



2025-2026

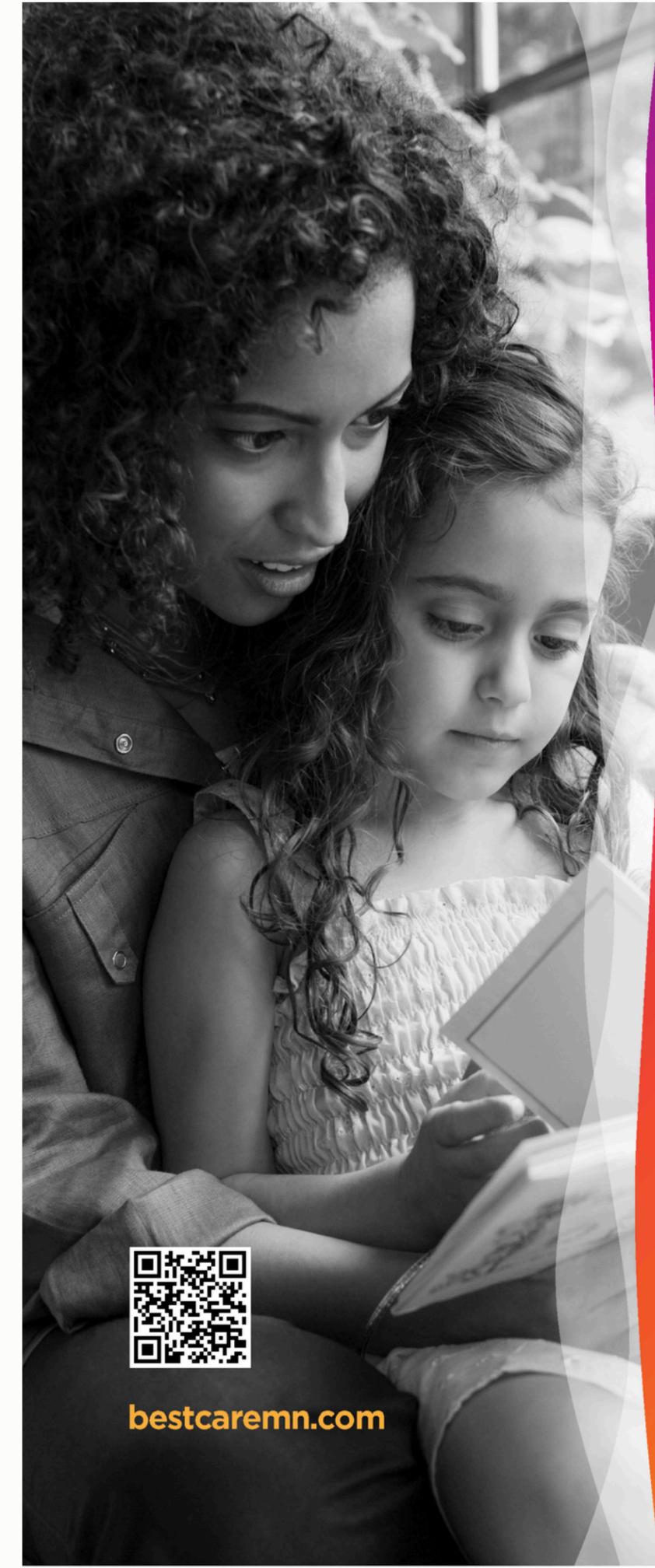
AusM Fall Programs

www.ausm.org

ausm
autism society of minnesota



Autism Society



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WELCOME to fall with AuSM.

We're glad you're here.

The Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) is proud to share our 2025-2026 Fall Activities Guide—your resource for workshops, classes, events, therapy, advocacy, and community impact. Whether you're an autistic adult, a caregiver, an educator, or an ally, we invite you to explore all the ways AuSM can support and uplift your journey.

This guide brings together everything we offer this season: from education and mental health services to advocacy opportunities and camp experiences. You'll also find stories and articles that highlight how AuSM is making a difference across Minnesota plus practical resources you can use today.

You may notice some updates to familiar programs, such as a streamlined lineup for Social and Recreation offerings, a shortened 2026 Minnesota Autism Conference, and adjustments to the Autistic Community Summit. Rising costs in areas like venues, staffing, and technology mean we've had to make thoughtful changes. Our goal is to ensure we can continue providing the high-quality experiences our community counts on—delivered in a more efficient, sustainable way.

We also know that many community members have faced challenges using waiver funding for AuSM programs, and we expect those challenges may continue in 2026. We're here to help. This guide includes tools and resources to support your access to services, and our staff is always available at info@ausm.org if you need assistance.

Everything we do is guided by a neurodiversity-affirming approach, shaped by autistic voices and lived experience. Every program and initiative in this guide reflects our ongoing commitment to connection, inclusion, and empowerment for everyone in the autism community. Wherever you are on your path, AuSM has something for you.

To learn more or register for any offering in this guide, visit www.ausm.org.

We appreciate the support of the advertisers featured in this guide. Please be aware that their inclusion does not reflect an endorsement by AuSM.



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JIGSAW PUZZLE COMPETITION

September 27, 2025

In-Person at the Mall of America and Virtually on Zoom

Presented by **BEST CARE**
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Autistic Community SUMMIT 2025

Dakota County Technical College (DCTC)

November 8, 2025

Created and curated by autistic people, for autistic people, the purpose of the Autistic Community Summit is to provide a space for community building and sharing the knowledge and perspectives of Minnesota's autistic community. This year's summit is dedicated to working together to advocate for our needs while creating connections with other autistics.

Learn more and register at www.ausm.org/summit



Calling all puzzlers – from serious competitors to casual players! AuSM's Jigsaw Puzzle Competition returns Sept. 27. Join us at Mall of America or virtually on Zoom. Test your skills while supporting our community. Each division features its own 500-piece puzzle: join us for one or all three!

Divisions

2-Person: 8:30-10:30 a.m.
\$50 per team

4-Person Beginner & Advanced:
11 a.m.-1 p.m.
\$60 per team

Free-For-All (1-4 person):
1:30-3:30 p.m.
\$60 per team



Scan or visit www.ausm.org/puzzle to register



Home and Community-Based Services Provider Since 1976



Dungarvin provides support to individuals under the DD, CADI, and CAC Waivers, including those with developmental disabilities, such as autism. Our diverse range of services is designed to assist people in achieving their goals while enhancing their overall quality of life. Whether through case management, skill-building activities, independent living, or supported living environments, we strive to create a nurturing and inclusive atmosphere where everyone can thrive.

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- Employment Services
- Individualized Home Support
- Integrated Community Supports
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- Vocational Rehabilitation Services
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mnservices@dungarvin.com
www.Dungarvin.com
www.MeetMyRumi.com

Get Involved

At the AuSM, our work is powered by a caring and connected community — and there are so many ways you can be part of it! Whether you choose to donate, fundraise with friends, join our advocacy committee, volunteer your time, or simply stay informed through our mailing list, every action helps strengthen our mission to support autistic individuals and families. Check out these five ways of getting involved with the AuSM community.

1 Donate

AuSM supporters sustain the work that helps the Minnesota autism community. Donations stay local, and every dollar counts.

2 Fundraise

Celebrate your birthday with donations, host a run or walk, plan an event, or create something entirely new to fundraise for AuSM.

3 Advocate

Join AuSM's advocacy work to speak up for laws and public policies support individuals and families living with autism.

4 Volunteer

Share your time with AuSM through volunteer opportunities connected to acceptance and fundraising events, special office projects, and more.

5 Join Our Mailing List

Sign up to receive AuSM's twice-monthly e-newsletter, or join mailing lists tailored for your interests to learn about upcoming events, resources, and services.

Visit www.ausm.org/get-involved to learn more

Connect with the Minnesota Autism Community

Be a part of the AuSM community. We're thrilled to partner with businesses and organizations that support programs and services designed to enhance the lives of individuals with autism from birth through retirement.



Sponsorships and Advertising

Have a presence at one of our four major events throughout the year and show your support for the Minnesota autism community, or include your ad in one of our three printed pieces each year.



Premier Partnership

AuSM Premier Partnerships are sponsorship opportunities that are ideal for organizations interested in supporting and reaching Minnesota's autism community throughout the year in many ways. By becoming an AuSM Premier Partner, you'll receive more recognition, more sponsorship opportunities, and more access to the Minnesota autism community at a lower cost.



Bundle and Save!

When you join AuSM at multiple events, you'll save \$100 and get free sponsorships in AuSM's e-newsletter. You can select any two events to package for savings.

Contact Kelly Ulrick to sponsor or advertise. Email kulrick@ausm.org or call 651.647.1083 ext. 128.

Education

AuSM is your go-to stop for learning more about autism. We offer educational opportunities throughout the year, including autism training, certification, and consulting; workshops; and professional development.

Workshops

AuSM's workshops are held throughout the year and offer expert-led insight into a wide range of autism-related topics.

Designed for autistic individuals, families, educators, and professionals, these virtual sessions provide practical tools, thoughtful perspectives, and community connection. From navigating disability services to understanding co-occurring neurodivergences, our workshops are crafted to meet real needs with respect and clarity. Unless otherwise noted, all workshops are offered online and come with one month of post-event recording access.

Certificates of Attendance are provided for all AuSM workshops. Submit to your professional licensing board to receive CEUs.



Scan to Register

Pricing

- \$59.99 (non-member)
- \$49.99 (member)
- \$39.99 (autistic individual)



AuSM Workshops are supported by Premier Partners.



Now and Venn: AuDHD and Overlapping Neurodivergence

Oct. 9, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

More people are finding that they are diagnosed with both autism and ADHD, or AuDHD. Learn the basics of what AuDHD is as well as the strengths, challenges, and idiosyncrasies of being doubly neurodivergent in this virtual workshop. Beth will cover what qualifies someone to have the AuDHD diagnosis, the barriers to diagnosis, and various tools to improve quality of life for those with challenges caused by being neurodivergent in a world made for neurotypicals.

Presented by **Beth Pitchford (she/her)**

Beth Pitchford, MA, LPCC, is a mental health therapist who has specialized in working with neurodivergent individuals for over 10 years. Starting out at the Autism Society of Minnesota, she now works at Dakota County Technical College where she does individual therapy with students as well as social programming, education workshops, and assessments for autism and ADHD. Beth has a master of arts in Adlerian Psychotherapy and Counseling (Adler Graduate School, 2014) and a master's in Forensic Behavioral Health (Concordia, 2023).



Eating Disorders and Autism: Understanding the Overlap and Supporting Recovery

Dec. 4, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Autistic individuals are at significantly higher risk for certain eating disorders—especially anorexia and ARFID—yet their experiences are often misunderstood or overlooked in traditional treatment models. This workshop, co-presented by the Autism Society of Minnesota (AuSM) and Melrose Center, explores the intersection of autism and eating disorders through research, lived experience, and clinical insight.

Presented by **Zephyr James (any pronouns)**, **Heather Gallivan (she/her)**, and **Andrea Zuellig (she/her)**

Heather Gallivan, PsyD, LP, is the Clinical Director at Melrose Center. She joined Melrose in 2004 and has worked with eating disorder patients in all levels of care from outpatient to residential treatment settings. She obtained her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from the Minnesota School of Professional Psychology. Dr. Gallivan is a passionate leader and teacher concerning the prevention and treatment of eating disorders, and how societal messages impact our beliefs and attitudes about food, weight, and body image.

Zephyr James is an autistic adult and the Director of Marketing and Communications at AuSM. With over a decade of experience in creating resources, trainings, events, and community for autistic individuals in Minnesota, they bring the lived experience of both autism and an eating disorder. Zephyr has completed the Partners in Policymaking disability advocacy program and was a Minnesota LEND Fellow.

Andrea Zuellig, Ph.D, LP has worked with eating disorder patients at Melrose Center's various levels of care for over 20 years. She currently works in Melrose Center's higher levels of care (intensive residential, residential, partial day treatment), and is also the Clinical Lead of Melrose's Binge Eating Disorder program. Dr. Zuellig obtained her doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from Pennsylvania State University, with a minor in Human Diversity. Dr. Zuellig has particular interests in the areas of neurodiversity and eating disorders, and health at any size.



PTSD and ASD: Double Neurodivergence

Feb. 5, 2026, 9 a.m.-12 p.m.

Autistic people are likely to experience trauma at a higher rate compared to neurotypicals. Sometimes these traumatic experiences turn into Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, or PTSD. There has been more research regarding the combination of ASD and PTSD, including how PTSD affects autistic people. PTSD has also been explored as a form of acquired neurodivergence, or how some brains are re-wired after birth. What does it mean to have two forms of neurodivergence? This workshop will go over the intersection of PTSD and ASD, the basics of EMDR (a common trauma therapy), and PTSD as acquired neurodivergence.

Presented by Sara Lahti (she/her, he/him)

Sara Lahti, a Mental Health Professional and Certified Clinical Trauma Professional, graduated with her Master of Arts degree in 2018 and previously earned a BA in psychology through the University of St. Thomas. Lahti has worked with children with ASD as well as with people with ASD and other disabilities in a day program facility. Lahti has a passion for working with adults on the autism spectrum. She uses Adlerian and person-centered therapeutic techniques to help clients better understand themselves and their strengths. Lahti's Master's thesis focused on using Early Recollections with people on the spectrum, which she believes is central to understanding clients' core beliefs. She works with clients on thought patterns and how they affect daily living and also helps clients develop social interest within themselves and their communities.



Understanding Autism

Ready to truly understand autism—and support autistic people with confidence and compassion? Understanding Autism is a free, one-hour session that will give you the essential tools to recognize, respect, and support autistic experiences. Whether you're a parent, caregiver, professional, or exploring your own identity, this class will help you shift from confusion to clarity with a neurodiversity-affirming mindset. Every session includes time for your questions, so you'll get personalized insights to help you take the next step—whatever that may be.

Day/Date	Time	Location: Held Virtually
Monday, Sep. 8, 2025	6-7 p.m.	All sessions are free
Monday, Nov. 10, 2025	12-1 p.m.	Choose the date and time that works for you. All sessions include the same great content—just one hour and totally free.
Monday, Dec. 8, 2025	6-7 p.m.	
Monday, Jan. 12, 2026	10-11 a.m.	
Monday, Feb. 9, 2026	12-1 p.m.	

2025-2026 Understanding Autism classes are sponsored by AuSM Premier Partners Best Care and MICC

BEST CARE
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MICC
Learn Skills. Experience Life.

Professional and Personalized Training

By learning more about autism and neurodiversity, you are taking proactive steps toward acceptance and inclusion. AuSM will provide you with strategies to help you understand the needs of people affected by autism, allowing you to offer a positive, supportive environment for the fastest growing disability population in the United States.

Training

AuSM's team of education specialists provide you with customized trainings that offer strategies to help make your environment positive, inclusive, and supportive for neurodiverse individuals.

Common topics include:

- Accessibility and Inclusion
- Autism 101
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in the Workplace
- Sensory-Friendly Environments and Events
- Understanding Behavior and Positive Supports

Consulting

AuSM offers a range of consulting services through our partnerships. Our services include, but are not limited to:

- Customized staff trainings
- Sensory-friendly inventory of spaces
- Customized social narratives and visual tools
- Sensory-friendly guide listings
- Event listing on AuSM's Community Calendar
- Sensory kits and tools
- Guidance for inclusive spaces and resources

✉ education@ausm.org

🌐 www.ausm.org

☎ 651.647.1083



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Director:

Abdirizak Ismail

Phone

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Families love our supportive approach and flexible service options. Whether you prefer care at home or in our beautiful Eden Prairie center, we're here to support your child's journey to growth and independence.

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Visit: www.magnitudetherapyservices.org

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Sensory Friendly PERFORMANCES

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Enjoy a Sensory Friendly performance at Children's Theatre Company, thoughtfully designed for individuals with sensory sensitivities, autism, or developmental differences. These performances feature lower sound levels, adjusted lighting, and a welcoming environment. Quiet spaces and comfort items—like fidgets and ear protection—are always available.

Treasure Island

Ages 8 and Up
Friday, October 10, 2025 at 7pm
Sunday, October 19, 2025 at 11am

Roald Dahl's The Enormous Crocodile The Musical

All Ages
Friday, October 31, 2025 at 7pm
Sunday, November 16, 2025 at 5pm

Dr. Seuss's How the Grinch Stole Christmas!

All Ages
Friday, December 12, 2025 at 7pm
Sunday, January 4, 2026 at 11am

Go, Dog. Go! • Ve Perro ¡Ve!

For Younger Audiences
Friday, February 20, 2026 at 7pm
Sunday, February 22, 2026 at 11am

Dinosaur World Live

Ages 3 and Up
Friday, April 3, 2026 at 7pm
Sunday, March 29, 2026 at 11am

The Wizard of Oz

All Ages
Friday, May 29, 2026 at 7pm
Sunday, June 7, 2026 at 5pm



Want to learn more or get tickets? Visit childrenstheatre.org/sensory or give our friendly Ticket Office Associates a call at 612.874.0400.

Content guidance available on individual show pages at childrenstheatre.org



Autistic Unmasking

In the context of autism, masking is when an autistic person works to behave more like a neurotypical person or in ways that meet neurotypical standards. A person can mask intentionally or unintentionally.

Why do people mask?

There are many reasons people might mask. Underlying most of them is an attempt to blend in, be more accepted, or stay safe. Here are some common reasons people mask:

- To stay safe
- To avoid mistreatment, bullying, stigma, or discrimination
- To be more successful at work or school
- To meet friends or romantic partners
- To fit in
- Ableism or beliefs that acting autistic is bad or wrong



Impacts of Masking

Although there are times and places where a person may feel it's necessary to mask, research has found that masking for long periods of time has negative consequences like:

- Mental health impacts, including anxiety, depression, and suicidal ideation
- Burnout, fatigue, and limited energy for anything else
- Feeling disconnected from yourself
- Sensory suppression
- Difficulty developing a sense of identity
- Loneliness and isolation
- Delayed diagnoses
- Fewer services and supports

It's important to remember that masking is a survival strategy. Sometimes it isn't safe for a person (especially someone from a marginalized group) to act openly autistic.

Start with Self Reflection

One useful place to start when it comes to unmasking is taking the time to understand why you mask, how you mask, and when you mask. That will help you determine what's getting in the way of stopping. Some questions to get started: When do you mask? What does masking look like for you? What emotions do you feel when you think about unmasking? Do you have assumptions or fears about what might happen if you unmask, or about yourself when you are unmasked?

Finding Your Authentic Self

As you start to understand why and when you are masking, you may begin to get a picture of who you would be without a mask. But sometimes it can be hard to even imagine yourself unmasked. Check out these strategies to help you determine who your authentic autistic self is.

- Build a sensory profile for yourself. Brainstorm what kinds of sensory inputs would feel good to you and which ones you'd want to avoid.
- Identify your special interests and brainstorm how you can spend time enjoying them.
- Notice what you do when you're by yourself and you don't feel pressure to be or act a certain way.
- Try to notice your emotions when you're masking. Is there something your body wants to do to express those emotions?
- Be open with yourself about the places you need support. What do you authentically struggle with?

Autistic Community

As you work on unmasking, it can be helpful to be around other autistic and neurodivergent people, especially those who are openly and proudly different. It will help normalize being "weird" and may challenge some of the assumptions you have that are rooted in ableism.

Places to find autistic community:

- Search for support groups in your area
- Look for online groups of autistics, including Facebook groups, Discord groups, or on Meetup.com
- Follow autistic writers and creators on platforms like Bluesky, Substack, or YouTube
- Look for local organizations focused on neurodiversity in your area and get involved
- Find groups related to your special interests or hobbies: chances are you'll find another neurodivergent person or two there

Get more tools and exercises for unmasking in [AuSM's Unmasking Toolkit](#).



Community

At AuSM, we believe that connection and community are essential. In this section, you'll find opportunities for autistic individuals to meet peers, build friendships, and share experiences in welcoming, understanding spaces. Whether you're joining a support group, sipping coffee at a casual meetup, or diving into summer adventures at camp, these programs are designed to celebrate neurodiversity and foster meaningful connections.

Coffee Club

Coffee Club is a space where autistic and neurodivergent adults (18+) can connect with each other, foster friendships, and build community while enjoying a favorite beverage and/or snack. Adults are welcome to bring items that make them feel comfortable, stay as long as they'd like, stim, and parallel play. While it's free to participate in AuSM's Coffee Club, we ask that participants purchase something from our venue.

AuSM provides a staff person to assist with questions, check-in, ordering, or to manage any issues that may arise during the club. You can also find resources including a social narrative providing club details, parking info, and menus on AuSM's website.

Tuesdays, 3-5 p.m.

- Sep. 9, 2025
- Oct. 14, 2025
- Dec. 9, 2025
- Jan. 13, 2026
- Feb. 10, 2026
- March 10, 2026

Location:

Dogwood Coffee, 2700
University Ave W Suite 100,
St Paul, MN 55114



Scan or visit
www.ausm.org
to RSVP

AuSM Coffee Club is free thanks to the generous sponsorship of AuSM Premier Partner Best Care.



Support Groups

AuSM provides a variety of support groups to meet the needs of our community. Support groups offer those affected by autism the opportunity to share problems, solutions, joy, and sorrows with one another.

AuSM Support Groups are generously sponsored by Premier Partners Accra, Best Care, and MICC.



- **Women's Support Group:** first Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
 - Upcoming dates: Sep. 4, Oct. 2, Nov. 6, Dec. 4, Feb. 5, Mar. 5, Apr. 2, May 7, June 4
- **LGBTQIA+ Support Group:** second Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
 - Upcoming dates: Sep. 11, Oct. 9, Nov. 13, Dec. 11, Jan. 8, Feb. 12, Mar. 12, Apr. 9, May 14, June 11
- **Family Members of Adults on the Spectrum Support Group:** third Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
 - Upcoming dates: Sep. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18, Jan. 15, Feb. 19, Mar. 19, May 21, June 18
- **NEW BIPOC Parents of Children with Autism Support Group:** third Thursday of each month, 12-1 p.m.
 - Upcoming dates: Sep. 18, Oct. 16, Nov. 20, Dec. 18, Jan. 15, Feb. 19, Mar. 19, Apr. 16, May 21, June 18
- **Independent Adults with ASD Support Group:** fourth Thursday of each month, 6:30-8:30 p.m.
 - Upcoming dates: Sep. 25, Oct. 23, No group in November or December due to the holidays, Jan. 22, Feb. 26, Mar. 26, Apr. 23, May 28, June 25

Scan or visit www.ausm.org to RSVP.
All groups are held virtually via Zoom.
Check the website for more details.





Get Ready for Camp 2026!

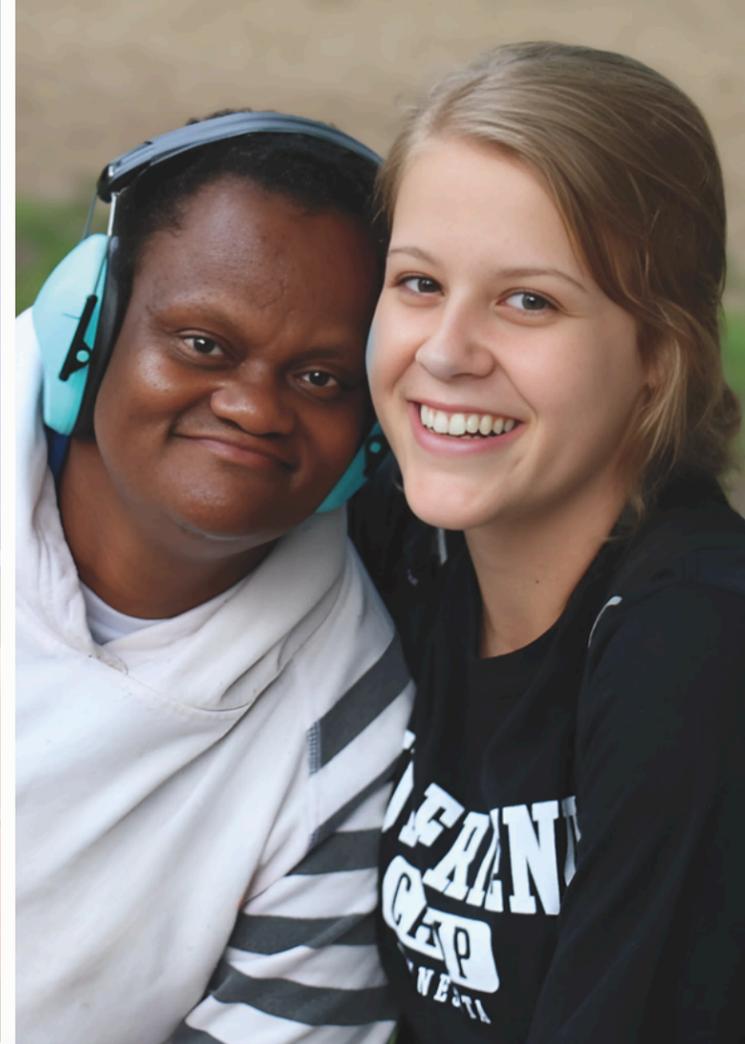
AuSM camps are tailored for autistic youth and adults. Parents and caregivers can rest assured knowing that their campers are being cared for by highly-trained, experienced staff, while campers make memories that last a lifetime. AuSM will be running sessions of Camp Hand in Hand and Camp Discovery. The Camp Lottery starts Jan. 1, 2026! Looking for guidance on using a waiver to pay for camp? Contact camp@ausm.org for more information.

Check www.ausm.org for updates.



AuSM Is Seeking Staff for 2026 Camps

AuSM invites you to learn about the magic of camp and community by becoming a camp counselor during the summer 2026 season. AuSM's Camp Discovery and Camp Hand in Hand are seeking camp counselors. Visit ausm.org/about/job-opportunities to learn about the best summer job ever, or email camp@ausm.org for more details.



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245D Basic Licensed Service (IHS)

Providing services for individuals with disabilities and older adults in Minnesota for 25 years.

PICS is a subsidiary of Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota.



Emergency Preparedness

Emergencies can happen at any time — from house fires to tornadoes to power outages. Planning ahead can make these situations less overwhelming and safer for everyone. Autistic people and their families may face unique challenges during emergencies, such as sensory sensitivities, medical needs, or communication differences. This guide shares practical strategies and tools you can use now to prepare for a variety of situations — whether you're a caregiver or family member of someone with high support needs or a more independent autistic individual.

What kinds of emergencies should you plan for?

It helps to think through the types of emergencies you might encounter, such as:

- Natural disasters: tornadoes, blizzards, floods, wildfires
- Public health events: pandemics, chemical spills, poor air quality
- Power outages or other utility disruptions
- Evacuations: fires, gas leaks, or building damage
- Shelter-in-place situations: staying home because it's unsafe to go out
- Health emergencies
- Elopement or other autism specific emergencies

Step 1: Build Your Emergency Plan

For Individuals with Higher Support Needs:

- Identify and talk with a trusted support network: family, PCAs, teachers, emergency services, or neighbors.
- Write down the individual's sensory, medical, and communication needs.
- Make sure everyone who lives with the individual knows how to help them calm down, communicate, or evacuate. Write these instructions where they are easily accessible.
- Register with your local emergency services if you will need help leaving your home or other support.

For More Independent Individuals:

- Learn the emergency exits at home, work, and school.
- Pick at least two safe meeting spots — one close by and one farther away.
- Practice what to say if you need help or call 911.
- Store copies of medical and contact info somewhere easy to grab.
- Know how to shut off water, gas, and electricity at home.

Practice your plan regularly with your network, so everyone knows what to do.

Step 2: Prepare Emergency Kits

You may need to either GO (evacuate) or STAY (shelter-in-place), so it's best to prepare for both.

Your "Go Bag" — For Evacuation

Pack these items in a backpack or duffel bag you can carry easily:

- Copies of important papers: medical info, ID, insurance, contacts
- Medications & medical equipment (hearing aids, wheelchair parts)
- Food & water for 3–7 days (including for pets/service animals)
- Flashlight, batteries, whistle, radio
- Sensory tools or comfort items (headphones, fidgets, weighted blanket)
- Clothes, sturdy shoes, hygiene items, cash
- Phone charger & emergency contacts
- Communication devices or supports

Your "Stay Kit" — For Sheltering in Place

Stock enough supplies to last at least 1–2 weeks:

- Water (1 gallon per person per day) & non-perishable food
- Extra medications & medical supplies
- Blankets, entertainment, and comfort items
- Emergency power sources, candles, and matches
- Pet/service animal food & supplies
- Manual can opener & hygiene items
- Blanket, snacks, water, flashlight
- First aid kit, jumper cables, shovel, sand/kitty litter
- Cell phone charger & help signal
- Food that meets your sensory needs

Step 3: Practice & Communicate

- Teach family members and caregivers what to do, who to call, and where to go.
- Use apps or add ICE ("In Case of Emergency") contacts to your phone.
- Practice evacuation drills and staying calm with your support network.
- For those with high support needs, include instructions for sensory-friendly spaces and calming strategies.
- If you are supporting someone with high support needs, ensure they can communicate during an emergency (the appropriate language is included on an AAC device for example) and that they know what to do in each type of emergency.

Top 5 Things To Do Today

- Make a plan & write it down.
- Build a go bag & stay kit.
- Practice your plan with your network.
- Register with local emergency services if needed.
- Store important documents in a waterproof container.

Tips for Different Needs

For High Support Needs: Post emergency info in visible places, prepare a sensory-friendly safe space, and ensure backup PCA and transportation plans are in place.

For More Independent Individuals: Learn accessible evacuation routes, carry a card noting your autism and needs, and have a backup plan for shelter and transportation.

Resources

For more information and printable planning forms:

- [ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov)
- [redcross.org](https://www.redcross.org)
- disability.state.mn.us
- Feeling Safe, Being Safe toolkit: tinyurl.com/FeelingSafe



Where the amazing happens

Franklin Center delivers innovative, tailored services for those on the autism spectrum or with related neurodiversities. **Our integrated model unlocks potential and transforms lives.**



Franklin ACADEMY

As a leader in education for those with ASD and related learning differences, we deliver highly personalized, accredited **K-12 education**

Franklin THERAPY

Our professionals provide fully licensed, **comprehensive therapy** at the intersection of behavioral and mental health

CAMP Franklin

During the summer, we offer a wide range of academic, recreational, and social skills camps for students entering grades K-12

Franklin CAPSTONE

Our **Adult Program** includes a range of social, vocational, and life skills classes that launch young adults toward a life of confidence and independence



Learn more or schedule a conversation at franklinmn.org

Improving lives through personalized homecare



Accra helps families affected by Autism Spectrum Disorder that need support in their homes. We are one of the largest providers of homecare services in Minnesota, proudly serving more than 9,000 clients across the state. Our mission is to improve lives by providing individualized homecare services and support to people living at home. Our person-centered philosophy focuses on treating each person as a unique individual.

Our services include:

- Personal Care Assistant (PCA) Choice
- Financial Management Services (FMS)
- 245D Waivered Services
- Home Health Care
- Mental Health Services
- Senior Assisted Living

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Advocacy

Advocacy is one of the core elements of AuSM's mission. In 2025, we worked hard to ensure that the voices of autistic individuals, families, and professionals were heard at the Capitol, even in the face of significant state budget cuts to disability, education, and human services. Here are some of our accomplishments, as well as important information about legislation that will affect our community.



Human Services

This year's legislative session brought historic cuts to disability services — \$270 million over the next two years and an additional \$850 million in the following biennium (2028-2029). Thanks to persistent advocacy, AuSM and our partners helped prevent even deeper cuts, including harmful changes to waiver qualifications and the return of TEFRA parental fees.

Key outcomes include:

- Streamlined the disability determination and appeals processes and required the state to help applicants gather evidence before denying services.
- Accelerated appeals timelines and improved access to electronic health records for disability determinations.
- Created a multidisciplinary working group focused on human services areas and added requirements to the Waiver Reimagine Advisory Committee to ensure diverse voices shape the future of disability services.
- Maintained key waiver eligibility criteria, including supports for individuals experiencing homelessness or with sensory needs.
- Fought limits on waiver funding growth, increasing them from 2% to 4%.
- Simplified MnCHOICES reassessments for adults and allowed remote reassessments (starting in 2026).
- Added coverage under CDCS and CFSS waivers for swimming lessons for children whose disability puts them at greater risk of drowning.
- Established licensure requirements for Applied Behavior Analysts (BCBAs), ensuring qualified professionals serve Minnesotans while exempting licensed psychologists.
- We fought to make sure the people most affected by these programs — autistic individuals and their families — are at the table as Minnesota continues reshaping its long-term care and disability services.



Education

Education funding also faced serious reductions, with \$470 million in cuts over the next several years, including \$250 million of Special Education funding. AuSM pushed back on proposals that would have further weakened support for autistic students.

We helped advance:

- A new language access plan requirement, ensuring families who speak a language other than English or who have disabilities themselves can access information, accommodations, and appeal decisions.
- Grants to promote alternatives to exclusionary discipline practices.
- Working groups to examine seclusion practices and developmental delay education services.
- Codifying the federal special education complaint process in state law for clarity and accountability.
- We successfully fought off attempts to roll back the ban on withholding recess, seclusion, and suspensions — keeping protections for our youngest students intact.



By the Numbers

- \$270M: Cuts to disability & human services for 2026–27
- \$850M: Additional cuts projected for 2028–29
- \$275M: Specific cuts to long-term care waivers
- \$470M: Cuts to education funding over the next few years
- \$250M: Special education funding targeted for cuts in FY28 and beyond

Looking Ahead

2025 showed us how fragile and critical disability and education funding are. As the state begins implementing these cuts and forming working groups to redesign programs, AuSM remains steadfast in advocating for an equitable, inclusive Minnesota where autistic people are valued and supported. Your support helps us stay at the table, protect vital services, and fight for a future that meets the needs of our entire community.

Visit www.ausm.org/advocacy to get involved.

Updates on the One Big Beautiful Bill Act

Recent federal legislation, known as the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, included changes to Medical Assistance as well as financial cuts to disability and education services. AuSM is working with partners to analyze how this will impact the community and advocate for safeguards of Minnesotans services and supports. Many elements of this bill don't go into effect until 2027 or later, and will be a high priority during the 2026 legislative session. Follow AuSM's social media platforms or join our newsletter mailing list for updates.



bell
museum

Sensory Friendly Saturdays

This monthly series provides a welcoming and accessible environment for individuals, families, and children who have sensory sensitivities. Explore the Bell Museum with lowered lighting, quieter sounds, and fewer visitors.

Find dates, additional resources and more at:
zumn.edu/bell-sensory



Sensory packs available for check out!



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A Christmas Carol

Sunday, November 30, 2025 at 4 p.m.

A dance-filled family portrait

Somewhere

Sunday, January 18, 2026 at 1 p.m.

A heart-pounding thriller

Sleuth

Sunday, April 19, 2026 at 1 p.m.

A beloved coming-of-age drama

Louisa May Alcott's Little Women

Sunday, May 31 at 1 p.m.

A musical inspired by true events

Come From Away

Sunday, July 19, 2026 at 1 p.m.

Experience an intentionally modified performance and sensory-friendly activities at a relaxed performance. From reducing the volume of loud effects and raising the house lights to creating quiet areas and fostering a welcoming atmosphere, relaxed performances are the perfect option for anyone who would benefit from a more inclusive environment.



Therapy

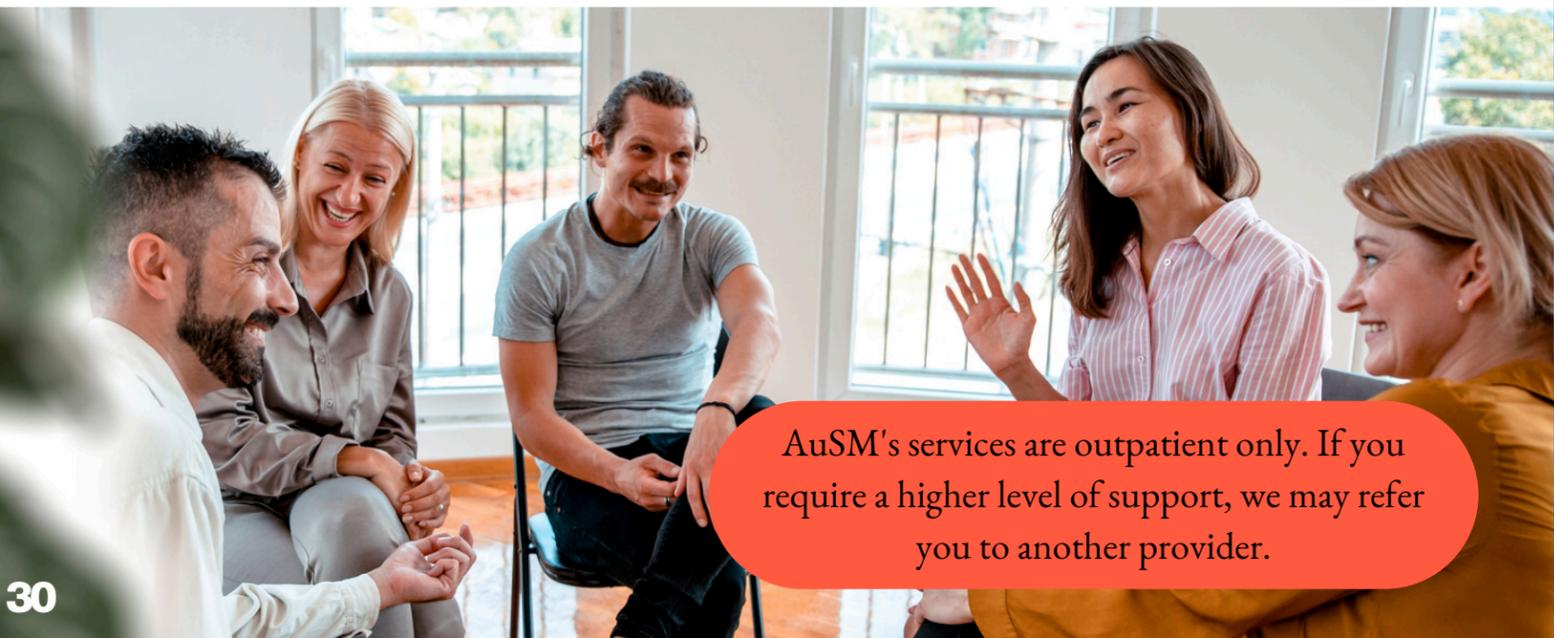
At AuSM, our counseling team provides compassionate, affirming therapy for autistic individuals of all ages. With more than 80 years of combined experience, our highly trained therapists are dedicated to helping clients understand their diagnosis, embrace their strengths, and develop strategies to navigate challenges. We meet you where you are—without judgment or preconceptions—supporting growth at your own pace in a safe, respectful environment.

AuSM’s clinic is both neurodiversity-affirming and LGBTQIA-friendly, with many neurodivergent therapists on staff. We are proud to lead in providing adult mental health services for autistic clients. Our therapists offer a variety of evidence-based approaches including EMDR, ACT, and CBT, and hold a wide range of professional licensures (LMFT, PhD, MA, MS, MSW, and more). Our team works alongside you to create an individualized plan focused on your unique needs and goals. Learn more about our therapists and services at www.ausm.org.

Contact us at autismcounseling@ausm.org to set up an appointment.

Counseling Services:

- Individual therapy
- Marriage, couples, and family therapy
- Psychoeducation
- Second opinions on autism evaluations
- Trauma therapy
- Onsite consultations for high-intensity challenges when staff or family need additional support



AuSM's services are outpatient only. If you require a higher level of support, we may refer you to another provider.



Professional Networking Group

If you’re a professional who works with autistic clients – or are working towards your licensure so you can – AuSM’s Counseling and Consulting team has a resource to help you connect with other autism-focused therapists. AuSM’s Professional Networking Group offers a chance for therapists to meet with other professionals who see clients with autism to ask questions, share cases, and build peer-to-peer relationships.

Upcoming Dates

- (all held 12-1 p.m. virtually)
- August 14, 2025
- September 11, 2025
- October 9, 2025
- November 13, 2025
- December 11, 2025
- January 8, 2026
- February 12, 2026



Scan to RSVP

AuSM is a Neurodiversity-Affirming Clinic

Neurodiversity refers to the fact that human beings have a wide variety of minds, sensory systems, and ways of processing the world. AuSM embraces this diversity: we won’t try to change your mind to fit a particular mold. We’ll work with your needs and your unique mind to create personalized goals and supports that are right for you.

You are not broken.

We acknowledge that there are challenges and difficulties created both by the world we live in and by lack of accessibility. Autism is a disability, and we know that it isn’t easy to be autistic. Our goal is to support the navigation of the world with these differences in mind and to acknowledge that everyone is worthy and brings value to the world.

Continuing AuSM's Multicultural Work

In 2024, AuSM was awarded a portion of funds appropriated to the Department of Human Services to create or improve resources for autistic families who experience extra barriers to services and supports related to their culture or first language; in particular, AuSM aimed to better support families from Somali, Oromo, Latino, and South Asian populations, all of whom hold an important presence in the Minnesota autism community.

Through a model of partnership that included half a dozen organizations who are experts in specific cultural communities, AuSM first set to work learning about how mainstream resources often fall short for parents of autistic kids. Staff and parent leaders from the respected Somali Parent Autism Network, the Multicultural Autism Action Network, Centro Tyrone Guzmán, Te Apoyo, and SEWA convened with AuSM to identify where parent needs across these diverse cultural groups were similar, but also where they diverged because of cultural nuance.

Across all groups, our teammates helped articulate that parents from all the targeted cultures craved strategic information about accessing services, but also needed strong foundational information about the diagnosis to combat stigmatizing misinformation that often drives families to isolate, even from those they needed most. Together, AuSM and partners honed key messages that could be communicated through short, simple videos and written guides and made sure that the messages were accurately conveyed, without losing important context in translation. In all, our collaborative team published a series of resources in five languages, covering topics like diagnosis, misinformation, stigma, neurodiversity affirmation, navigating services, and safety.

Most parents in the autism community know that true parent support is not only characterized by high quality resources, but also by connection to other families who offer shared experience and acceptance. As such, this project also powered monthly support groups, such that more than 100 parents could confide and connect amongst leaders and peers who shared common language, culture, and experience in Minnesota.

AuSM is truly grateful to our partners who are deeply dedicated to the well-being of their communities. We are thankful for their impact and also for their guidance and trust as we advance our collective competency to best serve all families who seek connection and support.

In 2025, AuSM was selected by the Department of Human Services to expand our equity-focused work related to the reduction of cultural barriers for families with autistic children. In the coming year, we will be connecting with Twin Cities-based organizations that support Black families as well as parents of Black autistic children to help advance a strategy that will bring new resources and connection to this intersection of our community.

Our work will have three main tenets:

- 1) Connecting Black parents for acceptance, support, and community building.
- 2) Hosting resource events, trainings, and information sessions in new-to-us community venues.
- 3) Developing resources and sharing stories that highlight and respond to the particular needs and experiences of Black autistic families.

As our work unfolds, we hope to announce new partnerships, opportunities, and collaborations that strengthen our diverse communities and empower Black and autistic families to access much needed supports, while affirming all the important parts of their identities.

Scan here to view the resources AuSM created through this grant work.



Want a little practice before taking a trip? Buckle up.

The **Navigating MSP Airport** program was created in partnership with the Fraser organization to allow people to practice unique airport experiences—including security screening, boarding and fastening your seatbelt — before you fly.

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**DoubleTree by Hilton
Minneapolis Airport** April 14-16, 2026

The Minnesota Autism Conference is a 3-day event featuring keynote speakers and breakout sessions led by experts—including autistic voices—designed for autistics, families, educators, and professionals. It's a place to learn, connect, and find community no matter where you are on your autism journey.

St. Louis Park May 17, 2026

Steps for Autism is a community event featuring a resource fair, stage show, costumed characters, interactive activities, and more for families, autistic adults, and supporters. Enjoy a self-led walk through the park alongside opportunities to connect and celebrate the autism community.



Mall of America September 26, 2026

The AuSM Jigsaw Puzzle Competition is Minnesota's largest autism-friendly puzzle event, held at Mall of America or virtually, where teams of all ages and skill levels compete in a fun, inclusive atmosphere.



Location TBD November 7, 2026

The Autistic Community Summit is a gathering created by and for autistic people, offering a safe space to share experiences, build connections, and explore topics important to the autistic community. The event features speakers, workshops, and opportunities to celebrate and empower autistic voices.

ausm[®]

autism society of minnesota

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AuSM Membership

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- Member-only rates on classes and annual Minnesota autism conference
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- Advocacy updates and alerts

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Corporation: \$350 (includes memberships for employees)

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