



January 2016

## Dear Blank:

Q: Is more therapy better? Why are appointments one time a week, or even every other week?

A: In specific cases, it is important for a child to be seen multiple times a week. However, for the most children, one time a week (or every other week) is appropriate. Our goal is to provide high quality therapy sessions to teach skills through focused practice and empower you to work on those skills outside of therapy. We emphasize home programming in order to help make functional changes for you and your child. Many of your child's therapy goals can be targeted throughout the day at home, school, and in the community. So in a way, he or she really gets "therapy" 24/7! Additionally, your child's plan of care is specific to his or her needs, may be different from that of another child, and may change throughout the course of therapy. If you have questions regarding your child's therapy frequency or need additional ideas for what you can be working on at home, don't hesitate to ask your child's therapist, they're happy to help!

Submit a question to: [rose.giorgio-nelson@unitypoint.org](mailto:rose.giorgio-nelson@unitypoint.org)



# HAPPY NEW YEAR



What a year 2015 has been! At Blank we have expanded by welcoming new patients and staff alike to our Blank Pediatric Therapy family. Also during 2015 Connections was established and as you'll read on the following page each clinic now has their own supervisor. All of these changes have resulted in many positive changes to the services we provide.

We welcome 2016 with enthusiasm and anticipate more positive additions. One such addition will aid your therapy routine with the addition of Blank Therapy Folders. These folders will be a great way to keep organized, a common New Year's Resolution for many.

Your treating therapist will provide you with the folder which in addition to holding many key policies will function as weekly communication for home programming. Once you have received the folder and your therapist has explained the contents, please return the folder each therapy session so that your child's therapist can continue to provide home programming.

Home programming is collaborative and works best with open communication between the therapist, child, and the child's caregivers. For this reason, the therapy folder will also have space to allow you to write your questions and observations throughout the week. We look forward to your feedback so that we may serve you and child's needs to the best of our ability.

### ***Important Reminder***

Please let us know of any **insurance**, **address**, or **phone number** changes immediately. This ensures proper billing and that we are able to contact you in the event of an emergency.

### ***Winter Weather Reminder***

All our clinics will remain open in the event of snow or cold, regardless of school closures.

In the rare event of a closure, please check the news or call 515-241-8550 for information.



Linda Smith (left) is the manager of Blank Pediatric Therapy, Blank Audiology, and Family Services (social work and case managers). She is a graduate of Kansas State University with a degree in Life Sciences and a graduate of the University of Kansas with a degree in Physical therapy. Linda has experience in acute care, outpatient and rehab settings and has a special certification in process improvement. She is married and has 5 children and 6 grandchildren. Linda enjoys spending time with her grandchildren and 7 Tennessee Walker horses she and her husband have on their acreage.

Laura Michel (right) is the supervisor of our outpatient office downtown at the hospital and additionally oversees our inpatient therapy team. She is a speech language pathologist who graduated from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Laura has worked in our department for 5 years, most recently being the supervisor of all three offices for the past 3 years. She enjoys working with children, particularly with early language development and helping families brainstorm how to make language and communication functional in their everyday lives. Laura enjoys spending time with her boyfriend and family, golfing, traveling, and exploring the arts and culture of Des Moines.



Rachel Witt (left) is the supervisor of our Ankeny pediatric therapy office. She is an occupational therapist who graduated from St. Ambrose University in Davenport, Iowa. Rachel has worked in our department for nearly 16 years. She has worked with many children with feeding issues as well as children who have cardiac issues and Down syndrome. Rachel lives on a small acreage with her husband and daughter. She enjoys camping, scrapbooking, being outside and is a huge fan of the Iowa State Fair.

Brenda Pedersen (right) is the supervisor of our West Des Moines office. She is an occupational therapist who received her degree from Creighton University. She has a Master's in Health Services Administration from the University of St. Francis as well as has a certification in hand therapy. Brenda has worked at UnityPoint-Des Moines for the past 19 ½ years. She and her husband have two daughters. Brenda enjoys traveling, reading, spending time with her daughters, and leading their Girl Scout troop.



## What is Physical Therapy?

Pediatric physical therapists (PTs) specialize in movement, stability, balance, walking, and strengthening. Physical therapists will help the child develop the strength and range of motion children need to move through their environment easily and effectively. Their goals often include helping with developmental milestones such as crawling, sitting, standing and walking. They will also evaluate the need for orthotics or other adaptive equipment including walkers or wheelchairs. They use a variety of treatment techniques to address movement, balance, motor coordination, walking, strength, range of motion, and age-appropriate skills such as crawling, ball play and riding a tricycle. The therapist will work with the child and family, and will customize the treatment plan according to the child's needs and goals. Kids learn by playing, so PTs will incorporate play into their session using toys such as balls, blocks and puzzles to address their therapy goals. The PT will educate the family on activities to work on at home to continue working towards the child's goals.

## Winter Activities!

- *Building a snowman outside: Great way to work on gross motor skills (Rolling the balls and lifting), fine motor skills (placing pieces for face and buttons) and some language (identifying body parts during task).*
- If you don't like the cold, build a snowman inside: draw 3 circles on paper and fill them in by: 1. Gluing on cotton balls (full size or pulled apart) or 2. ripping up white construction paper and other colored paper to make body parts and gluing into circles.
- *Craft Activity: cutting out snowflakes. Take a square piece of paper and fold diagonally, fold the triangle again, then fold 1/3 to the front and 1/3 of the back. Cut into the folds in any design you would like. Carefully unfold for your creation. Hang from a string or tape to a window.*
- Making hot chocolate: filling mug with water, pouring in cocoa mix, stirring, adding marshmallows (or other toppings) and enjoy!

Even though we've had an unseasonably warm winter so far, many are eagerly awaiting the arrival of summer! If a vacation is in your future you may be interested in the following blog:

### ***Your Guide to Planning a Vacation for Special Needs Kids***

This was published on Yahoo Travel on July 9, 2015 by Hallie Levine and can be found by visiting:

<https://www.yahoo.com/travel/your-ultimate-guide-to-traveling-with-special-122976627174.html>

## Events

Special Egg Event- West Des Moines  
Coming Spring 2016, check it out at [www.specialeggevent.com](http://www.specialeggevent.com)

Kiwanis Miracle League Spring Sign-Up Coming Soon  
<http://kiwanismiracleleague.org>

Ankeny Miracle League Spring Sign-up coming soon  
<http://ankenymiracleleague.com>

## What would you like see in Connections?

If there is a topic that you would like to see in a future issue of Connections, let us know! All suggestions are welcome.

Please email [rose.giorgio-nelson@unitypoint.org](mailto:rose.giorgio-nelson@unitypoint.org)