Arizona Autism Charter School
Parent Policy & Responsibility Handbook

Our Mission

The mission of the Arizona Autism Charter School is to educate students with autism and related disorders using evidence-based strategies grounded in the principles of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) delivered by highly trained teachers and staff. Our goal is to make this high quality, specialized education accessible to students with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in the Phoenix Metropolitan area.

Our Vision

Our driving force is to empower students with ASD to reach their full potential in motivating and engaging environments using individualized programs, so that each child gains the skills to integrate into the community and become a fulfilled, productive citizen.

The Board of Directors for Arizona Autism Charter School
The Board is responsible for meeting the mandates of the Arizona State Board of Education and the overall operation of the charter school.

Administrative Team

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Diana Diaz-Harrison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Education &amp; HR Director</td>
<td>Rosetta Hicks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>Tanya Brodd</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Business Office

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office Manager</td>
<td>Shay Kratzer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrollment &amp; Records Specialist</td>
<td>Amanda Hernandez</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

School Contact Info

4433 N. 7th Street, Phoenix, AZ 85014 (602) 882-5544
Daily School Hours

Kindergarten AM: 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Kindergarten PM: 12:15 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.
Grades 1 – 5 M, Tu, Th, F: 8:30 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.
Grades 1 – 5 Wed: 8:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Wednesdays are Early Release for Staff Training Days.

Office hours are 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

Attendance Is Essential

Arizona law ARS § 15-803 requires students to attend school from the ages of 6 – 16. Arizona Autism Charter School believes students need to be at school daily to maximize their learning opportunities. We strongly request that students and their parents make every effort possible to minimize the number of days they miss school.

Arrival & Dismissal

In order to ensure the safety and security of all students, we have instituted strict arrival and dismissal procedures. Students may arrive on campus between 8:00am and 8:25am every morning. School begins promptly at 8:30am with literacy instruction. Please use the provided Parent Communication Log, call or email your student’s teacher with any concerns before school so that the pick-up line can move quickly and smoothly. Staff members have been instructed to ask parents to follow this procedure to help alleviate some of the traffic concerns so that all students can benefit from academic instruction time.

Also, so that all students can benefit from every minute of academic instruction, students will not be released for dismissal after 2:30 pm except on an emergency basis. This is to ensure that staff members have time to complete all academic lessons and proceed to staff posts to ensure that students can safely be dismissed to the pick-up line. Please help us keep your children safe by complying with this request to not routinely pick up your child early from school. We ask that parents be on time to pick up their students. As part of our continuing effort to keep your child safe and ensure adequate staffing at all times, if you are more than 20 minutes late to pick up your child after dismissal, your child will be sent to our Emergency Late Care room. The fees for this emergency service are $25 for the first 20 minutes (3:05pm) and $50 for each additional 15 minutes. We thank you in advance for your understanding and support of our efforts to ensure the security of all our students.
Illness Policy

If your student appears to be ill in the morning before school, please have him/her remain at home. In general, students will be sent home from school if they have a temperature of 100.4 degrees or more, if they are experiencing vomiting or diarrhea, or if they have symptoms of a suspected communicable illness or condition. If your student is sent home from school, please keep in mind that he/she should not return to school until he/she has maintained a 98.6 degree (normal) temperature for 24 hours without being given medication for fever reduction (such as Tylenol, Motrin, etc.). The student should have experienced no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 before returning to school. If parents, guardians or emergency contacts are called to pick up a student due to illness at school, it is expected that your student will be picked up as requested within one (1) hour of notification.

*AZACS does not have a school nurse on staff. All staff are First Aid and CPR certified.

Excused Absences

Daily attendance in school is required. The only absences considered excused are:

- Personal illness
- Death of a family member
- Serious family emergencies (subject to approval)
- Court summons
- School-approved activity
- Religious holiday
- Medical appointments (please note: if regular doctor, dentist, therapy (speech/OT), or other non-urgent appointments need to be made, the expectation is for every attempt to be made to schedule appointments after school, or on early dismissal or school holiday dates).

For an excused absence, parents/guardians must notify Arizona Autism Charter School by 9:00am of each day the student is absent. Any student who is absent with an illness for four (4) or more days must bring an official note signed by their doctor to the office when they return to school. The note must include the name of the student, dates of absence and reason for absence.

- Full name of the student
- Date(s) or time of absence
- Specific reason for absence
- Signature of medical provider

To report an absence, please email studentattendance@autismcharter.org or call 602-882-5544.
**Chronic Illness Policy**

For students with a chronic illness resulting in ten (10) or more absences throughout the school year, a Chronic Illness Verification form signed by a physician will be required to be on file at our office.

**Unexcused Absences**

Unexcused absences reflect poorly on student achievement, so we strongly encourage students to minimize the number of unexcused absences they incur. If a student does not arrive to school or class, and we have not received notification of the absence from a parent/guardian by 10:00am, the parent/guardian will be contacted.

The following are some examples of missed school days that will be considered unexcused absences:

- Family Trips
- Non-school related activities (e.g. sporting events, cultural activities, celebrations, trips)
- Truancy (non-attendance)

Any student who is absent from school without the permission of the parent/guardian and/or without the knowledge and permission of Arizona Autism Charter School is considered TRUANT and may be subject to disciplinary actions in school and/or by local authorities. If a parent/guardian fails to send their child to school, the child will be considered truant. Under Arizona State law, Arizona Autism Charter School is required to report excessive truancy to the *Arizona Department of Public Services (DPS)*.

**Excessive Absences**

Should a student reach ten (10) total absences (excused or unexcused) within a semester; the Administrative Staff will meet to align interventions in an effort to support the student in regularly attending. A student’s parents/guardians will be notified and asked to participate in this process to review the circumstances that led to the excessive absences. **It may be recommended that students with excessive absences not re-enroll at AZACS the following school year.**

*Arizona State law states that any student who has 10 consecutive unexcused absences must be dropped from the school enrollment.*

If a student misses school more than 15% of the time, the students may be denied promotion due to the Arizona state law and receive a failing grade in that class. The student may be required to repeat the grade the following semester, year or at summer school.
Tardiness

Lateness to school and to class is disruptive to instruction. School begins each day at 8:30am, and students must be in their assigned classroom by 8:30am. A student will be considered tardy to school if he/she arrives after 8:30am. Please note, students may not be allowed to enter school if they arrive after 11:00am. If arriving to school after 11:00am is unavoidable, the parent must make every attempt to communicate with the school’s administrative staff so that arrangements can be made and approved.

Upon late arrival, the parent/guardian must sign the student in at the front desk. Four (4) unexcused late arrivals to school will be considered habitual and parents will be contacted.

Signing Out Early

We strongly discourage parents/guardians from signing students out early for appointments, therapies or other engagements which can be scheduled during school breaks, half days, or after school hours. Students who must leave school early for unavoidable purposes must have their parents contact the school and the parent/guardian must sign their child out at the front desk. Parents must remain in the lobby area until the child is escorted to the lobby from the classroom by staff. A parent/guardian must authorize in writing all additional family members or others who can sign their child out of school.

Identification for Picking up a Child

All adults authorized to pick up your child must be listed on the authorized contact list. If someone who does not routinely pick up your child is picking them up after school they must come into the office and show identification in order to pick up your child. If you have a new provider working with your child please ensure that we have written updated authorization allowing us to release your child. If someone is coming to pick your child up during the school day, please ask them to bring identification into the office so that we can verify the correct name on the pickup list.

Visitor Procedures

Arizona State Law mandates that all visitors to any campus, including parents must check in at the school offices before entering the classroom areas.

Parents, Guardians, DDD case managers, and other professionals working with a family are welcome to visit their student’s classroom with prior permission. Due to the nature of the students served at Arizona Autism Charter School (AZACS), interruptions and distractions in the classroom must be kept to a minimum for all students in the room. All visits must be pre-approved by a member of the administrative team and will be limited to one (1) hour.
We are asking that all families wait six (6) weeks into the school year before scheduling visits and observations to give students and staff time to adapt to their new school routines without disruptions. Please contact Tanya Brodd at TBrodd@autismcharter.org, or (602) 882-5544 regarding arrangements at least **one (1) week in advance** of the intended visit. All visitors must report to the front desk to sign in and receive a visitor name tag. Visitor identification and signed Release of Information Form will be requested at that time if a person other than the parent/guardian is observing. Visitors will also be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement. An AZACS staff member will accompany the visitor to the classroom. All visitors must sign out at the front desk when leaving the school facility. For the safety of all students, there are no exceptions to this requirement.

Groups of visitors (more than two (2) persons) may be asked to visit the classroom at separate times. AZACS requests that siblings or small children are not brought along during scheduled visitations.

Teachers and therapists are not able to take instructional time to discuss class events, procedures, or student matters with visitors. It is recommended that a second time **before or after** school be arranged with the teacher and/or the therapist to discuss the visitor’s observations.

School administrators, or persons acting in their absence, are authorized to refuse entry to the school to persons who do not have legitimate business at the school or do not have proper signed documentation. Any unauthorized person or persons engaging in unacceptable conduct will be asked to leave the school grounds.

Families interested in having outside therapy providers shadow students or assist students in class on a regular basis must contact school administration for approval and appropriate paperwork **before** the outside provider assists the student in class.

**Custody**

The most recent custody papers are to be kept on file in the school office.

This would be the latest dated court decree. It is the parent’s responsibility to provide the latest and most recent court papers to the school. Otherwise, the school uses the most recently dated papers received to validate custody.

**Order of Protection**

1. If there is an order of protection due to custody (or any other issues), the student file is flagged in the school office. Orders of Protection are only good for one year. When Orders of Protection expire it is the custodial parent’s responsibility to give a copy of the renewed Order of Protection to the school office.

**Guardianship**

1. Legal Guardianship and Temporary Legal Guardianship can only be established by Court Order. The school should request “letters of guardianship,” issued by a court, before enrolling a student. Temporary Legal Guardianship can only be granted for six months, per court order.
School Paperwork / Payment Deadlines

AZACS operates under the supervision of several different regulatory bodies at both the state and federal level that impacts everything we do from IEPs to instructional minutes to expenditures for curriculum. As a result, we are frequently audited and need to complete reports on tight deadlines.

We will provide three opportunities for you to respond to requests for information (e.g. immunization records, RSVPs, money for uniforms/events, etc.) via phone, email, and/or fax. After those three opportunities, you and/or your child’s ability to participate in the event or activity cannot be guaranteed.

Uniform Requirements

AZACS requires students to wear a uniform polo purchased from AZACS. On Fridays, students have the option of wearing a spirit shirt. Please see the front desk for details on how to order uniforms. Bottoms may be khaki or navy blue shorts, pants, skirts, capris, or skorts. Flip flops may not be worn at AZACS.

Medication

1. Prescription medication may only be administered by specific staff members with the physician’s written request and a signed/dated permission form filled out by the child’s legal parent/guardian.
   a. Medication must be in the original prescription bottle (your pharmacist may give you a second, labeled bottle in which to send only the amount of medication needed during school hours.
2. Any and all medication to be given during school hours must be labeled with the child’s full name.
3. Medication should be brought (by an adult only) directly to the school office. It is not acceptable to send it in a child’s backpack, lunch box, etc. No medication may be administered without a signed medication form.
4. It is the responsibility of the parent to make sure there is always enough medication in the office.

   * The school is not responsible when a child’s medication runs out.
**Immunizations**

The state immunization law requires all students to have an immunization record on file for school attendance. If your child is exempt from some or all immunizations, a signed immunization waiver must be on file. These forms can be found in the school office. **All records must be on file PRIOR TO A STUDENT ATTENDING SCHOOL. PLEASE NOTE:** The state mandates that a child without an immunization record on file will not be allowed to attend classes until the school receives this information.

**Child Safety Policy**

A new Arizona law, SB 1459, amended an existing law, ARS § 15-105. This law set forth guidelines schools should follow for restraint and seclusion. We support the full implementation of this law and the communication it allows parents to receive regarding their child.

At AZACS your child’s safety and wellbeing is always paramount. In an effort to go beyond the letter of the law and ensure we comply with the spirit of the law, we have trained all of our staff in de-escalation techniques and assessment of potentially harmful situations according to Crisis Prevention Institute’s (CPI) Non-Violent Crisis Intervention training. Our goal is to always, whenever possible, keep a child safe without the use of therapeutic holds. However, in the event that it is impossible to keep a child safe from harming him/herself or someone else, we will implement restraint and seclusion if necessary. This will never be done as a form of discipline or in a negative fashion. As always, this will be a last resort. You will receive both a phone call and written notification if this is necessary.

We will be offering parent orientation for the CPI protocols throughout the year as many parents have found it helpful in de-escalating their child.

**Emergency Information Form**

A CHILD WILL NOT BE ADMITTED UNLESS A COMPLETED EMERGENCY FORM IS ON FILE. PARENTS ARE ASKED TO NOTIFY THE OFFICE IN WRITING IMMEDIATELY IF AN ADDRESS OR TELEPHONE NUMBER ON THE EMERGENCY CARD CHANGES. WE MUST HAVE A WAY TO CONTACT YOU IN CASE OF AN EMERGENCY.

**Child Abuse**

AZACS maintains strict adherence to Arizona laws and statutes governing the reporting of suspected child abuse. All individuals required to report suspected child abuse are protected by state law from criminal liability.
Annual Notification of Rights under FERPA for Elementary Schools

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) affords parents and students who are 18 years of age or older ("eligible students") certain rights with respect to the student’s education records. These rights are:

1. The right to inspect and review the student’s education records within 45 days after the day the Arizona Autism Charter School receives a request for access.

   Parents or eligible students who wish to inspect their child’s or their education records should submit to the school principal a written request that identifies the records they wish to inspect. The school official will make arrangements for access and notify the parent or eligible student of the time and place where the records may be inspected.

2. The right to request the amendment of the student’s education records that the parent or eligible student believes are inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student’s privacy rights under FERPA.

   Parents or eligible students who wish to ask the Arizona Autism Charter school to amend their child’s or their education record should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested by the parent or eligible student, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

3. The right to provide written consent before the school discloses personally identifiable information (PII) from the student’s education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.

   One exception, which permits disclosure without consent, is disclosure to school officials with legitimate educational interests. The criteria for determining who constitutes a school official and what constitutes a legitimate educational interest must be set forth in the school’s or school districts annual notification for FERPA rights. A school official typically includes a person employed by the school or school district as an administrator, supervisor, instructor, or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel) or a person serving on the school board. A school official also may include a volunteer, contractor, or consultant who, while not employed by the school, performs an institutional service or function for which the school would otherwise use its own employees and who is under the direct control of the school with respect to the use and maintenance of PII from education records, such as an attorney, auditor, medical consultant, or therapist; a parent or student volunteering to serve on an official committee, such as a disciplinary or grievance committee; or a parent, student, or other volunteer assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official typically has a legitimate educational interest if the official needs to review an education record in order to fulfill his or her professional responsibility.
Upon request, the school discloses education records without consent to officials of another school or school district in which a student seeks or intends to enroll, or is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes of the student’s enrollment or transfer.

4. The right to file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures by the Arizona Autism Charter School to comply with the requirements of FERPA. The name and address of the Office that administers FERPA are:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC  20202

FERPA permits the disclosure of PII from students’ education records, without consent of the parent or eligible student, if the disclosure meets certain conditions found in § 99.31 of the FERPA regulations. Except for disclosures to school officials, disclosures related to some judicial orders or lawfully issued subpoenas, disclosures of directory information, and disclosures to the parent or eligible student, § 99.32 of the FERPA regulations requires the school to record the disclosure. Parents and eligible students have a right to inspect and review the record of disclosures. A school may disclose PII from the education records of a student without obtaining prior written consent of the parents or the eligible student –

- To other school officials, including teachers, within the educational agency or institution whom the school has determined to have legitimate educational interests. This includes contractors, consultants, volunteers, or other parties to whom the school has outsourced institutional services or functions, provided that the conditions listed in § 99.31(a)(1)(i)(B)(1) - (a)(1)(i)(B)(3) are met. (§ 99.31(a)(1))

- To officials of another school, school system, or institution of postsecondary education where the student seeks or intends to enroll, or where the student is already enrolled if the disclosure is for purposes related to the student’s enrollment or transfer, subject to the requirements of § 99.34. (§ 99.31(a)(2))

- To authorize representatives of the U. S. Comptroller General, the U. S. Attorney General, the U.S. Secretary of Education, or State and local educational authorities, such as the State educational agency (SEA) in the parent or eligible student’s State. Disclosures under this provision may be made, subject to the requirements of § 99.35, in connection with an audit or evaluation of Federal- or State-supported education programs, or for the enforcement of or compliance with Federal legal requirements that relate to those programs. These entities may make further disclosures of PII to outside entities that are designated by them as their authorized representatives to conduct any audit, evaluation, or enforcement or compliance activity on their behalf, if applicable requirements are met. (§§ 99.31(a)(3) and 99.35)

- In connection with financial aid for which the student has applied or which the student has received, if the information is necessary for such purposes as to determine eligibility for the aid, determine the amount of the aid, determine the conditions of the aid, or enforce the terms and conditions of the aid. (§ 99.31(a)(4))

- To State and local officials or authorities to whom information is specifically allowed to be reported or disclosed by a State statute that concerns the juvenile justice system and the system’s ability to effectively serve, prior to adjudication, the student whose records were released, subject to § 99.38. (§ 99.31(a)(5))
- To organizations conducting studies for, or on behalf of, the school, in order to: (a) develop, validate, or administer predictive tests; (b) administer student aid programs; or (c) improve instruction, if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(6))

- To accrediting organizations to carry out their accrediting functions. (§ 99.31(a)(7))

- To parents of an eligible student if the student is a dependent for IRS tax purposes. (§ 99.31(a)(8))

- To comply with a judicial order or lawfully issued subpoena if applicable requirements are met. (§ 99.31(a)(9))

- To appropriate officials in connection with a health or safety emergency, subject to § 99.36. (§ 99.31(a)(10))

- Information the school has designated as “directory information” if applicable requirements under § 99.37 are met. (§ 99.31(a)(11))

- To an agency caseworker or other representative of a State or local child welfare agency or tribal organization who is authorized to access a student’s case plan when such agency or organization is legally responsible, in accordance with State or tribal law, for the care and protection of the student in foster care placement. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(L))

- To the Secretary of Agriculture or authorized representatives of the Food and Nutrition Service for purposes of conducting program monitoring, evaluations, and performance measurements of programs authorized under the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act or the Child Nutrition Act of 1966, under certain conditions. (20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)(1)(K))