

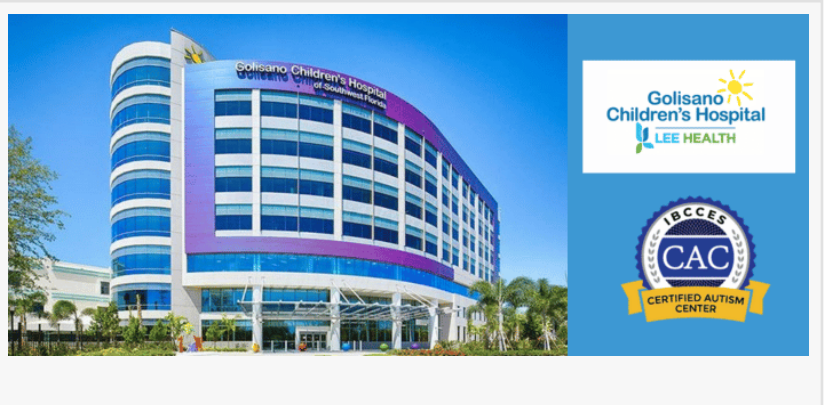
Lee Health's Golisano Children's Hospital of Southwest Florida Enhances Support and Care for Patients with ASD

The region's only pediatric hospital is now designated as the first Certified Autism Center™ in Florida and features the area's first sensory-friendly ambulance

FORT MYERS, FLORIDA, UNITED STATES, April 26, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ --

[Lee Health's Golisano Children's Hospital](#) launched a first-of-its-kind program to support patient care for

pediatric patients with Autism Spectrum and Sensory Disorders (ASD). The SEA STAR Program, which stands for Safety Education Awareness, Sensory Training – Autism Readiness, includes the first [Certified Autism Center™](#) (CAC) hospital in Florida, reviews of policies and procedures to



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Alyssa Bostwick, Chief Nursing and Operations Executive

align with sensory-friendly services, and efforts to identify locations throughout the facilities to best serve those living with autism. It is also now equipped with the first sensory-friendly ambulance to help improve comfort, reduce stress, and ensure safe and supportive transportation to the hospital.

About one in 36 children has been identified with ASD, according to estimates from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network.

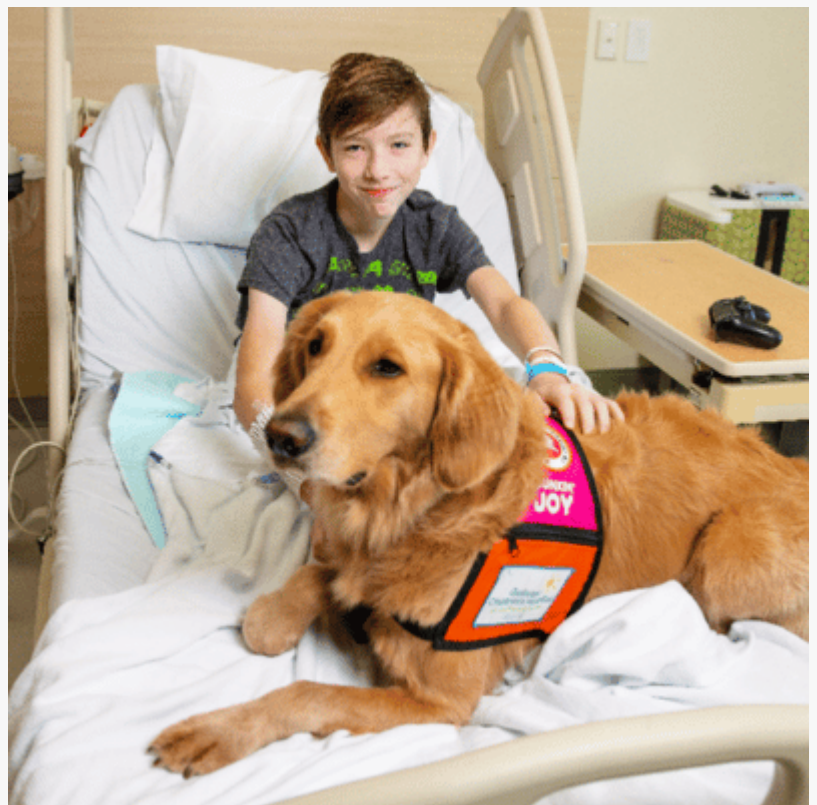
The Certified Autism Center™ certification from the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing

Education Standards (IBCCES) equips staff and management with the skills needed to effectively treat autistic and sensory-sensitive individuals, addressing unique needs in communication, pain perception and the approach to treatment.

To achieve the CAC designation, over 80% of the hospital's physicians, nurses and patient-facing

staff underwent training and certification to enhance their understanding of autism, communication techniques and patient safety. Additionally, IBCCES conducted an on-site assessment to offer further support, recommendations, and tools to improve care and accessibility for autistic patients and their families. Golisano Children's Hospital is only the second full facility in the world to receive this designation.

"We are thrilled to implement a diverse range of therapeutic tools for patients with autism and other sensory disorders. Our team worked tirelessly to make this a reality and it's a testament to their dedication to the highest level of compassionate care," said chief nursing and operations executive at Golisano Children's Hospital Alyssa Bostwick. "We are exceptionally proud to see the hospital become the first Florida hospital to achieve the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) designation and to have the first sensory-friendly ambulance. These lasting and impactful additions to care help parents recognize that the hospital is a safe space well-equipped to care for their children's unique needs, ensuring that they will have access to the care they need when they need it. Creating a safe and supportive environment for autistic children seeking medical care cannot be understated."



The newly launched SEA STAR program brings together expertise from multiple disciplines, such as psychology, neurology, and special education, along with the lived experience and viewpoints of neurodivergent and disabled individuals themselves to grow the services of the children's hospital and facilities.

In a statement, Myron Pincomb, chairman of the IBCCES board, commends Golisano Children's Hospital for setting a noteworthy precedent for inclusivity in healthcare. Pincomb states, "Their commitment to enhancing care for autistic patients sets a commendable standard."

For more than 20 years, IBCCES has led in training and certification focusing on autism and neurodiversity for professionals in education, healthcare and corporate fields. These programs are recognized around the world by more than 100 countries as the leading benchmark for training and certification in the areas of autism and other cognitive disorders.



The CAC certification will be renewed every two years as part of the SEA STAR program with updated training provided for staff. The credentials and training are meant to supplement or build upon existing departmental and organizational regulations and rules, particularly in a healthcare setting where professional protocols for patient or individual health and safety are already in place.

The staff at healthcare facilities and hospitals complete hours of training related to patient care and approach, communication strategies and awareness of alternative communication, sensory triggers or sensitivities, co-occurring conditions and needs, understanding the lived experience of autistic individuals and caregivers, and compassionate care.

A sensory-friendly ambulance plays a crucial role in ensuring safe and comfortable transportation for pediatric patients with ASD, helping to meet their unique sensory needs and provide a positive experience during medical emergencies or transfers.

The newly introduced ambulance is equipped with an array of therapeutic sensory devices carefully designed to address patients' needs and mitigate the impact of an already stressful situation, taking into account sensitivities to light, noise, and other sensory stimuli. This includes innovative features, such as a green energy lithium-ion chassis idle mitigation and battery backup system, significantly reducing both ambient noise and vibration during idle periods and provides backup power in case of a chassis failure. Additionally, the ambulance incorporates noise-reducing insulation to mitigate the effects of lights and sirens, along with ear muffs to

provide an extra layer of sound insulation. Dimmer lighting creates a calmer atmosphere, complemented by soothing illuminated stars and a sky view mural on the ceiling. Sensory strips along the handrail help the patients to hold onto something, while fidget spinner distraction items and safety signal cards cater to nonverbal patients. A vertical bubble machine enhances relaxation, accompanied by the comfort of weighted blankets, among other thoughtful amenities. Together, these elements work harmoniously to minimize anxiety and facilitate a smooth transition to the hospital.

“When the Golisano Children’s Transport Team approached Frazer with the idea of a sensory-friendly transport vehicle, the alignment of values and vision was evident,” said Adam Fischer, Vice President of Sales and Marketing at Frazer. “At Frazer, our purpose is to ‘Unleash Our Potential.’ We see beyond the traditional boundaries of emergency vehicle building and strive to make a tangible difference in pre-hospital care. This project resonated deeply with our commitment to Define the Future of Mobile Healthcare and we are so thrilled to see it come to fruition for the Southwest Florida community and beyond.”

Support for patients and families with autism extends throughout the Golisano system into Collier County with the addition of a sensory room at the Golisano Children’s Health Center, at 3361 Pine Ridge Rd., suite 201, in Naples.

The new sensory room helps put patients and families at ease during stressful situations by assisting patients with a variety of sensory disorders, such as autism, sensory modulation disorder and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). The sensory space can be lightened or darkened based on specific patient needs, and the team can utilize engaging tools like the bubble tube, fiber optic light strands, dynamic seating options and a variety of therapeutic sensory integration products to help children cope with their environment.

Golisano Children’s Hospital in Fort Myers has six dedicated sensory rooms across inpatient and outpatient areas including the emergency department, inpatient units and the Pediatric Procedural Sedation Center. Golisano Children’s Hospital is a [Children’s Miracle Network Hospital](#). Funds from Children’s Miracle Network help make possible programs like SEA STAR and advanced equipment. To learn more about Golisano Children’s Hospital and how it supports patients with ASD and other sensory disorders, please visit www.leehealth.org.

About Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida

Golisano Children’s Hospital of Southwest Florida, a nationally recognized facility for safety and quality care, is one of five acute care hospitals within Lee Health. Established in 1994, Golisano is the only designated children’s hospital in Southwest Florida, with over 500,000 visits a year, serving patients from six surrounding counties. Ranked as a Top Children’s Hospital by Leapfrog, a Solution for Patient Safety network hospital, an Asthma Friendly Hospital and a certified center for children with Autism, Golisano offers over thirty specialty pediatric services in various locations across SWFL. Lee Health opened the current hospital building in May 2017, which

includes 135-beds and comprehensive neonatal and pediatric services. For more information, visit GolisanoChildrensSWFL.org.

About IBCCES

Committed to providing The Global Standard for Training and Certification in The Field of Cognitive Disorders – IBCCES provides a series of certifications that empower professionals to be leaders in their field and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. These programs are recognized around the world as the leading benchmark for training and certification in the areas of autism and other cognitive disorders.

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