



BEST Kids, Inc.

Empowering youth in foster care to build better futures, one child at a time

Special Needs Guide

A special needs guide with a list of resources and activities in the area that are geared towards children with special needs. Here a few activities you can enjoy with your mentee.

RECREATIONAL

Clemyjontri Park

A unique playground that all children of all abilities can play side-by-side. This is a friendly park that welcomes all children, including children who use wheelchairs, walkers, or braces and children who have sensory or developmental disabilities. Clemyjontri Park is one of the only parks in the country that has liberty swings, which allows children in wheelchairs to swing without needing to transfer outside of their wheelchairs!

Address: 6317 VA-193 #2, McLean, VA 22101

Our Special Harbor

Our Special Harbor is a fully accessible recreation area that everyone can enjoy! This area includes a splash park, a 2,160-foot trail designed for children with all abilities that appeal to the sense (visit the sound garden and spinning rocks), treehouse, playground and carousel.

Address: 6601 Telegraph Rd, Alexandria, VA 22310

Rosedale Playground

Rosedale playground is the districts first fully inclusive playground that offers children of all abilities the chance to play together. The playground equipment is designed with a National Mall theme that includes the Capitol, White House and other DC landmarks.

Address: 1701 Gales St NE, Washington, DC 20002

Swimming

The [Bethesda-Chevy Chase YMCA](#) has a completely free adaptive swim program for children with intellectual and physical disabilities on Saturday afternoons. This one-of-a-kind swim program is held in the YMCA's smaller (although still big) pool in a room that is separate and quieter than the room where the main pool is located. Although classes are free, they do fill up quickly so registration in advance is required. *Please contact your Mentoring Support Specialist for the BEST Kids swimming policy.*

Address: 9401 Old Georgetown Rd, Bethesda, MD 20814

ATTRACTIONS

Smithsonian Museums

The Smithsonian offers periodic "Morning at the Museum" programs. During these programs visitors with autism and other special needs and their families are invited to visit Smithsonian museums before they open—and before the crowds arrive. Sensory Tip Sheets and other information for families with special needs are provided before a visit to help make a visit as enjoyable as possible. Popular places like the National Museum of American History, National Portrait Gallery, National Air and Space Museum and the National Zoo are just a few places that participate. Dates for upcoming



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Morning at the Museum programs are announced via a distribution list; e-mail access@si.edu to get on the list.

National Aquarium

If you and your mentee want to see and touch real live creatures from the sea, head over to the National Aquarium in Baltimore! Try avoiding long lines by entering in the member's entrance and visit the Aquarium on the first Saturday and Sunday of each month. They offer early access to children on the autism spectrum and their families on these days!

Address: 501 E Pratt St, Baltimore, MD 21202

MOVIES

Experiencing movies on the big screen can be challenging for children with autism and other special needs. On the second and fourth Saturday of each month, [select AMC theaters](#) offers sensory-friendly showings of family-friendly films. At these showings, lights are kept dim (rather than off), sound is kept lower than at regular showings, no previews are shown, and it's not uncommon to hear some talking and see some children wandering around the theater. A number of AMC's in the D.C. area participate, including the theaters at Tyson's Corner, Georgetown, Potomac Mills and The Rio.

THEATER

Imagination Stage

Does your mentee enjoy theater? Try heading to this Bethesda theater that offers sensory-friendly performances for many of their plays. During these shows, the theater is purposefully left partially full, lights are kept dim (rather than completely shut off), and adjustments are made in the noise level and special effects of the show. Staff with light sticks sit by the stage and alert the audience when anything that may be upsetting (such as a louder-than-usual noise or bright light) is about to happen. The theater has a sound-proof booth at every show that audience members are free to use—inside, the volume level of the performance can be adjusted or completely turned off. In addition, the theater also hosts performances with ASL interpretation and with open captioning.

Address: 4908 Auburn Ave, Bethesda, MD 20814

Ford Theater

Ford Theater aims to provide a safe environment where all children and their families can be who they are. If you have questions about when the next sensory-friendly show is please contact access@fords.org to get an updated schedule.

Address: 511 10th St NW, Washington, DC 20004

Adventure Theater

Adventure Theatre has a sensory-friendly performance for each of their shows throughout the season. Like most sensory-friendly theaters the volume of the music and sound cues is turned down while the house lights are kept on. The theater encourages audience members to bring quiet fidgets



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and designates a section for individuals who may need to get up and walk around during the performance.

Address: 7300 MacArthur Blvd, Glen Echo, MD 20812

Olney Theater

Olney Theatre Center offers audio-described, sign-interpreted and sensory-friendly performances. Please request services through jvia@olneytheatre.org or www.olneytheatre.org.

Address: 2001 Olney-Sandy Spring R, Olney, MD, 301-924-3400