

# Giant Steps Illinois, Inc.

## – Preventing Secondary Conditions Associated with Autism Spectrum Disorders: Expansion of a Community Outreach Program



The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has awarded a grant to Giant Steps Illinois, Inc. in Burr Ridge, Illinois. Founded in 1997 by a group of parents, Giant Steps Illinois is a therapeutic day school for children diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). In 2000, an after-school, community outreach program for children diagnosed with ASD and their families was founded at the school. This program, entitled *Stepping Stones*, was created for children and families not enrolled in the day school. It allows children and families to access expert services at a lower cost and provides access to services for any children in the northeastern Illinois area.

The *Stepping Stones* program currently provides music therapy, play therapy, motor skills development, an integrative program plan – Academics in Motion, and language skills classes for children up to age 10. The program also provides adapted piano lessons. This CDC grant allows for the expansion of the program to increase the variety of activities that cater to the specific needs of the students with ASD and to include a program for 10- to 18-year-olds diagnosed with ASD to facilitate building friendships and improving social skills. Giant Steps Illinois and the Autism Center for Excellence also provide free monthly training workshops to parents, professionals, respite workers, and others who want more information about various topics in autism, as well as consultation services and customized training for families at home and for professionals in schools and in the community. Topics are based on the unique questions and needs of the person with ASD. Participants in past trainings have included early intervention providers, social workers, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, school psychologists, school counselors, teachers, and paraprofessionals. This grant will allow expansion of teacher training and paraprofessional training to include development of a training curriculum in best practices for serving children and young adults with ASD.

Please visit [www.giantstepsillinois.org](http://www.giantstepsillinois.org) for more information about the after-school program, training topics, and workshop dates; click on [Autism Center for Excellence](#).

Giant Steps Illinois and the Autism Center for Excellence currently work with the Autism Society of Illinois. Continued expansion of activities and networking will include potential collaboration with other organizations that provide services for persons with ASD.

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