



# AUTISM TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROJECT

## Introduction to Autism

**icsps** impacting  
educational  
equity

Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support,  
Illinois State University, College of Education



**Illinois**  
State Board of  
Education

The Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA) develops and presents resources that assist individuals with autism in their transition from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment. ATTA provides training and support to important stakeholders as they work to provide an equitable experience for individuals on the spectrum.

# The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSPS)

The Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support (ICSPS) creates, supports, and delivers professional development for education professionals across Illinois. ICSPS provides technical assistance, develops publications, and facilitates program improvement strategies for our partners as they relate to college transition, recruitment, retention, and completion—encouraging achievement of special populations learners. ICSPS was founded in 1977 at Illinois State University and is housed in the Educational Administration and Foundations department in the College of Education.





# As we begin.

- ❖ Webinar logistics
- ❖ We often begin any autism-related training with the assumption that the audience has limited knowledge about ASD
- ❖ The positive is that we try to take as much into consideration and give as much information as possible without being too overwhelming
- ❖ The negative is that those who do have a good understanding of ASD might feel like they are not being given enough new information
- ❖ Please capture your questions to ensure you get clarification by submitting in the chat box



# Session Learner Outcomes

- Recognize when interacting with a student with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
- Describe the characteristics of a student with ASD: what it looks like in the college setting
- Identify strategies that can be used to help autistic students succeed in college

# An overview...

- ATTA offers monthly webinars for secondary and postsecondary teachers, counselors, administrators, and business and community members supporting students with autism as they transition to postsecondary and the workplace.
- Postsecondary Support <https://youtu.be/swioK9ly2TQ>

# What is ASD...

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) is a lifelong neurological developmental disorder that affects how an individual communicates, interacts with other people, and how they experience the world around them. ASD is a spectrum condition, which means that it affects people in different ways. The word 'spectrum' describes the range of difficulties that individuals on the spectrum may experience and the degree to which they might be impacted.

ASD can impact:

- Communication
- Social Interactions
- Behavior Differences
- Sensory Interest



# WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE IN A CLASSROOM

- Oddities in vocal pitch, intonation, and volume
- Displays literal and concrete thinking patterns and literal interpretation of words
- May come across as argumentative, rude, or monopolizing
- Strong, narrow interests
- May observe ritualistic or repetitive strategies such as rocking, tapping, or pacing
- May appear inattentive or bored
- May be easily distracted
- May become easily overwhelmed
- May misunderstand tone of voice, jokes, facial expressions, sarcasm, and other subtle messages

\*Every student on the spectrum is unique and you may or may not see all of these characteristics in any given student





# WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE IN A CLASSROOM

- Trouble staying on topic and maintaining conversation
- Difficulty with changes in classroom, seating, and syllabi
- May exhibit awkward eye contact, posture, and/or gestures
- Sensory sensitivity (lights, sounds, touch, smells)
- May have difficulty working in groups

\*Every student on the spectrum is unique and you may or may not see all these characteristics in any given student



# Strengths

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- Above average to superior intellect
- “Out of the box” thinkers
- Excellent long-term and short-term memory
- Task-oriented and diligent with routine work
- Excellent visual-spatial skills
- Exceptional talents in one specific area and highly motivated by interests
- Strong pursuit of knowledge within areas of interest
- Passionate commitment to ideas
- Strong attention to details
- Ability to maintain a prolonged, intense focus on subjects of interests
- Original ways of solving problems





# Challenges

- Social interactions and understanding social rules
- Abstract concepts and seeing the “big picture”
- Seeing other’s points of view
- Setting boundaries
- Working in groups
- Initiating, planning, organizing, and carrying out tasks
- Reading social cues, facial expressions and body language
- Multi-tasking
- Asking for clarification or assistance
- Assessing priorities
- Regulating sensory needs

# Strategies

- ✓ Break large assignments into smaller units to be turned in separately
- ✓ Provide direct feedback and set clear boundaries
- ✓ Provide ample response time for questions
- ✓ Provide a predictable routine
- ✓ Consider allowing use of technology or laptop for in class work and note taking
- ✓ Allow extra transition time
- ✓ Help with organizational supports (color-coded binders and folders)



# More Strategies

- ✓ Reminders for assignments
- ✓ Avoid the use of idioms, metaphors, sarcasm, and jokes
- ✓ Consider assigning group roles
- ✓ Supplement oral instructions with visual (written instructions paired with graphics)
- ✓ When speaking to the student, use their name so they know you are speaking directly to them

# Tips for Instructor – Student Interactions

- ✓ Remember that you are the educational leader in the classroom, so you set the precedent and the tone for the entire semester.
- ✓ Students on the spectrum respond well to routine.
- ✓ Scaffolding and frontloading information can be helpful, especially with transitions.
- ✓ Students with ASD might not ever ask for help, so take the initiative when the opportunity arises.
- ✓ Find out how the students prefer to communicate. Email?



# Tips for day-to-day communication.

- Be aware that each individual on the Autism Spectrum is unique, and no two individuals will react exactly the same to similar situations.
- If an autistic person is doing something inappropriate, try to find out the reason for those actions.
- What some may view as inappropriate behavior might be innocent curiosity, a lack of social skills, or the inability to communicate properly. Defining parameters for what is and is not acceptable might prevent further problems.
- Many people on the spectrum report being lonely, so their actions might be an attempt to get attention.



# Common Accommodations

- Extended Exam Time
- Private Exam Room
- Assigned Notetaker
- Ability to Excuse Self from Class
- Use of Laptop in Class
- Computer for Essay Exam
- Accommodations for Group Projects





# Ways to reassure students with ASD

- ✓ **Rules:** Rather than respond to a fluid environment, individuals with ASD often rely on the 'rules' to structure their activities
- ✓ **Routine:** Predictability and consistency are important. An interruption in routines can cause stress
- ✓ **Planning and Prediction:** Surprises are stress-inducing

# Take Aways!

## What can you start doing today?

- All of your students will benefit from these strategies, so it is not necessary to label anything “autism” –related.
- Remember, VAGUE or AMBIVALENT or SUGAR-COATED instructions are problematic for students.
- Most students with ASD are visual learners. Be sure to share information in a multimodal way. Remember your UDL – multiple means of expression! MAKE it VISUAL.
- Breakdown larger tasks into small increments.

# Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA)

<https://autismcollegeandcareer.com>

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# Webinar Topics

[autismcollegeandcareer.com/monthly-webinar-series](https://autismcollegeandcareer.com/monthly-webinar-series)

- 1. The Language of Disability and The Inclusion Revolution**
2. Empowering the Next Generation of Neurodiverse Self-Advocates
3. Online Virtual Space and Resources for Learners with ASD
4. Autism on the Job: Unpacking Neurodiversity at Work
- 5. An Overview of Legal Rights and Responsibilities for Autistic Students and Potential Employers  
Autism University: Lessons Beyond the Classroom**



# Webinar Topics

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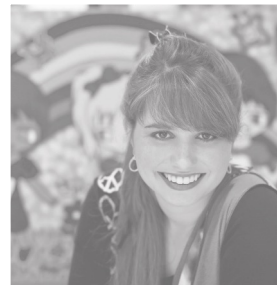
7. **Freshman Disorientation: Navigating College on the Autism Spectrum**
8. Neurodivergent Employees: Embracing and Valuing People with Autism in the Workforce
9. What do Reasonable Accommodations Look Like in the Workplace
10. We're Not Broken: Changing the Autism Conversation
11. **Supporting the "Social Chameleon:" A Discussion on Autistic Masking**
12. The ROI Benefits of Hiring Talented Autistic People In The Workplace

# Featured Speakers

All sessions are recorded and available on the ATTA website.



**Eric Garcia**



**Haley Moss**



**Kerry Margo**





# Resource Hub

<https://autismcollegeandcareer.com>

**RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING STUDENTS**   **MONTHLY WEBINAR SERIES**   **COPING WITH COVID RESOURCES**



The Autism Training and Technical Assistance Project (ATTA) creates resources and provides professional development that assists individuals with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) in their transition from secondary education to postsecondary education or employment.

ATTA provides training and support to stakeholders as they work to provide an equitable experience for individuals on the spectrum.

**SECONDARY**



**STUDENTS / YOUNG  
ADULTS**



**POSTSECONDARY**



**COMMUNITIES**



**FAMILIES**



**EMPLOYERS**



# Resources for

Secondary Educators and  
Counselors

Students / Young Adults

Postsecondary

Communities

Families

Employers







## AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER: TIPS FOR FACULTY

### WHAT IS AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER?

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD) is lifelong neurological developmental disorder that affects the way an individual communicates, interacts with other people, and how they experience the world around them. ASD is a spectrum condition, which means that it affects people in different ways. The word 'spectrum' describes the range of difficulties that individuals on the spectrum may experience and the degree to which they might be impacted. The following areas of difficulty might have an impact on the individual.

- Communication**  
 Differences in understanding and using individuals who are highly articulate to
- Social Interactions**  
 Differences in understanding social behavior and development of friendships and relationships
- Behavior**  
 Differences in how information is processed and adherence to routines and rules and/or
- Sensory interests and sensitivities**  
 Differences in the way sensory information is processed, sensitivities, can lead to extreme levels of stimulating environments

### WHAT YOU MIGHT NOTICE IN A CLASSROOM

- Oddities in vocal pitch, intonation, and volume
- May come across as argumentative, rude, or monopolizing
- May appear inattentive or bored
- May misunderstand tone of voice, jokes, facial expressions, sarcasm, and other subtle messages
- Trouble staying on topic and maintaining conversation
- Displaying thinking or interpretation
- Strong
- May be
- Difficult to understand classroom instructions or syllabi
- May appear bored



## Social Communication in the Workplace

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Assessment Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions:** Complete the following assessment based upon your experiences in an employment experience, school-based vocational experience, community service or volunteer activity, extracurricular activity, group activities and assignments in the classroom, etc. Ratings are based on the level of independence with which you are able to perform the activities or skills as described below:

not perform the skill.  
 you may require a reminder to perform the activity.  
 when you perform the skill mainly on your own  
 time.  
 able to perform the skill on your own, all the



## INTERVIEWING TIPS

An interview is an opportunity to convince an employer that you're the perfect person for the job. Interviewing well requires preparation and practice. Although some students may struggle with the social, conversational, and problem-solving skills needed for a job interview, it is important to reassure them that everyone feels nervous before an interview.

### BEFORE THE INTERVIEW

- Do Your Homework.** Check out the company's website for the most useful information. Know the products and/or services the company offers. You should know the name of the company leader and how the company is organized. For example, how many departments are there and what are their major functions? Once the interviewer learns you have researched the company, he or she will know that you have invested your time and that will serve you both well if you are hired.
- Consider What It Will Be Like to Work for This Company.** Now that you have learned more about the company, consider how working there might change your life. Consider the time you will be spending commuting to and from the job site. How will you get there? What type of work environment and schedule would be a good match for you? Do you want to work part-time or full-

SCALE				
Please check the number that most appropriately identifies the correct answer				
	1	2	3	4
not perform the skill.				
you may require a reminder to perform the activity.				
when you perform the skill mainly on your own time.				
able to perform the skill on your own, all the				

# Work Environment Assessment



## Assessment: Work Environment

**Director:** Complete this assessment as the student engages in the search for employment or volunteer experiences.

1. Never
2. Tolerable on occasion
3. Would be ok
4. Doesn't bother me at all

### NOISE LEVEL

DIFFERENT WORK ENVIRONMENTS HAVE DIFFERENT NOISE LEVELS. PLEASE RATE THE FOLLOWING:

	1	2	3	4	5
Some workplaces are very loud (theater lobby, stadium restaurant, landscape crew with mowers, etc.). I would be comfortable working in a noisy environment.					
Some workplaces are quiet (library, small office, small shop, etc.). I would be comfortable working in a quiet environment.					
Some workplaces have some noise most of the time (large retail business, large office with open spaces, large kitchen in restaurant, automobile garage, etc.). I would be comfortable working in a place that has some noise most of the time.					
I can tolerate working in an environment where there are lots of people and lots of talking (restaurant, theater lobby, stadium).					
I can tolerate working in an environment where there is some talking and people are around me most of the day.					
Do loud noises bother me?	Yes	No	Sometimes		
Noises that irritate me or make me uncomfortable include:					

### ODORS

DIFFERENT WORK ENVIRONMENTS HAVE DIFFERENT ODORS. IDENTIFY HOW WELL YOU COULD TOLERATE A WORK AREA THAT HAS DIFFERENT ODORS:

	1	2	3	4	5
Gasoline, transmission fluid, oil					
Chemicals, cleaning supplies, paints					
Animal smells (kennel or veterinary clinic)					
Hospital smells					
Moist or musty smells (poor ventilation like in a basement)					
Smell of smoke or exhaust fumes (airport, garage, etc.)					
Smell of different foods (restaurant, kitchen, etc.)					
Specific smells that irritate me or make me uncomfortable include:					

### TEMPERATURE

WORKING IN CERTAIN TEMPERATURES MIGHT BE UNCOMFORTABLE FOR SOME PEOPLE. FOR INSTANCE, WORKING OUTSIDE MEANS YOU MAY NEED TO TOLERATE VERY WARM AND VERY COLD TEMPERATURES. IDENTIFY HOW WELL YOU COULD TOLERATE THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS:

### TOUCH AND TEXTURE

TEXTURE, OR HOW THINGS FEEL, CAN BE IRRITATING FOR SOME PEOPLE. THINGS THAT I DO NOT LIKE TO TOUCH INCLUDE:

	1	2	3	4	5
1. In some workplaces, there may be a lot of dust or I am likely to get dirty (nursery/greenhouse, landscaping crew, automobile garage, etc.). I can tolerate working in a place where I get dirty.					
2. In some workplaces, people deal with body fluids, germs, and medical waste (hospital, urgent care center, retirement home). I can tolerate working in a place with medical waste.					

### CLOTHING

IN SOME WORKPLACES, EMPLOYEES ARE REQUIRED TO WEAR A CERTAIN TYPE OF CLOTHING, A UNIFORM, PROTECTIVE GEAR, ETC. IDENTIFY HOW WELL YOU COULD TOLERATE CERTAIN ATTIRE:

	1	2	3	4	5
Casual attire (jeans, shorts, kakis, etc.)					
Business casual attire (kakis, polo, button-down shirt, casual dress, slacks)					
Business attire (suit, blazer and tie, skirt suit)					
Gloves					
Mask					
Hard Hat					
Protective Eyewear					
Ear plugs					
Hairnet					
Apron					
Uniform					
Work boots					

### LIGHTING

CERTAIN LIGHTING MIGHT CAUSE SENSITIVITIES. IDENTIFY WHAT LIGHTING YOU CAN TOLERATE:

	1	2	3	4	5
I can tolerate working in a dark or poorly lit Environment.					
I can tolerate working in an environment with florescent lights.					
I can tolerate working in an environment that is very bright every day, brightly lit retail store).					
I can tolerate working in an environment where I have no face-to-face interactions with people.					

5. I can tolerate working in an environment where I have face to face interactions with customers, people I do not know.
6. I can tolerate working in an environment where I have phone interactions with customers, people I do not know.

### TASKS

	1	2	3	4	5
Some jobs require doing one task for long parts of the day (compiling data in retail sales, entering data on spreadsheets, house painting, shelving books in a library). I can tolerate doing one job task for most of the day.					
Some jobs require moving from task to task frequently. In some jobs, I will have to change tasks and do 8-10 tasks in a day. I can tolerate doing lots of different jobs each day.					
Some jobs only require doing a few tasks each day. Every day I might do the same 5 or 6 tasks. I can tolerate doing the same tasks every day.					

### REQUIREMENTS

	1	2	3	4	5
Jobs require standing up and walking around all day long. I can tolerate standing and walking most of the day in my job.					
Jobs require sitting down (at a desk) all day long. I can tolerate sitting for long periods of time.					
Jobs require moving between different rooms or spaces at a workplace throughout the day. I can tolerate walking between rooms, offices, and spaces throughout the day.					
Jobs require moving heavy objects (boxes, furniture, racks, etc.). I can tolerate lifting and moving boxes and heavy equipment as part of my job responsibilities.					
Jobs require working in a job that starts very early in the morning.					
Jobs require working in a job that ends late at night.					
Jobs require working in a job that has regular daytime hours (9am-5pm).					
Jobs require working in a job that has evening hours (5pm-12am).					

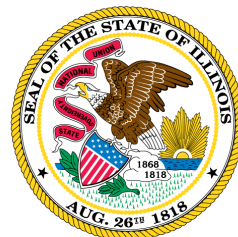
# Thank you.

**Aime'e Julian, Director ICSPS**

**Brittany Boston, Associate Director ICSPS**

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