

May Centers for Autism Spectrum Disorders



*Serving the special
needs of military
and civilian families*


In the fall of 2007, May Institute proudly opened the doors of a new autism center to serve children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) at Fort Benning. That center, located in Columbus, Georgia, holds special meaning for us, as it was our first opportunity to offer autism services directly to the military community. This had long been a goal of the organization and a personal goal of mine.

May Institute has decades of experience serving children and adults with ASD and other developmental disabilities, brain injury, mental illness, and behavioral health issues. We understand the tremendous challenges that families face when raising a child with autism. These challenges grow exponentially for military families who juggle the responsibilities and decisions associated with raising a special child alongside the unique circumstances that can be present in their lives — multiple deployments, lack of proximity to family and support networks, frequent relocations, long waiting lists for services, and more. Finding high quality services for their child is critical to a family's long-term health and well-being.

Since the opening of our center, May Institute has expanded its reach to be able to serve all branches of the military. Our many May Centers for Autism Spectrum Disorders offer a comprehensive set of behavioral services to military families stationed at installations throughout the country.

One in every 88 military dependents is on the autism spectrum. We are honored to support these families who are simultaneously making their journey through the complex world of autism while serving our country.

Sincerely,


Walter P. Christian, Ph.D., ABPP
President



Characterized by disorders in behavior, social interaction, and communication, autism can create enormous stress on a family—stress that is magnified when effective services are not accessible.

May Institute's Centers for Autism Spectrum Disorders are dedicated to meeting the immediate and pressing need for services for children with autism spectrum disorders in military and civilian families. We serve all branches of the military—Army, Marines, Navy, Air Force, and Coast Guard.

A Mother's Story

Like mothers all over the world, Tracy looked forward to hearing her son say just three little words. When he finally did, it was a breakthrough that changed both of their lives forever.

“For my son, the most important three-word phrase began with, ‘I want,’” she explains. Learning how to ask for what he wanted enabled Michael, who was diagnosed with autism at age 3, to replace angry tantrums with patient requests.

Tracy attributes much of Michael's progress to the applied behavior analysis (ABA) home-based therapy he received from May Institute. “It was the only therapy we found that had research behind it,” she said.

The first challenge was helping him make eye contact. “That was the way in,” says Tracy. “After he mastered eye contact, he could work on imitation, language, academic skills, and self-help skills.” But the most wonderful achievement, according to Tracy, was when he began making requests.

“Now he can just ask for what he wants. Within the first year after starting ABA, we had a much happier child. My dream for Michael—independence. We're trying to give him all the skills he'll need to succeed and be happy.”

“Research tells us that intense intervention during the early years fosters the greatest hope for children with autism and other developmental disabilities.”

—Walter P. Christian, Ph.D., ABPP, May Institute President

Home-Based Therapy

Home-based therapy provides meaningful learning opportunities that enable children with ASD to master critical skills in their home or other familiar environments. Our home-based services for military families are reimbursed by TRICARE. May Institute is an approved TRICARE network provider.

We work with families to identify the best times to schedule our one-on-one therapy sessions—typically from five to 20 hours per week. After discussions with the family and a comprehensive assessment that identifies a child’s strengths and areas to target for improvement, we develop a highly personalized treatment plan.

Children with ASD often need additional support on language development and communication, social skills and imaginative play, self-care, pre-academics/academics, and mastering skills that allow them to communicate their needs and desires in a way that decreases their need to resort to challenging behaviors.

The May Centers for Autism Spectrum Disorders offer home-based therapy and support to military families seeking access to autism services through TRICARE’s ECHO program and by the Enhanced Access to Autism Services Demonstration (the tutor program).



Responding to a Critical Need

The latest autism study (December 2009) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) further emphasizes the critical need in this country for early diagnosis, intervention, and treatment. These new statistics—for the first time placing the prevalence rate of autism at one in 110 children—“underscore the need to regard autism spectrum disorder as an urgent public health concern.”

Working Together to Build Skills

Children with ASD tend to reap the most benefit when parents are able to replicate the same strategies that we use to teach their child. We invite families to participate in the home-based therapy process to the extent comfortable to them. We offer parent training on the specific strategies that prove to be most effective and motivating for their child. This helps the child to use learned skills, and can greatly enhance progress.

Here are examples of how we target specific skills in a child's home environment:

Communication/Language

For children with limited communications skills, our therapists not only work on encouraging verbal language, but also on teaching children non-verbal ways to communicate their needs. This can include activities as fundamental as teaching a child to use eye contact or point to share experiences (joint attention). It can also include teaching a child complex skills like mastering language to express thoughts and feelings.

“Our son progressed by leaps and bounds with ABA. Doctors didn’t think he would ever speak, but with the help of ABA, he started talking at age four.”

—Jodi Davidson, military spouse and parent of a child on the autism spectrum

Imaginative Play/Social Interaction

Play skills create a natural bridge to more advanced forms of sharing and relationships. We typically teach these skills by using interactive toys, role-playing, or peer and sibling modeling. Although it may appear casual, our therapists are specifically targeting foundational skills that lead to a child’s ability to engage interactively with others.

Reducing Problem Behaviors

Our therapists carefully assess the environmental triggers that lead to challenging behavior, including outbursts, tantrums, self-injury, or aggression. They also spend significant time learning exactly what motivates and is most rewarding to each child, whether it is a hug or tickle, verbal praise, or a favorite toy. Modifying the environment and providing positive feedback or rewards for appropriate behaviors are extremely effective strategies for reducing challenging behaviors.

ABA is the only treatment reimbursed by TRICARE, which pays for up to \$36,000 per year for autism treatment services.



Parent Education and Family Support

When a child is diagnosed with ASD, the entire family is affected. For military families, the difficulties presented by a diagnosis are often exacerbated when a spouse is away for extended periods of time, when transfers create abrupt changes in daily routines and, most of all, when effective services are not accessible.

Through our home-based therapy, we help families develop essential skills that enable them to provide support for their children and to effectively manage complicated lives.

We offer an education series designed for parents of children and adolescents diagnosed with an ASD. The series provides critical information about ASD diagnosis, treatment options, and effective services.

At the May Center for Autism Spectrum Disorders in Massachusetts, we also offer a broad range of therapeutic and support services to families of children with autism. These services help families as they cope with issues such as stress, grief, depression, anxiety, guilt, marital distress, and sibling issues—which can be experienced by families following a diagnosis.

“Jose needed help, and he needed tools. ABA therapy has transformed him completely. I can see he is happy now. I am positive we have the tools to help him become the best that he can be.”

—Captain Ada Cotto, parent of a child on the autism spectrum

Support for Families as They Navigate the System

At the May Centers for Autism Spectrum Disorders, we are committed to helping military families access the services they need for their loved ones with ASD in a timely and efficient manner.

Our caring and competent staff members have extensive experience guiding families through the application process and helping them obtain the diagnostic and therapeutic services they need for their children.

After a child receives an ASD diagnosis, he or she is eligible to receive \$36,000 per fiscal year for ABA services. ABA uses effective interventions to increase skills and appropriate behaviors and

decrease inappropriate behaviors. It is the only treatment for ASD reimbursed by TRICARE.

We have helped many families navigate the process necessary to obtain critical services in several ways.

We encourage families to contact us for information about local resources. We are happy to provide assistance in finding qualified physicians or clinicians for an assessment/diagnosis.

We are also able to provide assistance as families work with their assigned case manager to access their TRICARE benefit.



A Broad Range of Services

We can also provide:

- Social skills groups that focus on turn-taking, initiating conversation, understanding social cues, and developing friendships through group-based activities.
- A broad range of school consultation and educator training for both public and DoDEA school staff.
- Training on the early identification of autism to military doctors, residents, interns, and other medical personnel.

ABA—Effective and Individualized

What most attracts parents to a program of applied behavior analysis (ABA) is its positive and reinforcing tone, its strong focus on teaching new skills, the documentation of progress in data-based reports and charts, its foundation in research, and the manner in which it is individualized for every child.

ABA is a methodology that applies scientific interventions to address behavioral needs. ABA facilitates the development of language, social interactions, and independent living by applying basic behavioral practices—positive reinforcement, teaching in small steps, prompting, and repeated practice. In addition to building critical skills, ABA can also help reduce both everyday social problems and serious behavior disorders.

Hundreds of scientific studies have shown that ABA is the most effective method to teach children and adolescents with autism and other developmental disabilities. ABA has been endorsed by the National Institutes of Health, the Association for Science in Autism Treatment, and the National Autism Center, and has been identified by the Surgeon General of the United States as the most effective way to treat autism.

“As many as 12,000 children in military families may have autism and their condition is made extremely difficult by the frequent changes of residences, schools, and other variables that accompany military life.”

— Representative Chris Smith, Founder of the Congressional Coalition on Autism Research and Education (C.A.R.E.)

Highly Trained Staff

All May Institute professionals who use ABA techniques are board certified by the Behavior Analyst Certification Board (BACB). Board certification is a significant accomplishment and an indicator of the capability and expertise of staff.

Board certification requires undergraduate- or graduate-level coursework and up to 1,500 hours of supervised practicum experience. Individuals with certification have received independent reviews and have passed examinations confirming their knowledge of the field.

May Institute's therapists are Board Certified Behavior Analysts (BCBAs) or Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analysts (BCaBAs). Our therapists have ongoing access to the organization's top national experts who provide consultation, peer review, and guidance through on-site training and weekly video-conferencing sessions. All staff work with the support and oversight of doctoral-level senior staff, ensuring excellence of care.

May Institute is one of the nation's largest employers of BCaBAs and BCBAs, and is committed to making our home-based and other services accessible to military families who have children with ASD.

About May Institute

May Institute is an award-winning nonprofit organization that provides educational, rehabilitative, and behavioral healthcare services to individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and other developmental disabilities, brain injury, mental illness, and behavioral health needs. Since its founding more than 55 years ago, May Institute has evolved into a national network that serves thousands of individuals and their families annually.

The Institute operates nearly 200 service locations in the Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, and on the West Coast. The Institute is an active center of research and training, maintaining affiliations with more than 50 universities, hospitals, and human service agencies worldwide.

In response to the tremendous increase in the prevalence of ASD, May Institute founded the National Autism Center in 2005. This May Institute Center is dedicated to serving children and adolescents with ASD by promoting best practices and offering comprehensive and reliable information to families, practitioners, and communities. In 2009, the Center's unprecedented multi-year project — the National Standards Project — established a set of standards for effective, research-validated educational and behavioral interventions for children with ASD. To date, tens of thousands of individuals have accessed the National Autism Center's reports and manuals.

Our newest initiative — to provide services to military dependents with autism — is quickly expanding. Our May Centers for Autism Spectrum Disorders offer effective treatment to children with ASD at over a dozen military installations throughout the country.

“Because of the unique way the husbands and wives, the sons and daughters of our all-volunteer force serve this nation, we have a sacred responsibility to care for them.”

—Dr. Robert M. Gates, Secretary of Defense, “Gates: Caring for Military Children ‘Sacred Responsibility’”
American Forces Press, July 25, 2008

A Tradition of Supporting Individuals with Developmental Disabilities

Since it was founded almost six decades ago, May Institute has been a pioneer in developing programming for individuals with autism and other developmental disabilities.

In 1955, Dr. Jacques and Marie-Anne May founded one of the first community-based schools in the world for children on the spectrum. This ground-breaking school became the first in May Institute's national network of programs renowned for their exceptional treatment and compassionate care for children with autism.

In the 1970s, May Institute was at the forefront of developing community-based systems of care for adults with developmental disabilities who had long been institutionalized.

Throughout the 80s, 90s, and into the new millennium, May Institute became a recognized leader in advancing the field through services, training, and research. We trained over 15,000 teachers, as well as professionals from more than 25 countries. We published over 350 books, chapters, and articles, and presented at over 1,600 national and international conferences.

Today, we continue our tradition of service to underserved populations through our outreach to military dependents. Fewer than 10 percent of military children with autism are receiving the services they desperately need. A worldwide shortage of qualified providers and the lack of professional resources near installations mean that many of these children are growing up without the treatment and care that can dramatically change their lives. May Institute is committed to changing this situation, and is proud to serve the military families who do so much to serve our nation.

To learn more about our **May Centers** or to schedule an appointment, please contact one of the following locations or email us at info@mayinstitute.org.

MASSACHUSETTS

*Hanscom Air Force Base
Massachusetts Military Reservation*

RHODE ISLAND

Naval Station Newport

CONNECTICUT

Naval Submarine Base New London

41 Pacella Park Drive
Randolph, MA 02368
Tel: 781.437.1455

VIRGINIA

*Fort Eustis
Fort Lee
Hampton Roads
Langley Air Force Base
Naval Station Norfolk
Virginia Beach*

P.O. Box 6734
Williamsburg, VA 23188
Tel: 781.437.1455

NORTH CAROLINA

*Camp Lejeune, New River catchment
area, and Cherry Point*

102 Elizabeth Street, Suite C
Jacksonville, NC 28540
Tel: 910.333.0814

GEORGIA

Fort Benning

6298 Veterans Parkway, Suite 9B
Columbus, GA 31909
Tel: 706.571.7771, ext. 100

GEORGIA

*Fort Stewart
Hunter Army Airfield*

5710 Ogeechee Road
Suite 200, #280
Savannah, GA 31405
Tel: 912.321.9232

GEORGIA

Atlanta Area

P.O. Box 870028
Stone Mountain, GA 30087
Tel: 770.680.8738

GEORGIA

Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay

FLORIDA

*Naval Air Station Jacksonville
Naval Station Mayport*

1409 Kingsley Avenue, Suite 1A
Orange Park, FL 32073
Tel: 904.269.0773

KENTUCKY/TENNESSEE

Fort Campbell

298 Clear Sky Court, Unit G
Clarksville, TN 37043
Tel: 931.896.2223

TEXAS

Fort Hood

P.O. Box 1169
Killeen, TX 76540
Tel: 254.383.2085

“My goal is to help the rest of our country better understand and appreciate the incredible service of you and your families, and to make sure... that your needs are met. I am launching a national challenge to Americans to find ways to rally support of the military family.”

—First Lady Michelle Obama, *LA Times*, June 13, 2010, excerpt from a speech at Camp Pendleton, discussing military healthcare services for military children with autism and other developmental disabilities



Our May Centers currently serve military communities in the following states:

(See inside back cover for contact information)

CONNECTICUT

Naval Submarine Base New London

KENTUCKY/TENNESSEE

Fort Campbell

RHODE ISLAND

Naval Station Newport

FLORIDA

*Naval Air Station Jacksonville
Naval Station Mayport*

MASSACHUSETTS

*Hanscom Air Force Base
Massachusetts Military Reservation*

TEXAS

Fort Hood

GEORGIA

*Fort Benning
Fort Stewart
Hunter Army Airfield
Naval Submarine Base Kings Bay*

NORTH CAROLINA

*Camp Lejeune, New River
catchment area, and Cherry Point*

VIRGINIA

*Fort Eustis
Fort Lee
Hampton Roads
Langley Air Force Base
Naval Station Norfolk
Virginia Beach*