JCC of Staten Island's First Foot Forward Earns Certified Autism Center™ Designation to Strengthen Inclusive Education

STATEN ISLAND, NY, UNITED STATES, October 19, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ --
The International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES) proudly awards the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) designation to the JCC of Staten Island's First Foot Forward, recognizing its commitment to creating a more supportive and inclusive early learning environment for children and families. First Foot Forward provides developmental support for children ages 2.9 and older, including evaluations, therapy and enrichment programs. To earn the certification, at least 80% of front-facing staff completed autism and sensory training to build greater understanding of individual needs and develop practical strategies for creating more supportive experiences for all children.

> We're proud to be recognized as an IBCCES Certified Autism Center™ and to continue elevating the services and support we provide our youngest learners."
>
> *Orit Lender, CEO of the JCC of Staten Island*

As part of the certification process, IBCCES conducted an onsite review of First Foot Forward to identify opportunities to further enhance accessibility and provide recommendations, including the development of sensory guides and other resources to support children and families.

"For more than 40 years, the Staten Island JCC has prided itself on helping children with disabilities reach their full potential in a nurturing environment," says Orit Lender, CEO of the JCC of Staten Island. "We're proud to be recognized as an IBCCES Certified Autism Center™ and to continue elevating the services and support we provide our youngest learners."

For educators and school staff, autism and sensory training provides practical knowledge and strategies to better understand and support autistic students, including their individual learning, communication and sensory needs. This preparation can help foster more inclusive classroom environments, strengthen communication and create more positive learning experiences for autistic students and their peers.

First Foot Forward offers a comprehensive range of early childhood special education services

designed to meet the individual needs of each child in a supportive and inclusive environment. Programs include Special Education classrooms with 8:1:2 and 12:1:2 ratios across all sites, as well as integrated classroom opportunities at two locations. Children also participate in weekly enrichment and therapeutic activities, including music and movement, sensory-motor groups and language-based lessons, along with extended-day programming featuring dance, art, handwriting support, literacy, sports and recreation.



As part of the larger JCC of Staten Island community center, families also have access to afterschool services, social and recreational programs, community resources and adult services for individuals with disabilities. During the summer, the center offers an inclusive camp serving children of all abilities. Together, these programs provide a continuum of educational, developmental, recreational and community-based support for children and families.

“Earning the Certified Autism Center™ designation reflects First Foot Forward’s commitment to creating an early learning environment where children with different communication, sensory and developmental needs can feel supported,” says Myron Pincomb, CEO and Board Chairman of IBCCES. “When educators have a deeper understanding of autism and sensory needs, they are better equipped to respond proactively, build meaningful connections and create positive learning experiences. This kind of preparation can benefit not only autistic and sensory-sensitive children, but the broader classroom community as well.”

To further support inclusivity efforts, the JCC of Staten Island’s First Foot Forward is featured on the IBCCES Accessibility App™, which is free to download. This app provides individuals with a variety of disabilities real-time guidance on certified destinations, sensory-inclusive spaces, and tailored recommendations. By connecting users to accessible locations worldwide, the app helps ensure seamless, enjoyable experiences for everyone.

IBCCES also provides access to resources such as AccessibilityCertified.com and AutismTravel.com, which are free online tools for families that list certified locations and professionals. Each organization listed on the sites has met IBCCES certification requirements.

###

About JCC of Staten Island - First Foot Forward
The Joan & Alan Bernikow Jewish Community Center of Staten Island was founded in 1929 with the goal of creating a home for the Jewish community by offering social, recreational, and educational activities. Over time, that mission expanded and the JCC has become a true community center—not just for the Jewish community, but for the entirety of Staten Island. Programs serve the needs of the Staten Island community and are constantly expanding to meet new demand. The JCC serves people of all walks of life, from young children to seniors and everyone in between by offering services that help improve the quality of life for people on Staten Island and beyond. The JCC strives to help those in need as well as provide recreational and educational opportunities for members. The JCC of Staten Island is dedicated to encouraging harmony throughout the community by providing facilities and programs that are open to all regardless of race, religion, creed, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, marital status, sexual orientation, or political affiliation. Everyone is welcome at the JCC.

About IBCCES
Delivering the global standard for training and certification in the fields of autism, neurodiversity, and accessibility – IBCCES provides a series of certification programs that empower professionals to be industry leaders and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. For 25 years, IBCCES has been a global leader, setting the industry standard in autism and cognitive differences training. IBCCES works in over 125 countries and provides training in 8 languages, and its programs have been recognized around the world as the leading benchmark in training and certification.

In addition to individual certification programs, IBCCES partners with cities, destinations, and organizations on initiatives like the Certified Autism Destination™ (CAD) and Autism Certified City™ (ACC), ensuring autistic and sensory-sensitive residents and visitors feel welcomed and safe. Destinations that achieve the CAD designation have completed a specialized program that ensures a multitude of recreation, hospitality, and entertainment organizations have completed an autism and sensory-sensitivity training, certification, and IBCCES facilities review process. The ACC designation expands on that program and includes IBCCES training and certification for the public safety, education, healthcare, and workplace sectors.

IBCCES also created the Accessibility App, AutismTravel.com, and AccessibilityCertified.com – free resources for individuals with a variety of neurodiversities and disabilities, listing certified locations and connecting individuals to other resources and each other.

Media Contacts

Kara Roche, Director of Marketing & Communications

JCC of Staten Island - First Foot Forward
Phone: 718-475-5251
Email: kroche@sijcc.com

Meredith Tekin
IBCCES
+ +1 904-508-0135
marketing@ibcces.org
Visit us on social media:
LinkedIn
Instagram
Facebook
X
Other

This press release can be viewed online at: https://www.einpresswire.com/article/949901531

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.
© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.