



STAR Institute

6911 S Yosemite Street

Centennial, CO 80112

303-221-7827 | www.sensoryhealth.org

Dear Friend of STAR Institute,

It's hard to believe it's been 10 years since we started this journey as a nonprofit organization. What STAR has accomplished in that time is no small feat. We recognize that our success is because of the support received from our community members like you. ***Your support has empowered us to raise awareness, transform lives, and set a course to make substantial changes within the world.*** Yet, it would be remiss of us not to point out the considerable work still needed. Our mission dictates it! We recognize the challenge and are ready to face it head on. ***Now is the time.*** The importance of sensory health has never been more critical and apparent. During the next decade we must further our work and continue to advocate, research, support and educate all on the profound importance of sensory health. **Help make a difference!**

Recognition of the significance of sensory informed care and education along with its impact on individual and community health continues to grow exponentially. We are and continue to be on the frontline to change the narrative and emphasize the need for change. We know that sensory health supports mental health, school success, child development, relationships, and well-being. It is our mission to make sensory health more well known and accepted.

"My son was diagnosed on the Autism Spectrum at 4 years old. He had only been in preschool half a day and it was evident the team at the school was not fully prepared for how to work with our son who happens to learn differently," shares Kia Milan, a STAR Client.


We hear this time and time again, from families and individuals of all ages expressing their struggles with sensory challenges and the impact it has on their daily lives, but also, *more alarmingly*, the lack of support available in their communities – including schools, businesses and jobs. **It doesn't have to be like this.**

"The summer after his diagnosis we were fortunate to have him join the School Readiness Program. STAR Institute gave my son a chance to have the full support of professionals that understood his individual needs. After his time at STAR, he has greatly improved his ability to meet, interact and develop friendships with his peers. ... It was a fun environment that brought the biggest smile to his face, while at the same time setting a wonderful foundation for him to build upon." - Kia Milan

Sensory processing challenges can be overwhelming for individuals and their families but are often avoidable and can certainly be alleviated. **STAR continues to bring hope** to those affected through educational resources and accessible treatment programs that focus on understanding the individual and supporting their sensory needs and lifestyle. STAR brings transformation and change to lives of children and families like Kia and her son; **change that lasts a lifetime.** We are driven by our organization's history to make a difference for those with disordered sensory processing, and now as we engage with our future, must extend our mission to increase understanding that sensory health impacts us all and is critical in every part of our daily lives.

"Most people don't understand how sensory issues affect our daily life," explains Gabriela Michaca, STAR Clinical Advisory Board. "We tend to judge and pathologize physiological body and mind responses to stress. We don't know how to take care of ourselves. People need to know and understand their individual sensory profile to know better how to solve sensory problems and improve wellness."





The time is long overdue for sensory informed care and education to become common knowledge.


Being sensory informed means understanding that our sensory systems are complex and underpin human function and flourishing in every setting. A sensory informed individual (an educator, health care provider, parent, caregiver, etc.) understands that sensation supports emotional well-being, mental health, communication, and relationships. Sensory integration refers to the mechanisms of *how you feel*, and how you are able to respond to those feelings. Every one of us experiences and responds to sensation, from both our inner and outer worlds, in unique ways, and this aspect of lived experience is as individualized as a thumbprint. A sensory informed approach recognizes that both changing the environment and creating therapeutic opportunities for growth are necessary.

Our dream is that every classroom, every doctor's office, every workplace, gym, mental health clinic, eating disorder clinic and social worker's office — everywhere where human support services are offered — is sensory informed. One way we aim to do this—within Colorado, across the US, and around the globe—is through building and increasing partnerships. We have more community partners than ever before including universities, professional organizations and practices, and parent groups. Yet, we know we must keep growing if we are going to increase our impact. We are determined to reach more professionals and organizations to spread awareness, grow mentorships, enhance research and provide accessible education and resources in all parts of the world.

As STAR moves into 2022, we are committed to **expanding awareness and outreach, and to addressing health inequalities in every way** – through education, treatment, and research. We are working closely with charitable trusts and community center boards to provide more affordable treatment programs, accessible education programs, fund research initiatives, and curate sensory inclusive community events. Heading into this new year, we are elated to become Medicaid providers and what this means for equitable, sensory informed treatment and research. We truly believe **every child, individual, and family should have the access, support, and resources they need to be their most authentic selves** and create a sensory lifestyle that makes a difference throughout their lifespans. Through our ongoing efforts, we are building capacity through donations, scholarships, community grants, and establishing best practices for sensory informed care.

The future of sensory informed care means refraining from making judgments about behavior based on a moral lens—instead, building understanding about a person's experience of safety, and seeking to understand what they need to flourish in every way, through nurturing relationships and meaningful occupations. **Your support will not only change a life but transform lives for years to come at home, across communities, and around the world.** Now is the time — be an advocate and supporter of sensory health awareness and sensory informed care. **Donate today** and impact positive change for individuals, families, and communities that lasts a lifetime.

Warmly,



Virginia Spielmann, Executive Director

P.S. Put your gift to work faster by donating online: visit our website at www.sensoryhealth.org or go to bit.ly/stargiving2021.

Remember, your gift is tax-deductible for 2021 if you make it on or before December 31st!

