

# ***danceability***

**to empower through movement**

2365 George Urban Blvd., Depew NY 14043

[www.danceabilityinc.org](http://www.danceabilityinc.org)

[danceabilitywny@gmail.com](mailto:danceabilitywny@gmail.com)

(716) 651-0094

## **2023-24**

### **Family/Caregiver**

### **Handbook & Policies**

# ***Our Mission***

***Danceability is an individualized dance, fitness, and movement program serving the special needs community. Our studio is led by qualified staff and dedicated volunteers who create a nurturing environment that empowers our students to flourish and grow while promoting a healthy lifestyle...and we have a little fun along the way!"***

## ***Who We Are***

***Danceability*** welcomes individuals of every age and ability, with a particular emphasis and expertise in those with special needs. We promise to be more than a dance program. *Danceability* seeks to be a recreational outlet for those who love music & movement and creates a safe space for them & the caregivers that love them. We pride ourselves on the connections we create and maintain with all who come into our studio. We want you to feel that our program is where you can have fun, relax, talk, vent, and seek advice from peers.

Classes run in the late afternoons & evenings from September to May and are 45 minutes long, once a week. Students will be assessed and placed into a class based on the following criteria: a) ability, b) age, and c) class size. We will work hard to find the best fit for each student & won't hesitate to make a change if necessary. We ask that families and staff be as flexible with their schedules as possible to accommodate the best class fit for their loved ones.

Payments involve an annual registration fee, monthly tuition, and a performance fee for those participating in the annual performance. We do have limited scholarships available for those with documented financial need. More information on tuition and associated payments is in this handbook. Families are encouraged to seek third-party payment: contact your service coordinator and insurance company to see what money is available for recreational and wellness activities. You may be surprised! We will provide you with an invoice, and they will help you from there.

Our primary goal is dance education, but having been in business for over 16 years, we know that it can be about so much more: health, wellness, a creative outlet, a sense of belonging, a support system, education, socialization, behavior modification, sensory work & FUN. We hope that through good communication between all of us, your needs will be met . ***If you have any concerns, issues, or questions, please contact us directly via email or phone, and we will do everything in our power to assist you. As long as there is open communication, we will try to help! We are not JUST dance instructors; we are professionals in the field (although we are awesome dance instructors too)!***

**RULES & POLICIES:** Please read the following rules and policies carefully. They were designed for your information, your dancer's safety and well-being, and the implementation of a high-quality program.

**CLASS PLACEMENTS:** At *danceability*, we work very hard to make sure that we place our dancers in the very best class for them based on numerous factors, such as: age, current level of movement, ability, medication schedule, bedtimes, school/work/therapy schedules, completed registration paperwork, adherence to studio policies, travel time to the studio, etc. We cannot accommodate other extracurricular activities, pairing dancers with particular friends, accommodating siblings' activity schedules, etc. We do not offer makeup classes for absences.

**SCHEDULING CONFLICTS:** Because we put so much effort into finding the right class placement for each dancer, we cannot accommodate scheduling conflicts due to other activities (sports, school clubs, etc.). When discussing your dancer's schedule with the Director to find an appropriate placement and class time, please consider your dancer's other activities and make a firm commitment to attend dance class at your scheduled time. While we understand the occasional absence when unexpected events arise, making it a habit impairs the progress your dancer makes in class each week, the relationships they are forming with classmates and volunteers, and their achievements in the Annual Performance. We cannot adjust tuition for missed classes other than those due to hospitalizations. You can do it all, just not all at the same time.

**FORMS:** Our liability release, photo/media releases and code of conduct are part of the registration forms. Please read and sign off on them when registering your dancer. If you have any questions, please reach out. Our medical release form will be emailed to you for submission to your dancer's physician once your registration has been accepted. If you have a question about whether your previous medical release is still valid, please reach out to the Office Manager. We cannot accept medical forms from other entities (Special Olympics, school districts, employment, etc.). Our medical release form is the only one we can accept and must be received on time so your dancer can attend class.

**INFORMATION DISSEMINATION:** *There are multiple ways danceability keeps you informed. Please make yourself familiar with all of them.*

**\*STUDIO INFORMATION BOARD:** located in the waiting room. Please check for updates.

**\*REMIND APP:** Please download the REMIND APP for the most up-to-date studio-wide information like snow closures, special events, announcements, and safety issues.

- 1) Download Remind App
- 2) Find Class: **Danceability**
- 3) Code: **able2dance**

**\*FACEBOOK:** <https://www.facebook.com/DanceabilityInc> - Like and follow us!

**\*TWITTER:** @DANCEABILITYWNY - Follow us!

**\*INSTAGRAM:** @DANCEABILITYWNY - Instagram

***We do our best to keep our website ([www.danceabilityinc.org](http://www.danceabilityinc.org)) up to date as well, but it should not be used as a source of day-to-day info.***

**BUSINESS HOURS:** Because we are a nonprofit, *danceability's* staff is small, and our office hours fluctuate weekly. If you wish to make a payment in person or set up a meeting, please call the studio at 716-651-0094 first to make sure someone is here.

**WEATHER CLOSINGS:** Closings due to inclement weather will air on the websites of Channel 2 & Channel 7 (not the tv channels), sent out on **REMIND**, and posted on our Facebook page. We may not always be in the office to change the answering machine. As always, your safety is paramount. If we are open for classes, but if weather is bad where you are, or you do not feel safe driving, use your discretion and call us if you are not coming to class.

**HOLIDAY CLOSINGS:** A student calendar is posted on our website at the beginning of the season. We DO have classes on most of the Monday holidays, otherwise those dancers would miss out on a lot.

**START TIMES:** Students should be ready to start class at the scheduled time. **Please do not come more than 10 minutes early before the start of class.** This is especially important because we need to give everyone time and space to enter in and out of class. Our instructors are busy preparing for class and some students often become agitated waiting in a busy waiting room. If needed, special accommodations for students who need assistance entering class or who may need to wait until the waiting room is less busy can be arranged with your instructor.

**PICK-UP TIMES:** Students should be picked up inside the waiting room at the appropriate time. We ask that parents and staff meet their dancers inside for safety reasons. Meeting your dancer inside also allows the instructors to relay important information and updates. If other pickup arrangements need to be made, please call us at 716-651-0094.

**PROPER DANCE ATTIRE:** Proper attire in dance class is essential to helping the dancer move freely and in as unrestricted a way as possible. **Dance attire includes; t-shirts, tank tops, sweatpants, yoga pants, leotards, or tights. NO JEANS.** Dresses should not be worn, but dance skirts with tights or leggings underneath are acceptable. We ask that long or loose hair be pulled back as dangling hair distracts the dancers. If purchasing proper dance clothes is a problem, please let the staff know, and a solution will be worked out.

For most dance classes, bare feet or socks with grips on the bottom is the preferred option, but students should bring socks in case they need to borrow tap or jazz shoes. Dance shoes can be borrowed during dance class; however, we may not be able to provide all sizes or multiple shoes in the same size. We ask that you bring any modalities needed to maintain proper foot alignment, balance, etc. Occasionally we will dance without these supports as feeling the floor through direct contact with the foot is beneficial for dance movement.

**EQUIPMENT/ASSISTIVE DEVICES:** Our instructors are very adept in modifying dance movement; however, in many cases, it is most beneficial that any assistive devices a dancer uses in their everyday life be used in dance class. In a few circumstances, the device must be brought to class to ensure safety for the dancer, instructor, and volunteer. These devices include gait belts, wheelchairs, walkers, communication devices, etc. Please speak with your class instructor to determine if a device is beneficial in class, and if so, bring them with you each week. We cannot store them at the studio for you as we don't have the space.

**PROGRESS:** Although our instructors try their best to communicate well with families and staff, please feel free to inquire about your dancer's progress from the teacher. If the teacher cannot speak to you then, please leave a phone or email message, and the teacher will get back to you promptly. The teacher, not the volunteer, should address any questions or concerns.

**ABSENCES:** Please notify the studio at **716-651-0094** if your dancer is absent from class. Danceability is a 9-month program, and we plan on your dancer being here for the duration. A medical release is REQUIRED before returning to class if your dancer has been absent due to an extended medical absence. Valid excuses for absence include individual or family illness, hospitalization, surgery, or death in the family.

For those dancers from group homes, inadequate staffing or unavailable group home transportation will not be considered valid excuses. The group home manager and/or agency must ensure that their client is being brought to the service for which they paid. That may mean calling a supervisor or borrowing transportation or staff from the agency. *For example, People, Inc. vans can be borrowed within the agency if properly arranged. Let us know if you need us to help advocate for the dancer!*

***\*For those dancers who receive scholarships, good attendance is not an option, it is required, or they will lose their scholarship. Donors have generously given their money to send a dancer to class; we all need to honor that. The only exception is serious medical issues; in this instance, please contact us immediately so we can work with you.***

**WITHDRAWAL FROM CLASS:** *After three consecutive absences from class without a valid excuse, the dancer may be withdrawn from class.* In cases of withdrawal, tuition refunds may be made for the remainder of the season, but not for classes missed due to unexcused absences. Unless other arrangements are made, you are still financially responsible for the classes missed up to formal withdrawal. **Please contact us to work out any concerns or difficulties you may be having before this happens! We can't fix a problem that we don't know about.**

**VIOLENT OR AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIORS:** *Danceability staff has the experience, education and patience to work through dancers' negative behaviors through behavior modification methods such as modeling, positive reinforcement, distractions, reward systems, sensory breaks, etc. However, when a dancer's behavior becomes aggressive or violent towards themselves, others, or property which creates an unsafe space for themselves and others, the following will happen:*

- We will immediately bring a parent, caregiver or staff into class.
- We will work within our means with the parent/staff, volunteer & student to quickly modify the behavior.
- If the behavior happens again, the instructor will end class for that dancer for the day and the parent, caregiver or staff must take the dancer.
- If the behavior continues, causing the instructors, classmates and volunteers to feel unsafe the student will be withdrawn from classes.
- When outside interventions succeed in changing the behavior and it no longer occurs within the dance class (and hopefully elsewhere), the parent or caregiver should call the studio and a proper plan for the students return will be discussed.

**Examples:** (Violent behaviors are defined as acts that pose a true threat to the dancer and others.

- 1) A three year old pulling a classmate's hair is undesirable but may also be developmentally appropriate until such time that they are taught that it is not ok using appropriate methods. The instructor will work with that student and their caregivers accordingly.
- 2) However, similar behavior from a teen or adult would be an example of escalated or

aggressive behavior due to their size and strength and can cause true harm and injury. The same scale would be used for pinching, hitting, pushing, grabbing, etc.)

We always try our best to meet the needs of our students through a combination of dance education, professional knowledge and best practices. Should we not feel that we can meet an individual's needs adequately, we reserve the right to withdrawal them from the program and refer them elsewhere

**FAMILY/VOLUNTEER COMMUNICATION:** We love our volunteers and couldn't do what we do without them! While we love that our dancers and families connect with their volunteers, we respectfully ask that you do not share phone numbers or emails expressly for the purpose of alerting them to absences. If your dancer is going to be absent, we still need their volunteer to come to class so they can be prepared to help the dancer catch up the following week. We may need them to help someone else in the class, cover another volunteer's absence, or there may be other projects we need help with. They may also need to show proof of consistent volunteer attendance to schools or employers. If the volunteer has been kind enough to share their contact information, please do not text or call them unnecessarily and remind your dancer to do the same & be respectful of their time and good nature.

**VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES FOR DANCERS:** Many of our high-school age and older students are looking for volunteer opportunities to fulfill school requirements or for other reasons. In-class one-to-one volunteers must be able to respond quickly to situations to keep their dance partner safe, be able to provide physical assistance and verbally relay information from the instructor. For those reasons, becoming an in-class volunteer may not always be appropriate for everyone. However, we have plenty of other volunteer opportunities throughout the year that would be beneficial. We always need help at fundraising events, with mailings throughout the year, help with building maintenance, organizing our props and materials and other administrative tasks. Please be aware that these may not be regularly scheduled activities. Let us know if your dancer is interested in any of these opportunities and we will work with you to find a good fit.

**LOST OR STOLEN ITEMS:** *Danceability* is not responsible for lost or stolen items. There is a lost and found bin in the waiting room. Please check there for lost items. This bin will be cleaned out periodically and items will be donated to Goodwill.

**SEXUAL AND OTHER UNLAWFUL HARASSMENT:** *Danceability* is committed to providing an environment free of harassment in any form, including inappropriate and disrespectful behavior, intimidation, and other unwelcome conduct directed at an individual because of their inclusion in a protected class. The following are examples of harassment; behaviors not specifically on this list may also be considered harassment:

- Unwanted sexual advances;
- Offering employment benefits in exchange for sexual favors;
- Retaliation or threats of retaliation for refusing advances or requests for favors;
- Leering, making sexual gestures or jokes, or commenting on another's body;
- Displaying sexually suggestive content;
- Displaying or sharing derogatory posters, photographs, or drawings;
- Making derogatory epithets, or slurs;
- Ongoing teasing about another's religious or cultural practices;

- Ongoing teasing about another's sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity;
- Physical conduct such as touching, assault, or impeding or blocking movements

Any harassment is unlawful whether it involves coworker harassment, harassment by a manager, or harassment by persons doing business with or for the Company, such as clients, customers or vendors. Any incidences of harassment should be reported immediately to the Executive Director and/or the Board Chair.

***danceability***  
**2023-24 Season**  
**Tuition Quick Information Sheet**

**6-Week Summer Session July-August \$105 (+ registration fee if applicable)**

**Weekly Dance Classes September thru May**

**Non-Refundable Annual Registration Fee:** \$ 45  
**Performance Fee (includes costume):** \$ 65  
**Monthly Tuition (Sept & May = one month):** \$ 75 x 8 months  
**TOTAL DANCE TUITION COSTS** \$710

**FITNESS FRENZY**

**Fitness Frenzy is for ages 13 and up. Each class is different from the next so that participants get to experience all types of fitness. Classes can include, aerobic activity, boxing, step aerobics, free weights, fitness games, obstacle courses, weighted ball activities, races and other fitness fun! Our goal is to get moving, keep moving, have fun and sweat a little! Fitness Frenzy is now an all-year program! Mondays at 6:00 pm starting Oct 2, 2023**  
**Fitness Frenzy All Year Cost \$275 (+ registration fee if applicable)**

**6-WEEK THEATRE & DRUMMING CLASSES**

**These 6-week sessions for ages 13 and up will be offered multiple times throughout the year in collaboration with Second Generation Theatre and the African American Cultural Center to bring their community classes to danceability!**

**Each 6-Week Session Cost \$100 (+ registration fee if applicable)**

\*Group Homes may continue to pay with checks or cash.

\*Payments must be made online whenever possible. Online payment via Paypal make it possible to:

- Set up auto-payments on the same day every month. Paying monthly is preferred.
- Even though the payment is month to month, the season is not month to month. You are committing to attending class for the entire season (Sept-May) and making payments for 8 months.
- The \$45 registration fee should be paid at the time of registration. The \$65 performance fee is collected with the first auto-payment. The performance fee will be refunded if your dancer does not perform. The registration fee will be refunded if you paid that as part of the summer session.
- A link to set up PayPal auto-payments (performance fee and monthly tuition) will be emailed to you once your registration is accepted.

\*Please call us to discuss if:

- you would like to pay in full
- use your Independent Health Flexfit or BCBS Wellness cards for partial tuition payment
- if payment is coming directly from a self-directed budget
- you have other extenuating circumstances.

\* Refunds/Administrative Fees

- No refunds will be issued for partial months. Any overpayments will be credited towards the 2024-25 dance season.
- No refunds will be issued for missed classes due to illness. We will credit/adjust tuition in cases of hospitalizations lasting more than 2 weeks.
- Taking credit cards/debit cards in person will require a \$5 processing fee to offset provider charges
- There is a \$10 fee for returned/bounced checks.

\*We have extremely limited tuition scholarships this year for those students with documented financial need. Please do not hesitate to ask for an application, but please understand that applying is not a guarantee of receiving a scholarship. Applications must be completed in full and all supporting financial documentation submitted by the deadline.



**TUITION:** Automatic monthly payments are set up via a Paypal subscription. This is the preferred method of payment. If you would like to pay by check or cash instead or pay the balance in full, please contact the Office Manager at 716-651-0094. Group homes may continue to pay by cash/check/money order. If you have a self-directed budget plan, we will work with your fiscal intermediary and budget manager to get *danceability* tuition put into your budget and where possible, have payment made directly to us. Please set up an automatic payment plan if you have chosen to have self-directed budget monies reimbursed to you. Your PayPal notification is your receipt, but we always provide invoices on letterhead when requested. **Tuition must be paid in full by the last week of April prior to the Annual Performances.**

**Tuition Adjustments:** We do not offer makeup classes for absences but will adjust tuition for hospitalizations lasting more than two weeks.

**Extenuating Circumstances:** The automatic monthly payment should take care of most issues, but if you have other extenuating circumstances and need an alternate arrangement for paying tuition, please contact the Office Manager during regular business hours to discuss your situation. Tuition still must be paid in a timely manner.

**FEES:**

- There will be a \$10 fee assessed for all returned checks.
- There will be a \$5 processing fee to process credit/debit cards in person to offset the fees our provider charges.

**WAIVERS/DISCOUNTS/THIRD PARTY PAYMENTS:** *Danceability* is part of the Independent Health FlexFit Family and can also accept the Blue Cross Blue Shield Wellness Debit card. As part of our agreement to accept these funds, a \$30 Wellness discount is given to those members when they use that benefit to pay tuition. No credit card processing fees will be charged for these payments. Please contact the Office Manager if you want to use this benefit for partial tuition payment. Proof of insurance may be required.

Families and staff are encouraged to apply for third-party payment when possible, i.e., NYS Commission for the Blind, OPWDD, family reimbursement through People Inc. and other agencies. Contact your service coordinator and insurance companies to see what money is available for recreational and wellness activities.

**SCHOLARSHIPS:** Scholarships are available depending on the financial need of the dancer and/or family. A FULLY completed application with appropriate documentation is required to officially apply for a scholarship. See the Executive Director for application, criteria, and deadline information. Scholarship recipients must sign a contract and may be asked to help with fundraisers or volunteer in some capacity at some point during the season (this does not apply to group homes). *The annual registration fee of \$45 is not covered by a scholarship and will be the responsibility of the family/dancer.* The Scholarship Committee meets in mid-October and awardees will be notified shortly thereafter. If you have applied for a scholarship, please do not stress about tuition payments before that. If only a partial scholarship is awarded, we will work with you to set up a reasonable monthly payment plan to cover the remaining amount that is your responsibility.

## **\*\*INFORMATION FOR GROUP HOMES\*\***

Our instructors are social workers, special education teachers, physical therapists, and mental health professionals; thus, we want you to consider us part of your client's TEAM. We want to share with you OUR keys to success:

- **CALL** us when the individual is not coming. When a dancer is sick or hospitalized, we want to know! We care, our volunteers care, and their classmates ask.
- **ENCOURAGE:** Many have difficulty transitioning to dance, especially when the weather is bad. Let us know. Sometimes all it takes is a phone call from their teacher to say, "Please come to dance, we would miss you," to get them moving. We realize that many of our dancers are considered "independent" but every one of us needs a little push to make healthy decisions now & then. Our clients need it even more.
- **BEHAVIORS:** Please do not use dance as a reward or punishment. Dance should be considered like any other therapeutic activity; its benefits far outweigh the "fun" factor. If a client is exhibiting poor behavior, dance may be just the thing they need to turn it around. Let our skilled instructors try to make their/your day better.
- **BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION PLANS:** If there are words or actions that you know help the dancer to be more successful or are detrimental, please let us know. Consistency is key.
- **COME IN:** We ask that staff come into the building with the dancer and return to the waiting room 5 minutes before the end of class. This is so instructors can check in with you about any notes, reminders, or concerns they may have.
- **SHARE INFORMATION WITH THE WHOLE STAFF:** We know that shifts and staff change, but to the best of your ability, please tell all staff about dance; where it is, when it is, that they need to come in, and any specific behavior plans set in place with the teacher. For example, maybe your dancer waits in the van until the waiting room is less full before coming inside.
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- **ATTENDANCE IS KEY:** We cannot teach, and an individual cannot learn if they are not here. They pay money to be here, so they should be here. Instructors plan classes, volunteers drive here, and classmates look forward to seeing their friends. If you have multiple clients from one house coming to dance and one of them is ill, please bring the other(s). They shouldn't be penalized and miss dance just because their friend has to.

**If a group home shows a consistent lack of effort towards getting their dancers to dance class because of transportation or staffing issues, action will be taken by the Executive Director to solve the problem by contacting the group home manager or their superiors.**

## Family/Caregiver Code of Conduct

**Please review this code of conduct and verify on the registration paperwork that you will uphold it. Please help your dancer follow these guidelines to the best of their ability depending on their age and understanding.**

- *I will support my dancer's involvement in danceability and help them get the most out of the program.*
- *Danceability is an inclusive, nurturing dance family. I will treat others the way I want to be treated and the way I want my dancer to be treated. I will partner with the entire danceability community to maintain an INCLUSIVE environment where all dancers are supported, regardless of age, ability level, disability, gender expression, or other differences. I will build up everyone - and I will encourage my dancer to do the same.*
- *There is ZERO tolerance for bullying or harassment of any kind, whether it be in person, on the phone, on social media, or via text or email. I will discourage bullying behavior or derogatory comments regarding any dancer's ability level, disability, body type, race, creed, national origin, sex, sexual identity or gender expression, etc. I will not make those comments about my dancer, any other dancer, volunteer or staff member whether it be in person, on social media or over text or email. I will not harass any other dancer, family member, volunteer or staff member in any way, including sexual harassment, in person, on the phone, on social media or over text or email.*
- *I will respect the faculty, staff and volunteers at all times. If I have a disagreement or an issue that needs resolution, I will make an appointment to discuss it privately with those involved and not raise the issue in the public areas of the studio or with other caregivers. If necessary I will make an appointment with the Executive Director to achieve a resolution.*
- *I will maintain an atmosphere of sharing in the studio and share my knowledge and resources with other caregivers and students.*
- *Instructors may at times offer suggestions as to how to improve an outcome in class or daily living. We encourage you to take advantage of their professional experience and give their suggestions a try. I will treat the instructors as part of my dancer's care team.*
- *Violent behaviors will not be tolerated and as such, actions will first be taken to modify the behavior. If violent behaviors occur, I will take suggested actions and work with my dancer's entire care team to resolve any issues related to negative and/or violent behaviors both here at danceability and elsewhere. I understand that my dancer may not be able to continue with dance if potential solutions are not working and/or if at some point they become a danger to themselves, others or property.*
- *I will keep our studio clean by picking up after myself and frequently check lost and found.*