

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Bismarck ND 58505**

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Upcoming autism conference in Fargo offers training for parents, educators, treatment professionals, and others

BISMARCK, N.D. – Parents of individuals with autism spectrum disorders, educators, therapists, medical professionals, and first responders interested in learning about evidence-based treatment and successful interventions are encouraged to attend **North Dakota's second Autism Spectrum Disorders Conference, Oct. 21-23**, at the Ramada Plaza and Suites in Fargo.

National and regional experts will share information about new developments, tools, strategies and resources to help people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) overcome their individual obstacles and reach their potential. Continuing education credits for professionals are available.

"People will benefit from this training conference whether they attend one day or three days. Different training tracks are available for parents and professionals, but people can attend any presentation they wish," said North Dakota Department of Human Services' Autism Services Unit administrator Trisha Page.

On Oct. 21, from 8:30 a.m. to noon, opening keynote speaker and neurodiversity scholar and author **John Elder Robison** will share his story of growing up different and becoming independent and successful. Robison will also discuss autism today and will describe his work with the Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and at the College of Williams and Mary.

Child neurologist and professor of psychiatry and neurology **Dr. Nancy Minshew**, will speak to conference attendees on Oct. 22 at 8:30 a.m. about "The Way Forward: Understanding and Implementing What We Have Learned about Autism Spectrum Disorder." Minshew focuses on the development and testing of new interventions to improve general thinking skills and has been involved in establishing regional autism centers and an Autism Speaks treatment network site.

Cathy Pratt, Ph.D., educator and director of the Indiana Resource Center for Autism, will share information on Oct. 23 at 8:30 a.m. about evidence-based strategies for educating students in general and special education settings. She will also address social, communication, and learning challenges of students with ASD.

Other conference speakers will share their expertise as researchers, clinicians, parents, educators, assistive technology experts, and individuals diagnosed with ASD. **Parents** can benefit from introductory information on ASD, and can learn about advocating for their child, Medicaid waiver services, self-directing a child's services, supporting organizational skills and behavior regulation, planning for the transition from youth to adult services and opportunities, and more.

Page encouraged parents of children diagnosed with ASD or adults on the spectrum to attend and said a limited number of reduced registration fees are available, along with lodging assistance for parents traveling from outside of the Fargo-Moorhead area.

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The **provider track** includes sessions on diagnosis, communication disorder and language delay, neurocognitive and neurobehavioral challenges, apps to support students with autism, and sibling support.

The **educator track** features presentations on autism, Asperger's Syndrome and aspirations, assistive technology to support learning, reading and literacy interventions, the Specialisterne process supporting employment of people with ASD, and strategies for interpersonal and academic success. Educators can also attend a panel discussion on working together as parents, teachers, employers, physicians, and other adults to support students affected by ASD to become independent.

Medical professionals can learn about medical comorbidities with ASD, prevalence of ASD, evidence-based interventions, the impact of genetic and genomic factors, and social development, sexual development and intimate relationship skills, and the etiology, neurology, assessment, and treatment of autistic disorders.

Conference Details

Conference registration information, details about presenters and sessions, and conference handouts are available on the Web at <https://www.continuingeducationassociates.com/nd-asd-conference.html>.

The North Dakota Department of Human Services organized the conference with these **key partners**: the North Dakota Department of Health, the North Dakota Department of Public Instruction, Family Voices of North Dakota, University of North Dakota (UND) School of Medicine and Health Sciences, UND Department of Teaching and Learning, Pathfinder Services of North Dakota, North Dakota Center for Persons with Disabilities, Anne Carlsen Center, Prairie St. John's, and the Red River Valley Asperger-Autism Network.

Conference sponsors include the Anne Carlsen Center, Prairie St. John's, Autism Asperger Publishing Company, Red River Valley Asperger-Autism Network, Early Intervention Partners, Interagency Program for Assistive Technology, Money Follows the Person program, Pathfinder Services of North Dakota, ASIPRE/Minot State University, Sanford Children's, Heart of Behavior, North Dakota State Council on Developmental Disabilities, North Dakota Autism Center, Child Care Aware of North Dakota, Beyond Boundaries Therapy Services, Rehab Services Inc. Minnesota Life College, and the University of Mary.

Individuals with **questions** about the conference can contact the North Dakota Department of Human Services Autism Services Unit at 701-328-8912, toll-free 800-755-2719, ND Relay TTY 800-366-6888, or dhsautism@nd.gov.

Information about autism services administered by the department is available online at www.nd.gov/dhs/autism/index.html.

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