

## Information to Know Prior to Registering your Child in the *Survive & Thrive in Junior High Program*

In order to ensure that you and your child are able to get the most out of our program, the following information is provided to assist you in determining whether our program is a good fit for you and your child:

### Who are the Program Participants?

Our program has been designed for children with a diagnosed or suspected Learning Disability/ADHD as their primary diagnosis without major behaviour or emotional regulation issues. The child must be able to participate within small and large group situations without requiring significant 1:1 support. As such, we engage in an intake process with you to ensure that there is a good fit between the needs of your child and what the program delivers.

### What are the Goals of the Program?

To help your child survive and thrive in the junior high environment by:

- Assisting your child in developing skills that will help them meet the increased social demands of junior high
- Assisting your child in developing skills related to executive functioning that increase at this age (e.g., organization, time management, etc.)

### What is the Make-Up of the Program?

Over nine sessions, we will address such topics as identifying personal learning styles, advocacy skills, study and test-taking strategies, time management and organization skills, and how to deal with such social situations as working in groups, locker room etiquette, “hanging out,” and dating, as well as how to deal with issues related to adolescence. Each week, the students will engage in large and small groups to discuss these topics, learn new strategies from the facilitator and counsellors, and engage in activities to put these skills into practice while being coached. In addition, weekly emails will be sent by the facilitator outlining the week’s topic, the skills that were taught, and how you can continue to develop these skills.

### Who Runs the Program and What are Their Ethical Responsibilities?

The program is run by a provisional psychologist or psychology intern who meets each week with a Registered Psychologist (Manager of Assessment & Intervention Services) to gain assistance and insight in providing the best service to the group and to each student. As a psycho-educational group, your child’s participation is covered by the standards and ethical practices of psychology, meaning that if the facilitator becomes aware of any abuse or neglect

occurring towards the child, or if the child is at risk of being a harm to himself or others, she may need to make a report to Child and Family Services.

The program is also supported by counsellors who are post-secondary students studying in the fields of Education, Social Work, Recreation, Rehabilitation and/or Psychology. They are given training prior to the start of the program and are supported throughout the course of the program by the facilitator.

### What are My Responsibilities as a Parent?

In order for your child to gain the most from the program, parents must be prepared to reinforce the concepts learned at home. As noted, the facilitator sends out an email each week to parents with a summary of the lessons taught on Saturday and suggested activities/discussions that can be implemented in the home and school environments. A progress report is also sent home to parents at the end of the program to report on their specific child.

As the program is therapeutic in nature, all legal guardians for the child **must** provide consent prior to its start. If there is a custody arrangement whereby one guardian has been given sole responsibility for decisions/sole custody, a copy of the court order indicating this must be provided. Our consent form outlining the nature of the program, its goals and limitations, and under which circumstances confidentiality may be broken (e.g., if we become aware of a child being abused or neglected, or a harm to himself) will need to be signed by all legal guardians. Furthermore, the emails of all legal guardians will need to be provided so that the parent emails can be shared with all parties.

### What Should I Not Expect from the Program?

Although our program has benefitted the children who have participated in it in many ways, there are limitations that you must be made aware of:

1. That *all* your child's problems will be solved as a result of participation in this class.
2. That your child's attitude, skills, and friendships will change immediately.
3. That your child's social skills will improve without regular attendance and attempts to engage in the activities.
4. That your child's social and executive function skills will improve without your active encouragement and support for his or her efforts to transfer the skills taught to his daily life.
5. That your child will make lasting friendships from this class. The purpose of this class is to try out new things first before trying them out at school and at home.

If you have any questions regarding this information, please contact us prior to continuing with the registration process.

## **Program Summary**

### **Survive & Thrive in Junior High**

Junior high school or middle school can be especially hard for students with Learning Disabilities/ADHD. With multiple teachers, increased workload and a lot more students, junior high can be an overwhelming experience.

In this nine-week program, a Foothills Academy provisional psychologist will facilitate a group for kids with LD/ADHD who are preparing to move up to junior high/middle school or are already there. A variety of topics related to challenges with executive functioning and social skill expectations at the junior high level are covered including: study skills, time management & organization, peer relationships and bullying, goal setting and dealing with adolescence and self-esteem issues. In a fun and interactive environment, participants will become better prepared to make the junior high experience a successful one.

#### *Week 1: Introduction and Identifying Personal Learning Strengths and Strategies*

Purpose: This lesson seeks to lessen student anxieties by providing them introductions to each other, the counselors/facilitator, and the program format. It also provides an opportunity for the students to acknowledge the transition that is coming and their possible anxieties. Finally, the students work on identifying their personal learning strengths that will be used later in the program to support advocacy, study, and test-taking skills.

#### *Week 2: Identifying Learning Challenges, How to Advocate and Setting Goals*

Purpose: Students with disabilities may encounter challenges as a result of their disability. This lesson provides them assistance in understanding their diagnoses and their impact on both academic and social arenas. The students are also provided with the knowledge that they can achieve success and examples of other successful individuals with disabilities are given. Students also learn the importance of setting realistic goals and how to set realistic goals for themselves as they enter junior high.

#### *Week 3: Working in Groups, Social Skills, and Locker Room Etiquette*

Purpose: These students often have difficulties responding with appropriate behaviors in various social settings. This lesson helps them to recognize social norms as well as provides them strategies on how to work productively in groups at school, how to interact with friends, and how to behave in the locker room.

#### *Week 4: Hanging out with Friends, Hanging out at School, and Being Held Accountable*

Purpose: Children with LD and AD/HD often have difficulty interacting with others, being aware of social expectations, and having awareness of the importance of commitments. This lesson is meant to assist the students in identifying what “hanging out” with others might look like in different settings (e.g., in school hallways and at lunchtime) and what might be expected of them. Additionally, this lesson provides insight on how being accountable for your actions is very important to social acceptance.

### Week 5: Dating, Study Skills, & Test Taking Strategies

Purpose: Many of these children tend to have greater anxiety levels and lack effective study skills compared to children without AD/HD and/or a learning disability. As such, this lesson will provide students with helpful strategies to prepare them for exams as well as relaxation strategies to help them remain calm and focused while in an exam. This lesson also provides information on the importance of respecting ones self and others as well as social etiquette while dating. This will be important for students who may be just beginning to date and are unaware of dating etiquette.

### Week 6: Dealing with Adolescence

Purpose: Students learn about what self-esteem is and how to empower themselves and make decisions. Children with disabilities may struggle with self-esteem issues, particularly when entering adolescence and this lesson provides strategies for students to recognize their strengths. As a part of adolescence, children need to become aware of how their body changes and the need for maintenance of personal hygiene. As such, this lesson also provides basic insight into some of the bodily changes and the necessary hygiene.

### Week 7: Time Management and Organization Skills

Purpose: Often students with disabilities struggle with their time management and organizational skills as they are not aware of effective strategies to help them plan and organize their time. As the children will be transitioning into junior high school, greater independence will be placed upon them to manage their time effectively as well as to cope with the new demands in classroom routines (e.g., multiple classrooms and different teachers). This lesson prepares them for the responsibility of using a locker and encountering changes in schedules and teachers so that they are ready and prepared with strategies to take on these changes.

### Week 8: Dealing with Bullying, Cyberbullying and Internet Safety

Purpose: Bullying is a prevalent problem in our schools and children with disabilities are especially vulnerable. This lesson will be valuable in providing the students with strategies to responsibly cope with bullying, cyberbullying, and internet safety, whether it be individually or by consulting with an adult.

### Week 9: Celebration week

Purpose: Provides positive reinforcement for good behaviors and focuses on working toward personal goals in a less structured and safe environment. The children will be able to practice their social skills as they are placed in a social situation to celebrate their successes in the program.