

Shristi Special Academy, Bangalore, Karnataka.

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects/project-view.php?p=602>

Structured intervention programs for children with mental retardation, Autism, ADHD, Down's syndrome and any other intellectual impairment.

Introduction:

Shristi Special Academy has a unique set of programs designed to enable independence among the mentally challenged, developmentally delayed, and those with autism and attention deficit hyperactive disorders of all ages. Rehabilitation at Shristi includes therapeutic intervention with a focus on special education, sensory stimulation, physiotherapy, language stimulation, and occupational therapy. Through an intensive, individualized and child-focused training program, Shristi has enabled many children with developmental delays to go to normal schools, and still other individuals to gain employment. The teachers at Shristi are special educators trained to work with mentally challenged and autistic children. Asha, with its belief that retaining educators in the system is the way to sustain education, particularly in the context of special education, supports salaries for the special educators at Shristi.

Videos:

[1] A video introduction to Shristi Special Academy:

http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Austin/projects/shristi_overview.mpg

[2] A shorter video introduction:

http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Austin/projects/Shristi_Overview_Short.wmv

[3] A shorter video introduction to Shristi including Austin's role:

http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Austin/events08/showofhope/movies/Shristi_shoh_comp.wmv

[4] Shristi's working with autistic children, in a video taken/edited by Santhosh during his and Ani's visit to Shristi in Mar08:

[This video link does not stream for some reason; please download and play]

http://www.cerc.utexas.edu/~vinod/shristi/Shristi_Autism_Joseph_AniSanthoshVisit.wmv

[5] Shristi's pet therapy video:

<http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Austin/projects/ShristiPetTherapy.wmv>

Posters:

[1] A quick, no A/V, poster of Shristi:

http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Austin/ProjectPosters/shristi_poster.ppt

[2] A more recent poster of Shristi:

http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Austin/ProjectPosters/shristi_poster_24oct08.ppt

Site visits/Photos:

[1] Rajeev and Kavita's site visit [Sep 2004]

Report: http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/602/Rajeev_site_visit.doc

[2] Gaurav's site visit [Jan 2006]

Report: http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/602/gagarwal_site_visit.doc

Photos: http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Austin/projects/gagarwal_site_visit_photos.doc

[3] Vinod's site visit [Jan 2007]

Report: <http://www.ashanet.org/projects/document-view.php?id=7092>

Photos: http://picasaweb.google.com/vinod.2v/Shristi_special_academy_jan24_2007#

[4] Anita and Santhosh's site visit [Mar 2008]

Report: http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/602/shristi_sitevisit_ani_santhosh.doc

Photos: http://picasaweb.google.com/vinod.2v/AniSanthosh_sitevisit_Mar2008#

[5] Nagarbhavi Autism unit [Dec 2008]

Photos: http://picasaweb.google.com/vinod.2v/Nagarbhavi_autism_unit#

[6] Vinod's site visit [Jan 2009]

Report: http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/602/Shristi_sitevisit_Vinod09.doc

Photos: <http://picasaweb.google.com/vinod.2v/ShristiSpecialAcademySiteVisit13Jan2009#>

Proposals:

[1] An overall proposal describing all Shristi activities is available here:

<http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/602/shristi-proposal.ppt>

[2] Nagarbhavi Autism unit proposal:

http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/602/nagarbhavi_autism_unit.pdf

[3] Apr09-Mar10 proposal for salaries of Autism and Respite Care Units:

http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/602/Autism_RespiteCare_Salaries_Breakdown_proposal.doc

[4] Vocational Unit catalog and Q&A

Catalog: http://data.ashanet.org/datastore/data/Chapters/Austin/projects/Shristi_catalog.pdf [Thanks to Santhosh]

Q&A: http://www.ashanet.org/projects-new/documents/602/Shristi_vocational_discussionthread.doc

About the organization

The mentally challenged are between one and three percent of the population. However, as intellectual impairment is an invisible handicap, it is generally not recognized and little is known about it. Awareness about their abilities and services to improve their quality of life are inadequate. The divide is even more pronounced in the rural areas. Further, a majority of existing institutions have stipulations for admission, such as refusing services for children who are not toilet trained or individuals with severe retardation and seizure disorders. Very few institutions have programs such as vocational training for those over 16 which implies that many individuals who are mentally challenged do not get opportunities to realize their potential and generally live lives of neglect.

***Saathi* -- Infant Stimulation & Early Intervention Unit**

This program is for children below the age of 5 years, with delayed development and psycho motor retardation. It gives specific emphasis on sensory motor training and is aimed at reducing deficits and atypical traits by training children in activities to promote development and learning of new skills which might not occur by itself or naturally due to developmental delay. Also supports families to cope with these challenges.

***Prakruti* – Autism Unit**

Autistic individuals are offered an intensive, functional and meaningful program which includes sensory integration and behavior modification. It facilitates autistic individuals to adapt and integrate and to behave in socially acceptable ways. The program for individuals with Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD) is carefully structured for learning and behavior modification to transform their environment and patterns of reinforcement.

***Prayathna* – Respite Care Unit**

The Respite Care Unit provides exclusive rehabilitation therapy to children who have severe mental retardation and multiple disabilities and offers respite to their parents.

***Dhruvi* – Pre-vocational (to identify) and Vocational Training Unit**

Vocational training aimed at enabling employability and economic independence among the challenged is provided for those above 12 years of age. Using a comprehensive curriculum, the training includes Pre-vocational and Vocational training, followed by internship and then employment either at the sheltered workshop for production, self-employment or open market employment. At present training is provided in weaving, stationeries, screen printing, tailoring, horticulture, gardening, candle-making, etc.

Redefined Curriculum

Shristi has enabled improvement in every individual with special needs that has been in its care. This has been achieved by using a specially designed, scientific, family centered curriculum which focuses on holistic development and growth of the child. Thus, while most schools follow a curriculum used in regular education and emphasized cognitive development; Shristi has redefined the intervention program so that the mentally challenged first learn vital life survival skills such as self care, socialization, appropriate behavior and language skills and then cognitive development. This approach has resulted in the overall functional development of the child. Self Reliance, thus, has become an actuality. They follow an eclectic approach to intervention where the needs and level of the child determines the program rather than any set methodology. They also use a variety of teaching material including natural resources instead of the routinely used beads, charts etc. Thus flexibility, innovation and a personalized program along with unconditional love and acceptance are the hallmarks of Shristi's rehabilitation program.

Balwadi

Shristi runs a balwadi for children under the age of 6, from the villages surrounding Channenhalli, in their rural campus. Initially, the balwadi was aimed at identifying mental disabilities and delayed development syndromes at a very early age, since a lot of medical and behavior training can be done at very early ages than at later ages. Over 3 years of running the program, they have now noticed that the kids who come to the balwadi and now are going to regular schools, are extremely sensitive to kids with mental disabilities and are very cooperative in their dealings with them in school.

Infrastructure

Shristi has a large rural campus in Channenhalli, about 20 kms outside Bangalore. The building that houses all the therapy units has been carefully designed with the context in mind. This campus also houses the Pre-vocational and Vocational training units. A new addition is an organic garden, which supplies most of the vegetables for the daily lunch at the campus. Apart from this, there is a new in-town center in Nagarbhavi, Bangalore, which focuses primarily on Autism. This has been active since early 2009, and as of now houses the erstwhile Autism unit, while expansion plans are on to include more children from the urban areas.

Asha support

Asha has been supporting salaries of the Autism unit special educators over the past 4 years now. Asha has also supported a nutrition program, support for constructing the new Nagarbhavi Autism center, and infrastructure in the Vocational Unit.