

Parent/Caregiver Resource Guide

This resource guide was created by the Cameron Park Zoo collaboration with Baylor University's Doctor of Occupational Therapy program to support families in the Waco community who have children with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), Sensory Processing Disorder (SPD), Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD), and/or other sensory or developmental differences. Our shared goal is to help make the zoo—and the broader community—a more inclusive, sensory-friendly, and accessible space where every child and family can explore, learn, and thrive. This guide details a list of both local and virtual therapy providers, community organizations, and family support resources designed to assist you in navigating your child's unique sensory, social, and developmental needs both at the zoo and beyond.

Local Waco-Area Resources

These organizations and therapy centers serve families in the Waco and Central Texas region. They provide services and support for children with ASD, SPD, IDD, and other developmental differences.

1. Hope & Believe Pediatric Therapy

- **Address:** 4900 Sanger Ave, Waco, TX 76710
- **Website:** www.ihopeandbelieve.com
- **Phone:** (254) 848-6284
- **What they offer:**
 - Comprehensive pediatric occupational, speech, and physical therapy services.
 - Expertise in treating children with sensory processing challenges, developmental delays, and ASD.
 - Offers a supportive, family-focused environment with individualized treatment plans.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Encourages active caregiver involvement and offers a nurturing atmosphere for children of all abilities to reach their full potential.

2. Elite Therapy Center

- **Address:** 601 W Loop 340, Waco, TX 76712
- **Website:** www.elitetherapycenter.org
- **Phone:** (254) 399-8255
 - **What they offer:**
 - Speech, occupational, and physical therapy for children from birth through young adulthood.
 - Offers sensory integration therapy, developmental play groups, and individualized intervention plans.

- **Why it's helpful:**
 - A long-standing Waco provider that combines multidisciplinary therapy with compassionate care, making it a great option for children with complex needs.

3. Little Land - Waco

- **Address:** 1201 Hewitt Dr, Woodway, TX 76712
- **Website:** www.littlelandplaygym.com/waco
- **Phone:** (254) 572-8890
 - **What they offer:**
 - A pediatric therapy clinic and inclusive indoor play gym designed by occupational and physical therapists.
 - Provides occupational, physical, and speech therapy services, plus open play sessions for all children.
 - Focuses on sensory-friendly play environments and motor skill development.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Offers a fun, community-based approach to therapy—children can build skills through play in a sensory-safe setting.
 - A great option for families looking for both therapy and recreational opportunities in one space.

4. Central Texas Therapy Spot

- **Address:** 213 Old Hewitt Rd, Unit D, Waco, TX 76712
- **Website:** www.centraltexastherapyspot.com
- **Phone:** (254) 246-4713
 - **What they offer:**
 - Provides speech, occupational, and physical therapy with individualized care plans tailored to each child's developmental goals.
 - Specializes in treating children with autism, sensory processing challenges, and communication disorders.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Known for its warm, collaborative team approach and strong emphasis on family education and involvement.

5. Klaras Center for Families

- **Address:** 1105 Jefferson Ave, Waco, TX 76701
- **Website:** <https://hotbhn.org/services/child-adolescent-behavioral-health/klaras-center-for-families/>
- **Phone:** (254) 752-7889
 - **What they offer:**

- Operated by the Heart of Texas Region MHMR Center, Klaras provides behavioral health, developmental, and early childhood services for children and adolescents.
- Programs include early childhood intervention (ECI), counseling, case management, psychiatric services, and family support.
- **Why it's helpful:**
 - A vital resource for families seeking comprehensive developmental and behavioral support, especially when navigating multiple systems of care.
 - Offers coordinated services for both diagnosed and undiagnosed developmental or emotional needs.

Inclusive, Disability-Friendly & Sensory-Friendly Community Spaces

Beyond therapy and clinical services, Waco is home to several inclusive businesses and organizations that actively promote participation, belonging, and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. These Waco-area attractions and community spaces are committed to providing welcoming, accessible, disability- and sensory-considerate experiences for individuals with ASD, SPD, and developmental disabilities. These spaces encourage families to connect, play, work, and thrive within their community.

1. Bitty & Beau's Coffee

- **Address:** 110 Franklin Ave, Waco, TX 76701
- **Website:** www.bittyandbeauscoffee.com
- **Phone:** (254) 315-9284
 - **What they offer:**
 - A beloved coffee shop that proudly hires adults with IDD.
 - Known nationally as a model for inclusion and awareness through meaningful employment.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Offers families a welcoming, judgment-free environment to relax and connect.
 - A great example of how the Waco community celebrates inclusion in everyday spaces.

2. The Arc of McLennan County

- **Address:** 49011 Lakewood Dr, Waco, TX 76710
- **Website:** www.wacoarc.org
- **Phone:** (254) 756-7491
 - **What they offer:**
 - Provides after-school care and summer camps for children with disabilities, social and activity groups for teens and young adults, and an adult day program promoting independence and community engagement.

- Offers parent and caregiver support groups and advocacy resources for families navigating disability services.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - A cornerstone of disability inclusion in Waco, supporting individuals with IDD across all ages and stages of life.
 - A valuable community partner for families looking for safe, engaging, and inclusive programming year-round.

3. Friends for Life

- **Address:** 5000 Lakewood Dr, Waco, TX 76710
- **Website:** www.friendsforlife.org
- **Phone:** (254) 772-7600
 - **What they offer:**
 - A local nonprofit dedicated to improving the quality of life for seniors and individuals with disabilities.
 - Provides a wide range of services, including adult day care, children and youth programs, and independent living supports.
 - Focuses on enhancing dignity, community connection, and lifelong support.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Offers families of all ages access to social, educational, and respite programs, helping promote inclusion and reduce caregiver isolation.

4. Cameron Park Zoo

- **Address:** 1701 N 4th St, Waco, TX 76707
- **Website:** www.cameronparkzoo.com
- **Phone:** (254) 750-8400
 - **What they offer:**
 - Hosts Sensory-Friendly Sundays on the last Sunday of each month, offering reduced crowds and sensory supports.
 - Provides sensory kits, a quiet sensory room, and a sensory walk throughout the zoo.
 - Offers disability and sensory training for staff members to promote a more inclusive environment.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Creates a supportive, inclusive experience for families to enjoy wildlife and nature together.

5. Mayborn Museum Complex (Baylor University)

- **Address:** 1300 S University Parks Dr, Waco, TX 76706
- **Website:** www.baylor.edu/mayborn
- **Phone:** (254) 710-1110
 - **What they offer:**

- Offers sensory kits and a sensory map to help families plan visits based on sensory preferences.
- Provides hands-on exhibits and quiet areas for rest or sensory breaks.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - A family-friendly museum that promotes accessibility and sensory awareness in educational spaces.

6. Hewitt Public Library

- **Address:** 200 Patriot Ct, Hewitt, TX 76643
- **Website:** <https://www.cityofhewitt.com/32/Library>
- **Phone:** (254) 666-2442
 - **What they offer:**
 - Offers sensory kits and bins, as well as quiet spaces for reading or decompressing.
 - Hosts inclusive events and sensory-friendly programs for children and families.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Provides a calm, free community space where children can explore learning at their own pace.

7. No Limitations

- **Website:** <https://www.nolimitationswaco.org/>
 - **What they offer:**
 - Provides adaptive sports, recreational, and social programs for individuals with disabilities.
 - Hosts sensory-friendly Ninja Warrior events and inclusive holiday celebrations throughout the year.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Builds confidence, friendship, and community through inclusive physical activity and fun.

8. Chuck E. Cheese (Waco)

- **Address:** 5106 W Waco Dr, Waco, TX 76710
- **Website:** www.chuckecheese.com
- **Phone:** (254) 399-6946
 - **What they offer:**
 - Hosts Sensory-Friendly Sundays on the first Sunday of each month.
 - Features reduced lighting and sound, smaller crowds, and supportive staff.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Provides a predictable, low-stimulation space for children to play and celebrate.

Online Resources

While the majority of this guide highlights organizations and services in the Waco and Central Texas area, the following national and online resources offer valuable information, education, and family support that can be accessed from anywhere. These organizations provide toolkits, hotlines, and community connections for families of children with ASD, SPD, IDD, and other developmental differences.

1. Autism Speaks

- Website: www.autismspeaks.org
 - What they offer:
 - A national nonprofit dedicated to advancing understanding, inclusion, and support for individuals with autism and their families.
 - Provides **free toolkits and resources**, including:
 - *100 Day Kit* for newly diagnosed families
 - *School Community Tool Kit*
 - *Transition to Adulthood Tool Kit*
 - Why it's helpful:
 - A trusted source for evidence-based information, advocacy updates, and practical tools that help families support their children at every stage.

2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) – “Learn the Signs. Act Early.”

- Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/act-early/index.html>
 - What they offer:
 - Free milestone checklists and developmental monitoring tools for children ages 2 months to 5 years.
 - Offers guidance for caregivers concerned about developmental delays or sensory differences.
 - Why it's helpful:
 - Empowers parents to track their child's development and seek evaluation or early intervention services when needed.

3. Navigate Life Texas

- Website: www.navigatelifetexas.org
 - What they offer:
 - A website created by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission specifically for parents of children with disabilities or special health care needs.
 - Provides easy-to-understand information about:
 - Getting an evaluation or diagnosis.
 - Accessing early intervention and special education.

- Finding local community programs, respite care, and financial resources.
- Tips for navigating healthcare and insurance systems.
 - **Why it's helpful:**
 - Offers Texas-specific guidance written by parents and professionals—ideal for families seeking practical, step-by-step help navigating life with a child who has a developmental difference.

The Cameron Park Zoo and Baylor University's Doctor of Occupational Therapy program are committed to fostering an environment where every child and family feels welcome, supported, and included. We hope this guide helps families connect with local and national services, plan sensory-friendly outings, and feel empowered to explore the zoo and the Waco community with confidence and joy. Together, we can continue building a more inclusive, accessible, and supportive community where all families can learn, play, and create lasting memories.