



About Norris Academy

Located just outside of Knoxville, Tennessee, Norris Academy is a Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facility (PRTF) that offers comprehensive, holistic services to children with Autism Spectrum Disorders and Neurodevelopmental diagnoses. The PRTF at Norris Academy is licensed for 63 beds. Individuals in their care typically have co-occurring psychiatric diagnoses and neurodevelopmental diagnoses that have caused distress at home, school, or in the community.

Norris Academy provides psychiatric, clinical and educational services with the goal of safely and effectively transitioning residents back into their communities. They believe in doing the right thing to help children and families receive care with the dignity and respect that they deserve.

Looking For Solutions

Prior to Ukeru, Norris Academy had a high number of restraints and staff injuries, leading to high workers' compensation premiums. "Our program relied heavily on restraint techniques that, unfortunately, often retraumatized our residents. The toll on both staff and those in our care was evident, with over 1500 restraints recorded in a single year," shared Marta Finnegan, Program Director.

They knew there had to be a safer, more compassionate approach out there that would help them reach their goal of decreasing the use of restrictive practices without compromising staff and resident safety. Thus, Ukeru's trauma-informed, restraint-free approach made Ukeru very appealing to them as a partner.



I am thrilled to share the transformative impact that Ukeru training has had on our program. When we embarked on this journey, our goal was to reduce restraints by 50%, which we believed would be a significant achievement. Little did we know the profound changes that awaited us.

Marta Finnegan
Program Director

Working with Ukeru

Norris Academy began their trauma-informed journey with Ukeru in July of 2020. They started by having 4 staff members trained as trainers. From there, their trainers trained over 100 employees over a 3 month period. In addition to training, their trainers offered staff coaching and modeled correct usage to champion change throughout their milieus.

Staff were resistant to Ukeru at first. Leadership responded by reminding them of the benefits of Ukeru, and how it would help them reach their goals. In addition, they created challenges with rewards for staff such as having a party if there were no restraints for 30 days. They would announce their number of restraints in staff meetings to not only show their progress, but to encourage staff to see that their efforts were paying off. Their efforts were making a difference!

Results

The results have been incredible. Prior to Ukeru, they recorded over 1,500 restraints in a single year. “Since embracing Ukeru training, the shift has been remarkable. In 2021, we experienced a drastic reduction to only 73 restraints for the entire year. The following year, in 2022, this number plummeted even further to just 34 restraints,” Finnegan proudly shared.



I am immensely grateful for the positive impact Ukeru has had on our program. It has not only reduced the need for physical restraints but has also fostered a safer and more supportive environment for both staff and residents. Ukeru is not just a training program; it's a catalyst for positive change, and we are fortunate to have it as an integral part of our program.

Marta Finnegan
Program Director

With the significant reduction of restrictive practices, both staff and residents feel safer. Staff now feel empowered to work through challenging situations, without feeling the need to go hands-on. “One notable instance highlighted the effectiveness of Ukeru, where we employed teamwork and patience during a three-hour session with a resistant individual, ultimately resolving the situation without the need for restraint,” Finnegan stated. Not only did Ukeru prove to be effective in this situation, but it demonstrated to this individual that staff mean what they say when they say they are here to support them and keep them safe. This is one of many instances where Ukeru has helped strengthen relationships amongst staff and residents.

In addition to staff and residents, families have also benefited from Ukeru. Norris Academy has offered training to families, and they have found it to be a valuable resource to them.

Another huge takeaway has been the shift in their culture. Their culture has shifted to one that promotes safety and compassion. Both staff and residents feel safer with Ukeru. If you walk through their environments, you may see kids taking naps on the Ukeru blocking pads or even painting on them.

“Beyond the numbers, Ukeru has fundamentally altered the culture of our program. Staff who initially had reservations eventually embraced the training, while those who couldn't align with our new approach moved on. The result is a more compassionate, understanding, and effective team,” Finnegan proudly shared.

As far as next steps, Norris Academy is determined to reduce their number of restrictive interventions even further and continue to build a culture focused on Comfort vs. Control. We are inspired by their commitment and dedication, and we are eager to see all that they continue to accomplish.

94.6%

Restraint
reduction



Reduction of
workers'
comp claims



Increased staff
and resident
safety



Culture
shift