

## THE CURRICULUM

The Bittersweet Transitional Program is a unique and innovative program that was designed to assist adolescents during their transition into adulthood. In order to ensure that adolescents are well prepared for their adult years, the Transitional Program focuses heavily on ensuring that each student increases independence and self-sufficiency.

The Transitional Program provides a framework for students to gain and acquire needed adaptive, self-help, and employment skills. There are several components to the curriculum, including:

- A functional curriculum that focuses on enhancing the basic life skills that are necessary to lead a more independent life. These activities include personal care skills, household chores, toileting, understanding concepts of time, and money management.
- A vocational curriculum that utilizes a variety of activities found throughout Bittersweet's farm, nature, and art-based environment, including activities such as grounds keeping, trail management, meal preparation, horticulture therapy/gardening, weaving, and drawing.
- An academic curriculum that is designed to meet each student's unique cognitive abilities. Activities include matching, counting, reading, mathematics, understanding safety signs, and computer proficiency.

Other major components of the program's model include training in communication, behavior management, and socialization. These training sessions occur throughout the day both in structured activities and as opportunities arise.

The curriculum is differentiated to meet each student's unique skills and individual needs. The programming is flexible and individualized to ensure that opportunities for skill acquisition are maximized. The program relies heavily on providing multiple choice making and decision making opportunities throughout the day.

Skills are taught in the most naturalistic environment and in the setting where the skill will most likely be used. Related services (Speech, OT) are delivered throughout the day in an integrated model. The curriculum focuses on activities that are functional, purposeful, meaningful, and useful to each student's life.

# We envision your potential!

## ABOUT BITTERSWEET

Bittersweet, Inc., a farm-based homestead for individuals with autism, is the only program in Ohio, and one of a select group of programs around the country, that offers comprehensive services to adolescents and adults with autism. Bittersweet's success is well known, and our model has been replicated by others.

Bittersweet provides a supportive and well structured program for individuals with autism that emphasizes meaningful activities and work and an avenue for using special talents and abilities. We are also dedicated to providing support to families of relatives with autism.

Bittersweet is a private, non-profit organization that was founded in 1977 by a school teacher and a group of concerned parents. Together, they successfully advocated for and developed services for individuals with autism.

Bittersweet Pemberville is situated on ten scenic acres of grassy fields, woods, and gardens. The setting serves as a natural and therapeutic living, learning, and recreation area that engages and connects individuals with autism to the world around them and provides for a life of purpose.

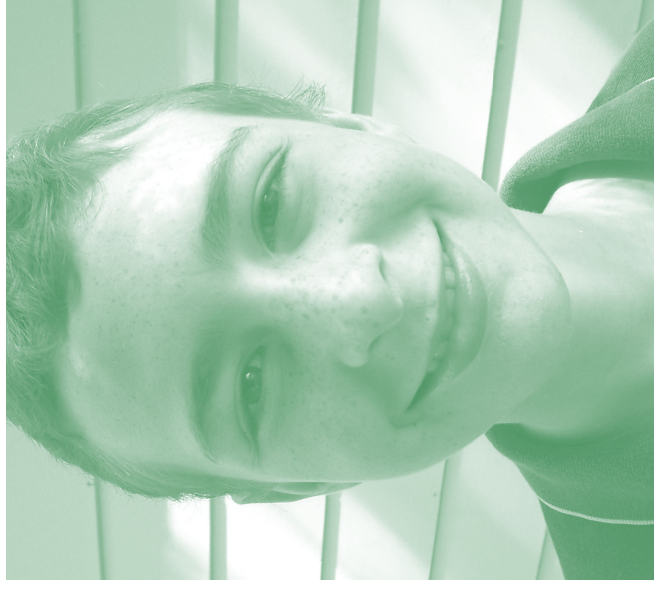
Today, Bittersweet serves over seventy individuals through an array of services, including Residential, Supported Living, Day, Supported Employment, Consultative, Recreational, Extended School Year (Summer), and Transitional services.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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the

# BITTERSWEET

# TRANSITIONAL

# PROGRAM





## MISSION STATEMENT

**The mission of Bittersweet, Inc. is to maximize opportunities for individual development of persons with autism by providing an array of premier services to individuals and support to families.**

## FAMILIES

Families play a vital role in the Bittersweet Transitional Program. The Bittersweet programmatic model relies heavily on holistic care, which is dependent upon strong collaboration, consistent communication, and ongoing support between families, staff, and autism professionals.

The program acknowledges that parents are experts with an in-depth understanding and insight on the unique strengths and needs of their child. That knowledge, when combined with the general expertise in autism provided by the professionals at Bittersweet, results in a collaborative relationship and partnership for the benefit of the student.

Bittersweet values the partnership that develops between our staff and parents. Many of the strategies, interventions, and training techniques that are used in the transitional program are expected to also be carried out at home by the student's family, caregivers, and providers. Those who are not willing to make such a commitment would not be ideal candidates for the program.

## OUR MODEL

Bittersweet is driven by strong and well developed philosophies for serving adolescents and adults with autism. Included are generous and ongoing amounts of:

- Meaning and motivation - Engaging in activities that are rewarding and interesting to the student encourages active engagement in the world.
- Physical activity - The use of vigorous physical activity throughout the day assists with issues relating to sensory processing, behavior management, and mood.
- Partnership - Relationship building between staff and students seeks to develop an inter-dependent community.
- Structure and schedules - The use of a variety of external supports increases order, understanding, and communication.

## FARMSTEAD COMMUNITY

Learning in a farmstead community can integrate all of life in a rhythmic, natural whole. Farming activities are purposeful, seasonal in nature, concrete, and meaningful.

Through farming, Bittersweet fosters a sense of purpose and pride in each of our students. The shared goals and relationships among students and staff creates a sense of community. Our community is built through an ongoing process of support and interaction.

## HOURS / SCHEDULE

The Transitional Program runs Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m. The program operates approximately 188 days per school year. Most students are strongly encouraged to also attend the Bittersweet Summer Program.

## TRANSITION PLANNING

The last day of a student's schooling should look like the next stage of his or her life. Transitions from one stage of life to the next stage should be seamless and well planned. Any necessary supports for adulthood should be defined well before graduation.

Transitions can be very challenging to individuals with autism, due to their resistance to change. In order to alleviate issues associated with transitions, significant thought should be given to the future.

## HOURS / SCHEDULE

The transition plan should address the future needs of the student. Bittersweet firmly believes that the student's transition plan should guide the development and delivery of the student's IEP goals and objectives and serve as a roadmap that guides each student's daily activities.

## ADMISSIONS/ELIGIBILITY

In order to be eligible for the Bittersweet Transitional Program, the student must:

- Be between the ages of 10 and 21.

- Have both a primary medical and educational diagnosis of autism or Asperger's.
- Have the approval of his or her school district's IEP team to attend Bittersweet.
- Have a family willing to make the necessary commitment to ensure consistency in training strategies and interventions.

## FUNDING

The Bittersweet Transitional Program is funded entirely by local school districts on a contractual basis. School districts are also responsible for transportation to and from the program. There is no expense for families who wish to have their child attend. Bittersweet does not accept the Ohio Autism Scholarship.

## The Bittersweet Transitional Program

# MAXIMIZES OPPORTUNITIES for adolescents with autism in a COMMUNITY OF CARING.

