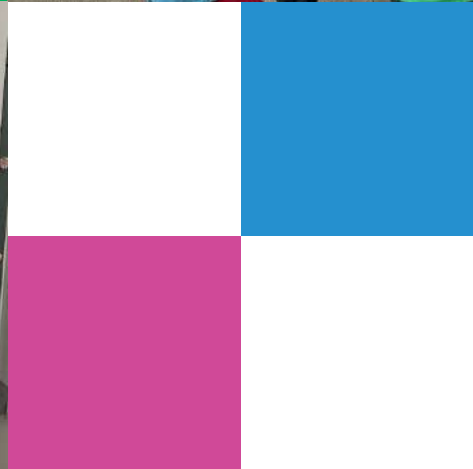
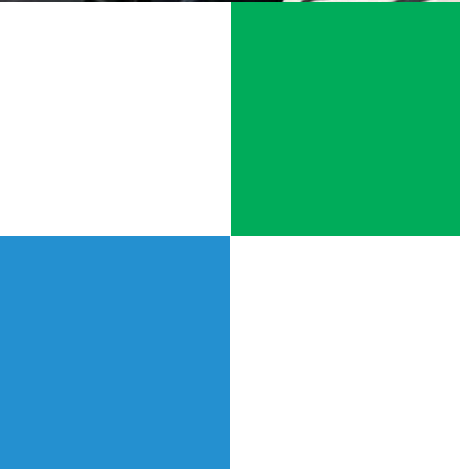
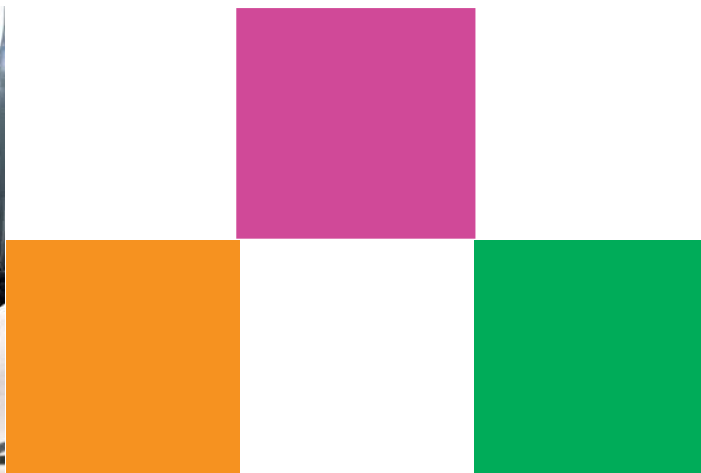


ANNUAL REPORT

JULY JUNE
2024 - 2025

**Rooted in Community. Driven by connection.
Leading through learning.**



VISION

All autistic people have a life full of possibilities.



MISSION

To enhance the lives of autistic people through knowledge, services and inclusive opportunities.



MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD CHAIR & THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends and Supporters,

This past year has been one of big changes and big accomplishments.

We welcome our new Interim Executive Director, and we are grateful to Cassandra Rasko for stepping away from the Board to help with the transition.

We're also proud to say we completed our strategic plan this year. This plan helped guide our work over the past few years, and we've made real progress in many areas. This past year Autism Edmonton held 128 learning sessions with over 4,900 participants! 40 individuals were housed, and 209 housing consults were completed. Strong partnerships are underway to ensure neuro-inclusivity in housing. The Pantry provided 2,039 hampers and 2862 respite hours were provided through Occasio. The E3 program saw 18 individuals secure meaningful employment and 7 cohorts were hosted. Autism Edmonton's Support Service metrics remain high and the need has never been greater for support and navigation. Now, we're ready to focus on what's next: staying strong and sustainable.

Like many non-profits, we're feeling the impact of reduced funding. Autism Edmonton doesn't receive ongoing government funding, so every dollar raised from donors, events, and sponsors goes directly into programs that support autistic and neurodivergent people. The need is growing faster than ever, and we can't meet it all, but we continue to be a trusted place people turn to, especially autistic adults.

Even with these challenges, there is so much to celebrate. You may have seen us out in the community this year at K-Days, Folk Fest, and other local events with our Sensory Room. Maybe you joined us for Cycle for Autism or attended one of our training sessions. We're proud to offer programs that bring people together, provide respite, and help build understanding.

This year, our membership has nearly doubled. That shows how important our work is and how many people are counting on us. Our team continues to show up with care, lived experience, and deep commitment. They go above and beyond every day, and we are so thankful for them.

To our Board of Directors, thank you for your leadership and support through another important year. And to our generous donors and partners, your belief in our mission keeps us going. We simply couldn't do this work without you.

As we look ahead, we know there are still challenges. But we're hopeful. We're building a strong future, and we'll keep listening, learning, and adapting together.

Thank you for standing with us.

With gratitude,

Cassandra Rasko
Interim Executive Director

Bobbi Elliott
Chair, Board of Directors

WORDS MATTER

IDENTITY FIRST LANGUAGE

The words we choose can significantly impact those around us. By adopting respectful and inclusive language, we create a more positive and supportive environment. Embracing inclusive language involves being attentive, intentional, and adaptable to the communication preferences of others. We engage with individuals who have lived experiences to continuously refine and enhance our language practices.

Our experience shows that many people favour "identity-first" language, such as "autistic person," as it acknowledges autism as an integral and inseparable part of a person's identity. We recognize and honour this preference and strive to reflect it accurately in this report.



LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

HONOURING THE LAND AND ITS FIRST PEOPLES

Autism Edmonton acknowledges with respect that we gather on the traditional lands of Treaty 6 Territory, known as Amiskwaciwâskahikan, Edmonton. The footsteps of diverse Indigenous peoples have marked this territory from time immemorial - Cree, Saulteaux, Blackfoot, Dene, Nakota Sioux, and Métis - whose histories, languages, and cultures continue to enrich our communities.

We pay our respects to the elders, past and present, who have stewarded the land, water, and life of this region. We also acknowledge the legacy and impacts of colonization. As we move forward, we are committed to working together to foster equality and inclusiveness, learning from the past to build a better future. As treaty members, we embrace our shared responsibility for stewardship of this beautiful land and community, guided by the collective wisdom and traditions of Indigenous cultures.





WORKSHOPS & EDUCATION

"I really wish more businesses and organizations would take your Autism 101 & 201. The world would be a better place if we learned about each other."

Autism Edmonton continues to be at the forefront in providing Autism education to the community. This is done via our online virtual platform where we host at least seven learning sessions a month plus additional Autism 101 and Autism 201 courses facilitated in person and virtually.

We are a leading resource in our community, offering the most up to date expertise on all topics of interest related to Autism. These sessions dive into crucial topics such as health, housing, and employment, and feature dynamic subjects including Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA), Masking, and Disability Tax Credits to name a few.

We bring you insights from autistic self-advocates and field experts, ensuring that each session delivers valuable, firsthand knowledge and expertise. In this upcoming year, we will be bringing our members and the public learning sessions with a greater emphasis on Autism through a woman's lens as well as Autism in the ages of 50 years of age plus.

Autism Edmonton continues to provide our foundational courses Autism 101 and Autism 201. These sessions have proven to be effective with individuals, businesses, and organizations learning about Autism and how even slight modifications can be very effective in the workplace and at home. In addition, we provide specialized training in Abuse Prevention and Response Protocol (APRP) allowing attendees to become Train-the-Trainers in the field.

"Thank you (to presenter)! Your openness and generosity created a very safe space for us all to join in. Great topic and excellent presentation"

"Thank you! So informative. Looking forward to checking out your website and sending it to the families I work with."

EDUCATION

Training Information Sessions of Varied Subjects

60

SESSIONS

2432

PARTICIPANTS

Abuse Prevention and Response Protocol

8

WORKSHOPS

103

PARTICIPANTS

Autism 101

41

SESSIONS

1670

PARTICIPANTS

Autism 201

19

SESSIONS

717

PARTICIPANTS



**FOLLOW US
ON EVENTBRITE!**

SOCIAL STATS



INSTAGRAM

TOTAL FOLLOWERS: 16,652

NEW FOLLOWERS: 13,581



FACEBOOK

TOTAL FOLLOWERS: 7267

NEW FOLLOWERS: 867



LINKEDIN

TOTAL FOLLOWERS: 1187

NEW FOLLOWERS: 601

SUPPORT SERVICES

"I've tried many groups for support. The League is hands down the best. I've made friends and have gotten support and understanding of my disability. As well how to manage. I love the league." - Víctor O.



THE LEAGUE

- 779 PARTICIPANTS
- 46 NEW PARTICIPANTS
- 43 ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR

"The League so far has presented him with opportunities to grow and socialize that might not otherwise have come to our attention. So many thanks and keep up the great work!" - Paula G.

OCCASIO

"I just wanted to say how much we appreciate that you know them well enough to match them up with really good-fit respite workers in Occasio"

- 780 PARTICIPANTS
- 49 NEW PARTICIPANTS
- 283 ACTIVITIES THROUGHOUT THE YEAR
- 2862 RESPITE HOURS



"The camp has been amazing so far. The workers are super nice and very cooperative. Rameesha is having a great time. Thanks for your efforts, for helping us out, and providing great, enjoyable activities. Thanks"

SUPPORT SERVICES

DISCUSSION GROUPS

- AUTISTIC ADULTS DISCUSSION GROUP** 182 PARTICIPANTS, 10 MEETINGS
- LGBTQ+ DISCUSSION GROUP** 58 PARTICIPANTS, 10 MEETINGS
- THE GOLDEN JOURNEY DISCUSSION GROUP** 46 PARTICIPANTS, 18 MEETINGS
- PARENTS OF ADULTS DISCUSSION GROUP** 70 PARTICIPANTS, 9 MEETINGS
- AUTISTIC WOMEN'S DISCUSSION GROUP** 124 PARTICIPANTS, 11 MEETINGS

"Honestly it felt so natural apart from the necessary rule aspect, that it was like a cloud lifting off of me. Maybe it's just how far I've come personally, but this was a turning point moment for me. I'm not expecting to have personal revelations all the time, but last evening I had several. Last night was the lowest anxiety I have suffered in these groups. I felt the afterglow of serious positivity for a long time yesterday evening and I slept well last night which I found really interesting. It was a very healing experience."

THE PANTRY

- 2039 HAMPERS DISTRIBUTED** VALUE OF \$112,147.00

Autism Edmonton's Pantry program continues to grow in response to rising food costs across Canada and the unique challenges faced by many autistic individuals and family households. Contributing factors that lead participants to rely on this program include increased living expenses, barriers to employment, housing insecurity, and financial limitations. The number of Pantry participants within our community is steadily increasing. Each week, we collect between 300 and 700 pounds of food from our valued partner, the Edmonton Food Bank. Over the past year, we have distributed approximately 2,040 hampers, with an estimated total value of \$112,147.00. This program has become a vital support for our members and their families experiencing food insecurity - a condition that can exacerbate physical health issues and place significant strain on mental well-being.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Community connection and collaboration are vital to the work of Autism Edmonton. As the first touchpoint post diagnosis in Edmonton and area, we do a great deal of work collecting and maintaining a deep understanding of the supports and services landscape in our province. As a community HUB and support service navigator, it is important to understand and refer to services that are trusted, educated in autism, and able to provide timely support.

Autism Edmonton actively facilitates the CACT and Adult Transitions committees. These initiatives allow us to strategically engage with partners, service providers, and government agencies to ensure we have a comprehensive understanding of all available options for families and Autistic individuals. Autism Edmonton staff are advocating and learning on boards, committees and in research to support members with the most up to date information and resources throughout the city, province, and nation.



A word cloud of partner organizations. The largest text is 'Autism Alberta Board'. Other prominent text includes 'Early Childhood Committee', 'Indigenous Relations Circle', 'Neurodiversity Editorial Board', 'Sage Publishing', 'ECHOAutismHub', 'AHNA', 'PTAN', 'Additude Magazine', 'Edmonton Autism Lions Club', 'ASA: Housing Community of Practice', 'AuDHD Magazine', 'National Autism Network', 'Barrier Free Alberta', 'Recreation for Persons with Disabilities', 'United Way New Partnership Cabinet', 'Job Developer Committee', 'Alberta Ability Network', 'Childrens Autism Collaborative Team', and 'Alberta Autism Alliance'.

CHILDREN'S AUTISM COLLABORATIVE TEAM (CACT)

5 MEETINGS

114 PARTICIPANTS

TRANSITIONS RESOURCE COMMITTEE

9 MEETINGS

147 PARTICIPANTS



SENSORY EXPERIENCES



In its second year, Autism Edmonton's Sensory Experiences Program continues to grow, providing support, mentorship, and the creation of calming sensory spaces in otherwise busy environments.

Requests for our expertise are increasing, and our reach is expanding as we collaborate with organizations across the province to bring sensory spaces to employee events, community gatherings, and festivals of all sizes. Our Sensory Spaces have become anticipated and valued features at major Edmonton events, including Klondike Days and the Edmonton Folk Music Festival.

One of our proudest accomplishments this year was supporting the development of the YEG Sensory Room at the Edmonton International Airport, which officially opened in April. This immersive space was thoughtfully designed to support passengers with sensory sensitivities - including those with autism, anxiety, and other cognitive or neurodivergent conditions. It stands as a hallmark example of what inclusive design can look like in public spaces.



At Autism Edmonton, we recognize the growing need for environments that are both inclusive and sensory aware. We are excited to continue building partnerships with communities - both near and far - to expand access to supportive sensory experiences.



EMPLOYMENT

BY THE NUMBERS



EDUCATE EMPOWER EMPLOY

18

INDIVIDUALS
SUPPORTED
TO SECURE
MEANINGFUL
EMPLOYMENT

7

COHORTS
HOSTED
IN THE
EMPLOYMENT
PROGRAM

8

EMPLOYMENT
ACCOMODATION
SESSIONS
HOSTED

5

EMPLOYMENT
PARTNERSHIPS
DEVELOPED
WITH
EMPLOYERS

E3 continues to support autistic job-seekers in the community with an ever-increasing demand for assistance. Our employment coordinators remain focused on helping autistic adults develop their job search skills and building connections with local employers. This past year, we have continued to expand our network of inclusive businesses employing our members and sharing knowledge about inclusive hiring practices with them.

"I am the kitchen manager at Fox Burger Edmonton. I currently have 2 employees that have been placed with us through the Autism Edmonton E3 program. Without the help and support of this program I don't think I would have understood how to best approach the challenges we experienced and create strong communications with our new employees I very happy to support this employment program and to help these employees gain experience and confidence in their role here."

- Shaun Nagaiya (Fox Burger)

"Autism Edmonton's employment program has provided me with valuable coaching in my search for meaningful work. Even as an experienced job seeker, I have received critical feedback on every part of the employment process from looking for jobs, writing resumes and cover letters, as well as interview practice opportunities. Most importantly though, Autism Edmonton has empowered me to not hide my autism as a weakness but as a strength that I can bring to my place of work. I have now found confidence in my capacities which I am certain will stand me well in my career."

- Adam Dressler (E3 Participant)

HOUSING

BY THE NUMBERS



40

INDIVIDUALS
SUPPORTED
IN SECURING
HOUSING

9

HOUSING PROVINCIAL
MEETINGS HOSTED
WITH OVER
750 PARTICIPANTS

209

CONSULTATIONS

18

INFORMATION
NIGHTS HOSTED

Autism Edmonton's Support for the Byamungu Family

Autism Edmonton first connected with the Byamungu family - newcomers from Ottawa - after they reached out through our general mailbox. The family of eight, including a high-needs Autistic son, was living in a hotel and urgently needed support. Fortunately, our French-speaking Housing Co-ordinator was able to assist.

We helped them understand Edmonton's housing market, connect with local homelessness services, and provided resources including Autism-friendly childcare, school options, furniture access, advocacy groups, English classes, and links to the local French-speaking community.

After they were evicted due to their son's distress-related hotel damage, we supported them in securing new temporary accommodation and eventually permanent housing. We also provided access to our food pantry and connected them with long-term housing supports, income assistance, and employment resources.

"I'm writing to you from the bottom of my heart to sincerely thank you for the support you provide to my child with his special needs. Your guidance makes a real difference for us. Honestly, I'm currently going through a difficult time, both in terms of family stability and financially, particularly regarding employment and subsidies for Bernard. Despite this, I want to highlight your commitment and dedication to the autism community in Edmonton. You are true pillars of strength. When I moved here, I didn't expect to find someone who could guide me in French according to Bernard's specific needs. For that, I thank you warmly, on behalf of my entire family. Once again, thank you for everything." - Mahazi Bymungu

2024 Opening Doors for Autism Gala

The Opening Doors for Autism Gala continues to be one of Autism Edmonton’s most impactful and inspiring events, bringing together community members, sponsors, and advocates in a shared commitment to empowerment, inclusion, and understanding. Over the years, this signature event has raised vital funds that sustain and expand our programs, directly supporting Autistic individuals and their families in areas such as housing, employment, mental health, and food security.

While past galas could fund nearly two years of programming, the growing demand for our services now means that the funds raised cover only about half a year, highlighting both the immense need within our community and the generosity of those who continue to stand beside us.

The 2024 Opening Doors Gala raised a net total of \$650,000 from our generous donors, which was a new record! This Gala event also marked significant milestones: Autism Edmonton’s 50th anniversary and the 30th Opening Doors Gala, both testaments to decades of advocacy, collaboration, and progress. We are deeply grateful to our sponsors, donors, and guests whose ongoing dedication keeps our mission alive. Together, we are not only opening doors but building a more inclusive future — one where every Autistic person is valued, supported, and celebrated.

[Click on the picture to access video](#)





Thank you for believing in and supporting our work.

Thank you for being an integral part of the Autism Edmonton community.

We are proud to walk alongside you and excited for what's ahead.

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