in your life.

According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, 251,700 toy-related injuries were treated by hospital emergency rooms around the U.S. in 2010. Of those, 72% of them were people younger than 15 years old. A few years earlier, toymakers recalled over 19 million toys across the globe due to safety concerns like lead paint and small magnets. Since then, toy safety has improved, but shoppers can take precautions to keep children in their lives safe.

Buying toys and other gifts are one of the most exciting parts of the holiday season. I mean, who doesn't love watching a friend or family member open a gift and seeing their eyes light up with excitement?! In all the eagerness, it's easy to forget about simple safety. So before making any purchases this year, keep safety in mind, so the holidays don't turn from the happiest time of the year to the scariest!

Here are some ways to be sure you're shopping safely this year.

Make sure to inspect the toys before you buy them. Try to avoid toys with sharp edges, lots of little parts, or parts that can be easily pulled off. (Especially if it's for a baby or toddler)

Make sure the age and skill level marked on the toy matches the age and skill level of the child you are buying it for.

Label check! Toys should have a label for ATSM (American Society for Testing and Materials) that proves it's up to standard. ATSM testing is more important than many people realize.

Do not give toys with ropes, cords, or that can heat up, and avoid crayons and markers unless they are labeled nontoxic.

Follow this advice, and your whole family is sure to have a very merry (and injury-free) holiday season!



## ***Sensory-Friendly Santa Coming To Hundreds Of Locations Nationwide***

*Reprinted from DisAbility Scoop | November 29, 2022 by Shaun Heasley*

As the holiday season gets underway, hundreds of malls will offer individuals with disabilities a special opportunity to meet with Santa Claus without the hubbub that such visits often entail.



Liam Munnelly visits with Santa during a sensory-friendly event at Woodfield Mall in Schaumburg, Ill. in 2017.[edIn](#)

Roughly 500 shopping centers across the U.S. will host sensory-friendly events with Santa this year.

The reservation-only opportunities will largely occur outside of normal business hours to provide a less crowded environment and limit wait times.

Santa and other event staff will be trained to accommodate individuals of all ages with disabilities and lighting and music will be reduced to ease sensory concerns, according to Cherry Hill Programs, which organizes the Santa experiences.

Jennifer Schell Podoll, senior vice president of constituent engagement at Autism Speaks, which helps put on the events, said that sensory-friendly Santa offers families of those with disabilities the opportunity to engage in a holiday tradition that many take for granted.

“At Autism Speaks we are dedicated to promoting solutions that help create a world where all people with autism can reach their full potential,” she said. “Our work with Cherry Hill Programs has brought us one step closer to that vision in creating opportunities for every kid to be a kid, and in allowing all families to embrace the magic of the holiday season.”

Most of the sensory-friendly Santa events will be held this coming Sunday and they are open to “people of all ages and abilities,” organizers said. There is no cost to register or attend, but there will be photo packages for sale.

The events are dubbed “Caring Santa” at Simon mall locations and “Sensitive Santa” at Washington Prime Group malls.



*Happy New Year 2023...*  
*May there be*  
*Peace in your mind, Peace on earth,*  
*Peace at work, Peace at home,*  
*Peace in the world*

*John Lennon*