



DSG Launches New Virtual Support Tool to Better Serve Families During Social Distancing

We know this time of social distancing is an incredible challenge, so that's why DSG accelerated the launch of our new Virtual Support (chat) tool to increase support for our families! This free service ensures better access to the DSG team during this time of social distancing and "stay at home" orders.



What to Expect

We're here to answer your questions, provide support and resources, and help address any concerns you may have for your loved one with Down syndrome. When you visit mykcdsg.org, you will see a chat box awaiting your arrival! Click the box and you will be able to speak directly with a member of our team!



Chat Availability

DSG's Virtual Support is a real-time chat tool that enables you to speak directly with our team during the designated hours of Monday through Thursday, 8:30 am – 4:30 pm. During non-business hours, our Virtual Support tool provides you with the opportunity to pose your question/concern and then provide your contact information, so a member of our DSG team may follow up with you!

Rest Assured: our DSG team is hyper-focused on thinking differently and taking action to ensure your family does not feel isolated! We are here for you!

Growing to Provide... Lifespan Services

DSG Welcomes New ACE Manager, Lauren Bingham



DSG recently welcomed Lauren Bingham, B.S., BCaBA, as the manager of our ACE (Adult Continuing Education) program. Lauren is excited to demonstrate in ACE our organization's belief that all people have the right to live, love, work, play and pursue their life aspirations in their community. Lauren will provide a behavior analytic approach to assist adults with Down syndrome in building skills that are necessary to accomplish their goals and to live life as independently as possible.

For the past 10 years, Lauren has supported individuals with disabilities through crisis intervention services and in-home behavioral therapy services. She also has extensive experience training professionals in the basic principles of behavior analysis and crisis prevention techniques. She is a Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst and holds a bachelor's degree of science in Applied Behavioral Sciences.

Lauren enjoys the opportunity to see the individuals she serves discover their passions and gain new abilities in order to pursue their dreams. She is equally overjoyed in watching her own two children learn new things and grow their interests. When she is not working, Lauren can be found exploring zoos and parks with her family, attending concerts with her husband, or planning her family's next big trip around the world.

Please join us in offering Lauren a warm welcome to DSG!

Meet Our Team: Sara Niederhauser, Administrative Assistant



Since 2019, Sara Niederhauser has worked part-time at DSG as an administrative assistant. "Sara began volunteering for us in 2017 approximately a year after we moved into our office across from the Mission Project apartments," explains Amy Allison, DSG's Chief Operating Officer. "She was a dedicated volunteer for two years, before joining us as a paid employee."

Sara has an excellent work ethic and is very focused while completing her work duties. Sara's responsibilities include serving our front office lobby, participating in learning videos for people with Down syndrome, and providing critical support to our Pathways (therapeutic) team.

"Sara helps the Pathways team with our data collection by inputting each participant's A-MAP data into an Excel spreadsheet," says Marie Leathers, OTR/L, RBT, Occupational Therapist. "She is very professional and timely. After she completes each person's spreadsheet, she emails it to me—and always includes a sweet message that brightens my day. This helps us immensely. Because of Sara, we have the data already entered to show families their progress according to the A-MAP during their Growth Assessment. This information is also used to provide Pathways program outcome data."

Sara lives independently in an apartment. When not working at DSG, she can be found bringing her talents to her other part-time job at Children's Mercy. When asked what she likes most about her role at DSG, Sara shared: "I like to work at Down Syndrome Guild, because I like to meet new people and work with other people too."

Sara is a great asset to our team and works hard to serve our mission. She also brings joy into the lives of staff and visitors. "Sara is a hard worker, who seeks out additional duties when her work is complete," says Amy Allison. "She is a self-starter and requires minimal supervision, but will ask questions to get the job done. Sara is a joy to work with!"

DSG Cares— Helpful Tips from our Service Team

During this challenging time of social distancing and "stay at home" orders, our talented DSG team has been hyper-focused on how to virtually serve our families. One way we are serving our families is to periodically share helpful tips created by our specialized service staff to help you navigate your "new normal."

TOPIC: Promoting Independent Play

Megan DeBoom, MS, BCBA, LBA

Board Certified Behavior Analyst (BCBA)

Licensed behavior analyst in the State of Kansas

Director of Behavioral Services

The Importance of Independent Play

- **Develop Fine Motor Skills:** building with blocks, stringing beads, Play-Doh, coloring, even some iPad apps can help with fine motor skills!
- **Prepare for Future Employment:** sustaining attention to play today can translate to sustaining attention to a job task in the future.
- **Gain Downtime:** let's face it, most of us are probably spending a lot more time with our children these days. Sometimes you just need a minute to throw dinner together, take that conference call, or even go to the bathroom in peace. Independent play can give you a little bit of time to yourself.

And remember, we are all figuring this out! What works today, may not work tomorrow. What works at my house, may not work at your house. That is ok. Believe me, I have tried out about six different daily activity schedules so far. So, just keep trying! And give yourself and your family a little grace.

TOPIC: Snack Rationing

Lauren Bingham, BS, BCaBA, LaBA

Board Certified Assistant Behavior Analyst

Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Program Manager

The Importance of Snack Rationing

- **Stretch Your Groceries:** as we navigate social distancing guidelines, we must limit our trips the grocery store.
- **Mindful Snacking:** we need to provide healthy snacks keeping in mind serving sizes, adhering to dietary needs, and understanding that foods that may be comforting at this stressful time are often the worst for us, but might be necessary to provide in small portions.
- **Budget Friendly:** with the whole family now eating at home (no school lunches, snacks at daycare, going out to lunch with coworkers, etc.), most families need to be conscious of grocery budgets. Snack rationing will be useful for ensuring your groceries last.

How to Promote Independent Play

- **Set it Up:** designate an area of your house that is where all of the toys for independent play are kept. It may help to keep these things in a bin or a bucket. Then you can take the toys out just when you need them. You can also change up what is available.
- **Give Choices:** provide a few choices so that your child does not get bored. Use a visual to show your child what is available for independent play. Do not be afraid to unleash your inner artist and include a hand drawn picture. This is especially helpful for non-readers and early readers.
- **Ration Independent Play Toys:** just like you ration your snacks to ensure you do not have to venture out as often, it is important to ration toys too. If a toy is always available, it can quickly lose its appeal. But if you keep those toys out of sight right until you need them, you can create some excitement when you pull those toys out!

Helpful Hints for Snack Rationing

- **Make a Plan.** what snacks are available? When can they be eaten? How much can be consumed at one time?
- **Keep it Simple!** should snacks be accessible to everyone? Consider how independent your family members are with opening containers, following instructions or pouring out of containers. What labels or expectations need to be provided?
- **Get Creative!** utilize social media and search engines to find examples of other snack organization systems.



On the Horizon



Cheers to Supporting our Families: DSG takes 17th Annual Private Cellar Wine Auction ONLINE!

During these uncertain times, our commitment to our families is stronger than ever! As we expand our services—currently into the virtual world to address social distancing—the support of our donors is critically important.

In lieu of our in-person gathering, DSG re-imagined this event by taking it online! Supporters of DSG's mission will come together “virtually” to make an impact on the families we serve! Online bidding takes place from Wednesday, April 1st at 6 pm, through Thursday, April 16th at 8 pm.

Share the Event in Support of the Families We Serve!

You can help our fundraising efforts by sharing this fundraiser through social media or other high-impact channels! Let friends and family know that by joining our online Wine Auction, they will gain exclusive access to unique wines from private collectors! The best part? They will make a direct impact on our mission! Auction items include various wines, wine art, wine lots, wine dinners, and even a couple of Chiefs items signed by Patrick Mahomes!

To learn more, visit the Private Cellar Wine Auction website! *Cheers to making a difference!*

Mission Moment

“Pathways has made grandparenting even more wonderful! Each meeting helps us better appreciate, understand, and support our beloved six-year-old granddaughter. Along with our daughter and son-in-law, we learn ways to encourage our charming, feisty, amazing granddaughter to be more appropriately social, follow directions, use her words and communicate, and so much more. Together, our family creates goals specific to her, and the therapists support us in reaching those goals. The therapists are such great resources, tossing in fantastic tips and tools that make us all feel so much more informed, confident, and connected. We enjoy attending the sessions and sharing the experience and education with our daughter and son-in-law. Most of all, we love witnessing the great progress our beloved grandchild is making.”

~Grandparents of Annabelle, 1st grader with Down syndrome and Pathways participant