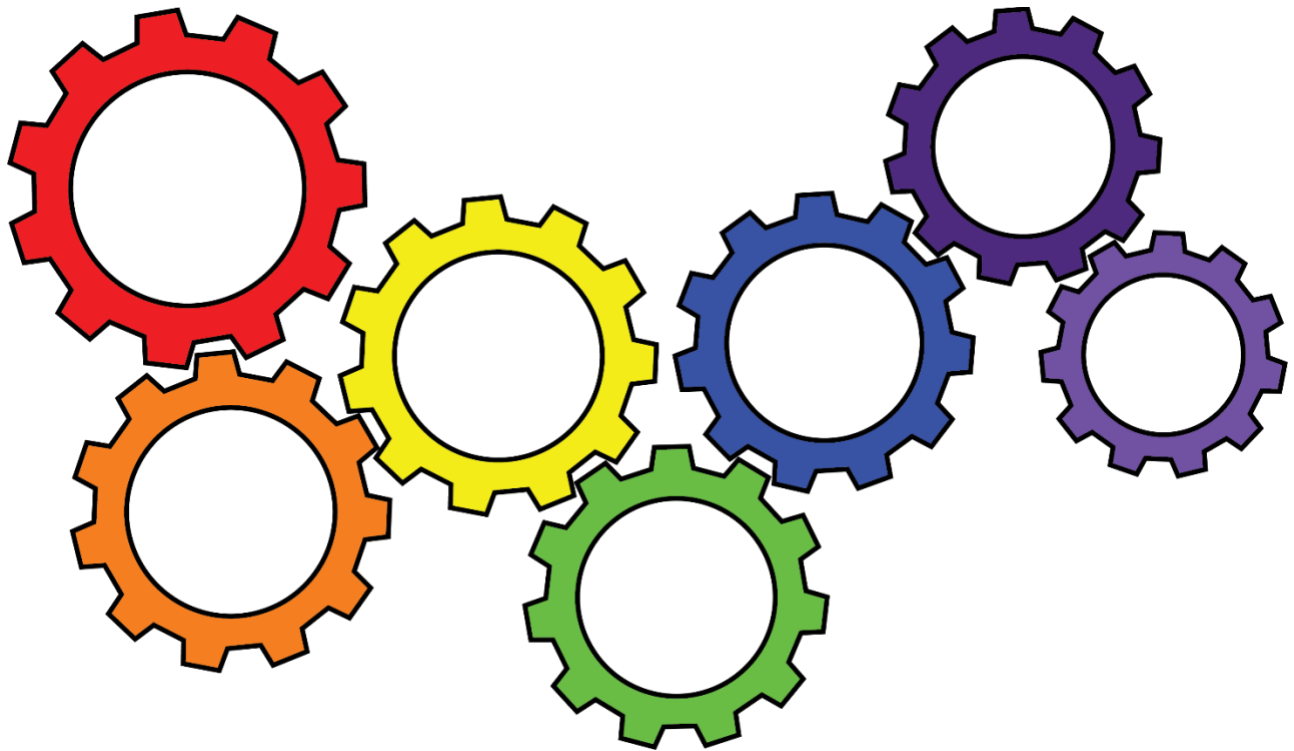




Resource Handbook

A Guide for Caregivers, Families, Educators, and Autistic Individuals

Doc Clegg

[Autism Studies School of Education, Utah Valley University](#)

AUTS 3810: Lifespan 1: Infant and Children

Professor Jennifer Call

November 20th, 2025



<https://bit.ly/resourcehandbook>

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Section 1: Autism Basics

Definitions & Terminology

Sometimes, the hardest part is just understanding the words people use. This section breaks down the basics, such as ASD, ABA, BCBA, and all those acronyms that get tossed around. It's a solid starting point for anyone new to the autism space.

ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis): A scientific approach that uses strategies based on learning principles to teach and support behavior. ABA isn't just for Autism—it helps many people with different challenges. Examples include Discrete Trial Training and Incidental Teaching.

ABA Therapist / Behavior Technician: These people work directly with individuals using ABA strategies. Other names might include tutor, tech, or clinician. In this document, we use “ABA Therapist.”

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD): A developmental condition that affects communication, social skills, and behavior. Autism is a *spectrum*, so every person is different in their strengths and support needs.

BCBA / BCaBA / BCBA-D: Different levels of certified behavior analysts. BCBA-D has a doctorate, BCBA has a master's, and BCaBA is assistant-level.

RBT (Registered Behavior Technician): Entry-level credential for ABA therapists. They need training and must pass an exam. Not always required, but many jobs and insurance plans prefer it.

Behavior: An action that you can see or measure. Example: Raising a hand is behavior, but “being quiet” is not (a quiet person might be doing nothing at all).

Chronological vs Developmental Age: Chronological age is actual age. Developmental age is based on skills and behavior.

Co-Morbidity: Having more than one diagnosis at the same time (e.g., Autism and Anxiety)

Consequence: What happens right *after* a behavior. It can increase or decrease how often that behavior occurs.



Consultant: Usually, a certified behavior analyst (BCBA) who creates treatment plans, trains staff, and monitors progress.

Contained Classroom: A special education class with only students with disabilities. Smaller group size and extra support.

Inclusive Classroom: A classroom where students with and without disabilities learn together.

Developmentally Delayed (DD): A term when a child isn't meeting milestones like walking, talking, or sitting up. It can also apply to older individuals if diagnosed late.

DSM-5-TR: Manuals used by professionals to diagnose mental health conditions. The DSM-5 (updated in 2022) defines Autism using two main criteria.

High Functioning/Low Functioning: Old labels indicate how much support someone might need. Today, it's better to describe areas *where* a person needs support, like communication or behavior.

Hypersensitivity / Hyposensitivity: Hyper: Overreacts to input (e.g., sounds). Hypo: Underreacts (e.g., may not feel pain).

ICD: An international health coding system doctors use to track conditions and treatments.

IEP (Individualized Education Plan): A legal document that outlines a student's special education services and goals.

IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act): A law that ensures students with disabilities receive appropriate education and services.

Intervention: A teaching plan or strategy used to change a behavior (e.g., teaching a child to ask for help instead of having a meltdown)

Mainstream: Placing a student with disabilities into a regular education classroom with typical peers.

Mouthing: Putting toys or other objects in the mouth when it's not appropriate.



Normal vs. Typical: To be more respectful and accurate, “Normal” is avoided in favor of “typical.”

NT (Neurotypical): A term for people without neurological differences, like Autism.

OCR (Office of Civil Rights): Part of the U.S. government that protects your rights and enforces anti-discrimination laws.

PDD (Pervasive Developmental Disorder): An older diagnosis for Autism-like symptoms. Now considered part of autism spectrum disorders in the DSM-5.

Perseverative Behavior: Doing or saying something over and over again, like asking the same question repeatedly.

Scripting: Repeating phrases from shows, books, or conversations (sometimes called “self-talk”).

Scrolling: Giving multiple answers when asked a question, often to try and get the right one.

Self-injurious behavior (SIB): Harming oneself intentionally (e.g., biting, head-banging).

Stereotypic/Repetitive behaviors (“Stimming”): Repetitive actions like rocking or hand-flapping that help people self-regulate or express themselves.

Verbal vs Non-Verbal: Refers to whether someone uses spoken words. In professional terms, “non-vocal” is more accurate than “non-verbal.”

[Simplified and adapted from the work of Lillian Adolphson, Ph.D. \(2023\)](#)

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection [“Definitions & Terminology”](#)** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Autism Acronyms – Autism Council of Utah

The world of autism services comes with a mountain of acronyms — IEP, ABA, BCBA, DSPD, and the list goes on. This guide from the Autism Council of Utah is a handy cheat sheet to decode those terms. It's simple, clear, and perfect when you're staring at paperwork and wondering what all those letters mean.

Link: <https://www.autismcouncilofutah.org/post/autism-acronyms>

People First vs. Identity First Language – YouTube

Autistic advocate Ivanova Smith breaks down the difference between people-first (“person with autism”) and identity-first (“autistic person”) language. Helpful if you're unsure which to use and want guidance straight from lived experience.

Link: <https://youtu.be/Ddcl-yA88MU>

ICD Autism Codes (WHO ICD)

The ICD is the global “rulebook” for how autism is defined and coded. It also shows common co-occurring conditions. This is more on the clinical side, but it's helpful if you want to understand the official language providers use.

Link: <https://icd.who.int/browse/2025-01/mms/en#437815624>

Identity-First vs. Person-First Language

The words we use matter. This article from Health Journalism explores the ongoing discussion around “autistic person” vs. “person with autism,” showing how language reflects respect, identity, and belonging in the autism community.

Link: <https://healthjournalism.org/blog/2019/07/identity-first-vs-person-first-language-is-an-important-distinction/>



What is Autism?

Autism is a lifelong, brain-based difference in how people communicate, connect, and experience the world. I like to think of it as a different operating system — not broken, just designed differently. Autism isn't something to "fix." It represents a distinctive way of thinking and being. Autistic people aren't less — just wonderfully different.

Autism Spectrum Disorder – NIMH

A clear, concise overview of autism, its signs, and what to look for—easy to share for beginners.

Link: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd>

Wired Differently: Module 4 Handout (PDF)

A plain-language guide explaining autism, its diagnosis, and the spectrum's diversity. Created by me (Doc Clegg), it's straightforward and easy to understand, especially for newcomers.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 1, Subsection *"What is Autism?"*** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Autism and Autism Spectrum Disorder – ASHA

A professional but easy-to-read overview that explains autism from a communication and behavior standpoint. It makes the clinical side feel more approachable.

Link: <https://www.asha.org/practice-portal/clinical-topics/autism>

CDC – Autism Overview

Answers many of the big questions parents usually have. A great starting point if you're new and want something reliable, simple, and clear.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/>

***Note: CDC resource** — I've included it here with some caution. The CDC is a common starting point for medical facts. Still, its reliability is in question within the autism community right now due to false claims being pushed by political figures (like linking Tylenol to autism). It's best used in conjunction with autistic voices and advocacy sources for balance.*



What Causes Autism in Children – YouTube

A science-based look at what we know (and don't know) about autism's causes.
Helps cut through myths and theories you might hear.

Link: <https://youtu.be/EoCD0asRXvc>



Understanding the Autistic Brain

Autism is a lifelong, brain-based difference in how people sense, think, and connect with the world. Think of it as running on a different operating system — not broken, just built uniquely. These brain differences shape perception, learning, and communication in incredible ways. Autism isn't something to “fix,” but something to understand, respect, and value.

Brain Differences & Structure

Temple Grandin Brain Scan – YouTube

This short video uses Temple Grandin's brain scans to show how autistic brains can be wired differently—offering a visual, science-based look at why unique thinking styles matter and how they shape learning and perception.

Link: <https://youtu.be/-j5bIYuVGDw>

Brain of an Autistic Child – YouTube

Ever wonder how the autistic brain works differently? This video makes it visual, real, and relatable—without going over your head.

Link: https://youtu.be/gFIB7ovqL_k

How the Striatum Is Linked to Autism

This article and short explainer video dive into neuroscience research on the striatum — the part of the brain involved in movement, reward, and attention. Scientists suggest that differences in this “reward hub” may explain some repetitive behaviors and social challenges in autism. A clear, science-based look at how brain wiring connects to lived experience.

Link: https://www.thetransmitter.org/spectrum/how-the-striatum-is-linked-to-autism/?utm_source=youtube&utm_medium=org&utm_campaign=202408-striatum-linked-to-autism



Processing, Emotion & Sensory Integration

Inside the Autism Brain: The Cerebellum – YouTube

This video explores how the cerebellum—the brain’s “little brain”—affects thinking, emotion, and social connection. Professors Sam Wang and Peter Tsai share current research showing how these differences can shape coordination, learning, and repetitive behaviors. It’s a simple, science-backed look at one piece of the autistic brain puzzle.

Link: https://youtu.be/Ct6a6z_roiA

Inside the Autism Brain: The Prefrontal Cortex – YouTube

This short video from The Transmitter looks at how the prefrontal cortex—the brain’s decision-making and social response center—may function differently in autism. It offers a science-based glimpse into why social cues and flexible thinking can feel “off tempo,” highlighting the brain’s incredible diversity in processing and response.

Link: https://youtu.be/OnWt-EDF_ss



Social Connection & Communication

Autism often changes how people connect, not whether they want to. Social and communication styles can look different—but they're just as real, meaningful, and valuable. This section explores how autistic people express connection, from body language and tone to shared interests and deep honesty, reminding us that communication isn't about fitting in—it's about being understood.

Social Communication in Autism – Spectrum News

Explains why things like eye contact, tone of voice, or back-and-forth conversation can feel different for autistic people. Helpful for understanding how social communication fits into an autism diagnosis.

Link: <https://www.thetransmitter.org/spectrum/social-communication-autism-explained/>

Adult Issues Webinar – Intro to Autism (NJACE) – YouTube

Autistic advocates Kerry Magro and Amy Purdy, not Gravino, share their lived experiences and practical insights about myths, self-advocacy, and adult life. Relatable, quick, and affirming.

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/live/FexYOglSkCE>



Repetitive Behaviors & Stimming

Repetitive movements, sounds, or routines—often called stimming—are a natural way many autistic people regulate emotion, focus, or joy. These behaviors aren’t “bad habits” to stop, but meaningful forms of communication and comfort. Understanding stimming helps shift the focus from control to compassion.

Repetitive Behaviors – Spectrum News

Looks at stimming and repetitive behaviors with nuance. Instead of asking “how do we stop this?” it asks, “when is this helpful coping, and when might support be needed?”

Link: <https://www.thetransmitter.org/spectrum/learning-when-to-treat-repetitive-behaviors-in-autism/>

Why Autistic Brains Stim (YouTube)

Stimming is one of the most visible parts of autism, but it’s often misunderstood. This video explains how the autistic brain is wired and why self-stimulatory behaviors, or “stimming,” make sense. It shows stimming as a natural, meaningful part of autistic life.

Link: <https://youtu.be/iJMWATYG9Zc->



Vaccine Myths & Facts

Autism has been surrounded by harmful myths — from vaccines being blamed to the outdated idea that “cold parenting” caused autism. This section clears up those misconceptions with research and context. The truth: autism is not caused by vaccines or bad parenting. Autistic people aren’t broken — they’ve just been misunderstood.

MMR & Autism Study Retracted – New Scientist

The study that started the vaccine myth? Fully retracted. This article explains why, using facts instead of fear.

Link: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/dn4743-controversial-mmr-and-autism-study-retracted/>

NPR – Autism & Vaccine Study Was Fraudulent

Breaks down how the vaccine myth came from fraudulent research. Clear, straightforward, and helpful if you want to understand how it all went wrong.

Link: <https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2011/01/06/132703314/study-linking-childhood-vaccine-and-autism-was-fraudulent>

Meta-Study: No Link Between Vaccines & Autism – Annals of Internal Medicine

One of the largest reviews of vaccine research. Dozens of studies, all pointing to the same conclusion: there is no link.

Link: <https://www.acpjournals.org/doi/10.7326/M18-2101>

CDC – Thimerosal in Vaccines

Thimerosal hasn’t been in children’s vaccines for years. Even when it was, studies showed no link to autism. This CDC page clears up the confusion.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/vaccine-safety/about/thimerosal.html>

Meta-Analysis – Vaccines & Autism (ScienceDirect)

A wide-scale review that pulls together multiple vaccine studies. For readers who want the deeper scientific picture.

Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X14006367>

AAP – Vaccine Studies Page

Walks through the science in a parent-friendly way. Great if you need something clear but evidence-based to share.

Link: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/safety-prevention/immunizations/Pages/Vaccine-Studies-Examine-the-Evidence.aspx>



CDC: Vaccine Studies on Autism (PDF)

A concise resource showing the actual studies behind the conclusion: vaccines do not cause autism. Helpful if you need a strong, shareable source.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Refrigerator Mother Theory in Fiction: Pauline Holdstock's Here I Am! (PDF)

Looks at how the harmful “refrigerator mother” theory appears in fiction. Shows how a novel challenged the myth and highlighted loving parenting. Reassuring for families who’ve felt blamed.

Link: <https://iupress.istanbul.edu.tr/en/journal/litera/article/autism-and-refrigerator-mother-theory-in-fiction-pauline-holdstocks-here-i-am>

(Find these PDFs in **Section 1, Subsection “*Vaccine Myths & Facts*”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Why “Refrigerator Mothers” Were Blamed for Autism – and Its Harmfulness

Unpacks the damaging idea that cold, unloving mothers caused autism.

Explains how this myth took hold, the harm it caused, and why moving forward with evidence-based compassion matters.

Link: <https://www.discoveryaba.com/aba-therapy/why-refrigerator-mothers-are-blamed-for-autism>

Refrigerator Mother Theory – What It Was & Why It Matters

An overview of how early figures like Leo Kanner and Bruno Bettelheim promoted the refrigerator mother theory — and how Bernard Rimland helped shift thinking toward a biological basis for autism. Essential history for understanding and moving beyond the stigma.

Link: <https://embryo.asu.edu/pages/early-infantile-autism-and-refrigerator-mother-theory-1943-1970>

Tylenol & Autism Myths – PBS NewsHour

Some recent claims suggest using Tylenol during pregnancy causes autism. PBS breaks down why the evidence doesn’t support that and highlights what studies say. Clear and easy to follow.

Link: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/health/research-doesnt-show-using-tylenol-during-pregnancy-causes-autism-here-are-5-things-to-know>



Co-occurring Conditions

Autism often comes alongside other conditions like ADHD, anxiety, sleep differences, or digestive issues. These aren't flaws — they're part of how someone experiences the world. Understanding co-occurring conditions helps us support the whole person, not just one diagnosis.

Anxiety & OCD

International OCD Foundation – Autism & OCD

A family-friendly overview explaining the overlap between autism and OCD, including real examples of how the two can appear similar but need different approaches. Offers practical tools and treatment insights.

Link: <https://iocdf.org/autism/>

Exposure (ERP) in Autistic Individuals – Research Summary (PDF)

Explores how ERP therapy for OCD can be adapted for autistic people, who often find standard ERP distressing due to sensory overload, communication differences, or rigid thinking patterns. Highlights ways to make ERP more respectful, paced, and person-centered.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Note: This summary was compiled by ChatGPT using peer-reviewed research. The original sources are listed in the uploaded article—please review them and use professional judgment when applying this information.

Co-occurring OCD and Autism in Youth (PDF)

Large UK clinical study (n = 7,922) examining prevalence and outcomes of youth with both OCD and autism. About 25% of youth with OCD also had autism, while ~5% of autistic youth had OCD. Those with both diagnoses had greater impairment and used services longer, but improved with care — highlighting the need for screening and longer-term supports.

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7595977/>

(Find these PDFs in **Section 1, Subsection "Anxiety & OCD"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Sleep & Digestive Health

Sleep Problems in Autism – The Transmitter

Many autistic people struggle with sleep, from falling asleep to staying asleep. This article explains why, connecting it to sensory needs, anxiety, and brain chemistry, in a way that's easy to follow.

Link: <https://www.thetransmitter.org/spectrum/sleep-problems-autism-explained/>

Sleep Differences in Autism (YouTube)

Explores why sleep is often different for autistic individuals, providing science-based explanations and practical insights. Helpful if you're trying to understand nightly challenges.

Link: <https://youtu.be/Q2a75v8wzgU->

Autism & Digestive Health (YouTube)

Digestive issues are common in autistic people. This video looks at possible reasons and what that means for everyday life.

Link: https://youtu.be/5NqcW_rSDBC-

Other Common Co-occurrences

Psychiatric Comorbidities in Autism – Comorbidity Handout (PDF)

Autism rarely shows up alone. This handout explains how ADHD, anxiety, and other conditions can overlap with autism. It reminds us that these layers don't make things "worse," they just add complexity to how support should be given.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Comorbid Psychopathology in Autism Spectrum Disorder (PDF)

Breaks down the research on mental health conditions like anxiety and depression in autistic people. A helpful reminder that support plans should address the *whole picture*, not just autism alone.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 1, Subsection "Other Common Co-occurrences"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Conditions That Accompany Autism – The Transmitter

Outlines how autism often coexists with anxiety, ADHD, or epilepsy, providing a clear overview of why experiences vary among autistic people.

Link: <https://www.thetransmitter.org/spectrum/conditions-accompany-autism-explained/?fspec=1>



Section 2: Diagnosis

Diagnostic Process

The autism diagnostic process is meant to bring clarity, not labels. It usually involves interviews, observations, and screening tools. While it's not always quick, it can open doors to better understanding, support, and connection.

DSM-5 Diagnostic Criteria (PDF)

The official checklist professionals use to diagnose autism focuses on areas like communication, social interaction, and repetitive behaviors. Helpful for understanding what clinicians look for during evaluations.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

DSM-5 (ASD Guidelines Overview) (PDF)

A simplified version of the DSM-5 criteria. If the full manual feels overwhelming, this guide breaks it down into clear, parent-friendly language.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

AAP Clinical Guide: Autism Diagnosis & Support (PDF)

Explains how pediatricians screen, diagnose, and connect families with support. Gives a big-picture view of what happens once a concern is raised.

Link: <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/145/1/e20193447/36917>

(Find these PDFs in **Section 2, Subsection "Diagnostic Process"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

AAP Executive Summary – Autism Diagnosis & Care

A shorter, easier-to-read version of the AAP's full guide. Perfect if you want the key points without the heavy details.

Link: <https://publications.aap.org/pediatrics/article/145/1/e20193448/37021>

Autism Research Institute (ARI) – Screening & Assessment

Explains common screening and diagnostic tools, from parent questionnaires to professional assessments. Helps make the testing process less overwhelming.

Link: <https://autism.org/screening-assessment/>



Where to Get Evaluated

Finding the right place for an autism evaluation can feel overwhelming, but you don't have to figure it out alone. Whether you start with a trusted doctor, psychologist, or local autism center, what matters most is finding someone who listens, understands, and looks at the whole picture, not just a checklist.

Evaluation Resources (Screeners & Guides)

M-CHAT (Modified Checklist for Autism in Toddlers)

A guide to early signs in communication, social behavior, and play. Easy to understand, especially if you're new to the topic.

Link: <https://www.mchatscreen.com>

Early Red Flags of Autism: (PDF)

A parent-friendly guide to early signs in communication, play, and social interaction. Great if you're just starting to notice differences.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Early Brain Development in Infants at High Risk for Autism (PDF)

Research showing that changes in the brain may appear before outward behaviors do. Useful if you're looking into early identification.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Milestones CDC – Learn the Signs. Act Early (PDF)

Tracks milestones from ages 2 months–5 years, not about labels — just a simple way to know when to ask more questions.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/milestones/>

Red Flag Checklist for Autism (Parent Questionnaire) (PDF)

A parent questionnaire that organizes early signs into categories like interactions, language, and play. Easy to use and clarifies when to seek a professional evaluation.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 2, Subsection "Evaluation Resources (Screeners & Guides)"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



CDC Autism Diagnosis Info

This page from the CDC explains what to expect when seeking an autism evaluation. It also helps you understand the screening tools and steps involved, making it a good place to start if you're new to the process.

Link: cdc.gov/autism/hcp/diagnosis

Kids On The Move – Utah Autism Resources & Evaluations

Kids On The Move offers autism evaluations for children 0–17 and ABA therapy at its Utah Autism Center in Orem. Their Utah Autism Resources page summarizes statewide support, including early-sign info, research programs, and family resources, serving as a helpful starting point for Utah families seeking diagnosis or next steps.

Link: <https://kotm.org/utah-autism-resources/>



Evaluation Services (Places to Go)

Utah Autism Evaluation Resources (PDF)

A statewide guide listing evaluation provider across Utah, organized by region. A practical starting point if you don't know where to begin or want all local options in one place.

Link: https://familyhealth.utah.gov/wp-content/uploads/Office_CSHCN/pdf/autism/Autism-Evaluations.pdf

ScenicView Clinic (PDF)

Part of ScenicView Academy, focused on evaluations and services for young adults with autism and related needs.

Link: scenicviewclinic.com

(Find these PDFs in **Section 2, Subsection** *"Evaluation Services (Places to Go)"* of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Kids Who Count (Utah)

A nonprofit in Utah County offering early intervention, autism services, and parent coaching.

Link: <https://kidswhocount.org/>

The Autism Clinic of Utah

A local evaluation and therapy center specializing in autism spectrum disorder.

Link: theautismclinicutah.com

University of Utah – HMHI Autism Services

Provides evaluations for children and adults using a team-based approach.

Link: healthcare.utah.edu/hmhi/treatments/autism-clinic

Milestone Neurodevelopment Center

Offers comprehensive autism evaluations and support plans for all ages.

Link: milestoneneuro.com

Dr. Colton Miller (Psychologist, Park City)

A psychologist who specializes in autism and provides evaluations and therapy in Park City. He's a local option if you're seeking an experienced professional for diagnosis or ongoing support.

Link: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/therapists/colton-miller-park-city-ut/753092>



Adult & Late Diagnosis

Many people don't discover they're autistic until adulthood. For some, that diagnosis brings clarity; for others, it can stir mixed emotions. This section explores what late diagnosis means, why it's often missed earlier in life—especially for women and marginalized groups—and how understanding yourself at any age can be empowering, healing, and freeing.

Autism Diagnosis in Adulthood – SPARK – YouTube

A webinar with Dr. Vanessa Bal on how autism is identified in adults, what the evaluation process looks like, and what decisions may follow. Especially helpful if you're considering or supporting an adult diagnosis.

Link: https://youtu.be/pniYFYqG_cQ

Understanding Undiagnosed Autism in Adult Females – UCLA Health

Many women and AFAB adults go undiagnosed for years due to masking, gender bias in research, and diagnostic tools built around male-typical traits. This article from UCLA Health explains how social camouflage and outdated criteria contribute to missed or late diagnoses and why awareness is vital for professionals and self-identifying adults alike. It's a valuable read for understanding gender differences in autism recognition and support.

Link: <https://www.uclahealth.org/news/article/understanding-undiagnosed-autism-adult-females>



Diagnostic Tools

The DSM outlines autism traits and support levels to guide services, not to judge or define individuals. Every autistic person is unique, and support needs can change over time. Think of the DSM as a framework to help secure supports, not as a definition of identity.

Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule (ADOS-2)

One of the most widely used tools in autism evaluations. Looks at communication, social interaction, and behavior through structured activities. Helpful to know about if you're preparing for an evaluation.

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4883454/>

(ADOS®-2) Autism Diagnostic Observation Schedule, Second Edition

A structured, play-based tool often used by psychologists and diagnosticians to assess social communication and behaviors related to autism. It's one of the most common instruments used during formal evaluations. Families don't administer it themselves, but knowing what it is can help you understand what evaluators are looking for.

Link: <https://www.wpspublish.com/ados-2-autism-diagnostic-observation-schedule-second-edition>

Module 3: Severity Levels (PDF)

Explains what "Level 1-3" means in DSM-5, translating support levels into parent-friendly terms. Helpful for understanding reports without getting lost in jargon.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

DSM-IV vs DSM-5 Comparison (PDF)

Shows how autism diagnosis used to work vs. how it's defined now. Great for understanding why older terms like Asperger's or PDD-NOS, are no longer used.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

How Diagnosis Changed with DSM-5 (PDF)

Explains how DSM-5 affected who received diagnoses and services, highlighting shifts in access.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 2, Subsection "Diagnostic Tools"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



DSM-5: Classification & Criteria Changes:

Outlines why autism is now under one label, what the “levels” mean, and what changed in DSM-5.

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3683251/>

AAP Autism Care Hub

The American Academy of Pediatrics’ main autism page. Covers diagnosis basics, medical info, and family support. A strong go-to if you want reliable answers in one place.

Link: <https://www.aap.org/en/patient-care/autism>

Baby Watch Early Intervention (Utah)

Statewide program for children from birth to age 3. Provides screenings, in-home services, and family support.

Link: <https://familyhealth.utah.gov/oec/baby-watch-early-intervention/>



History, Context, & Trends

Understanding autism today means knowing where we've been. This section looks at how ideas about autism have changed over time—from early misconceptions to today's broader, more accurate view. It also explores current research trends, shifting language, and how society's growing awareness continues to shape diagnosis, support, and acceptance.

Psychiatrist Views on DSM-5:

Summarizes professional opinions on DSM-5 changes. Helpful if you're curious about why some clinicians welcomed the changes and others raised concerns.

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3846446/>

2020 CDC ADDM Data Slides (PDF)

Shows diagnosis trends: number of children identified, age of diagnosis, and differences by race/region. Helpful for understanding gaps in services.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 2, Subsection *"History, Context, & Trends"*** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Autism in the DSM, 1952–2013 – Archive Entry

Walks through every DSM revision from DSM-I to DSM-5. A timeline that shows how autism definitions evolved, why some labels disappeared, and how criteria shifted.

Link: <https://blogs.uoregon.edu/autismhistoryproject/archive/autism-in-the-dsm>

CDC Autism Prevalence Reports (2014–2022)

Tracks how autism prevalence has shifted over time: 1 in 54 (2018), 1 in 36 (2020), and 1 in 31 (2022). These reports also show progress in earlier diagnoses and better identification among kids of color. A solid source if you want reliable stats or want to see how recognition is changing.

Link: 2014 | <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/ss/ss6706a1.htm>

Link: 2018 | <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/ss/ss7011a1.htm>

Link: 2020 | <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/72/ss/ss7202a1.htm>

Link: 2022 | <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/74/ss/ss7402a1.htm>



CDC Community Report on Autism

Summarizes autism data across the U.S. in a parent-friendly way. Highlights how early kids are diagnosed, how different communities compare, and what's changed over the years. A good “big picture” look at trends.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/communication-resources/community-reports.html>

Autism & Developmental Disabilities Monitoring (ADDM) Network

The source behind most national autism statistics. Tracks autism and developmental delays across multiple states. Helps reveal patterns, identify gaps, and push for earlier diagnosis and better services. If you've seen stats like “1 in 36 kids,” this is where they come from.

Link: <https://www.cdc.gov/autism/addm-network/index.html>



Section 3: Interventions & Supports

Overview of Evidence-Based Practices

There are many different interventions out there, and it's easy to feel overwhelmed. Evidence-based practices (EBPs) are those backed by research, shown to be effective, and often used in schools, therapy, and community programs. This section pulls together resources that explain the basics in clear, parent-friendly language. The goal isn't to sell you on one method — it's to help you understand the options and make choices that feel right for your family or yourself.

What's ABA & Why Do People Use It? (PDF)

Parent-friendly flyer explaining how ABA works, who provides it (BCBAs, RBTs), and where it can happen (home, school, community). Shows how data is used to track progress and keep things consistent.

Link: <https://www.abskids.com/>

(Find this in **Section 3, Subsection "Overview of Evidence-Based Practices"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

IRIS Center Modules – Vanderbilt

Free, easy-to-follow training modules for families, teachers, and anyone supporting autistic learners. A great way to build confidence in using strategies without needing a full professional course.

Link: <http://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/>

Organization for Autism Research (OAR)

Breaks down research into clear guides for parents, educators, and autistic people. Focuses on practical supports that matter in daily life, without the heavy academic jargon.

Link: researchautism.org

Implementing Evidence-Based Practices in the Classroom

A teacher-friendly guide based on Torres, Farley, and Cook's 10-step model for applying evidence-based practices in real classrooms. Includes links to trusted EBP resources like WWC, AFIRM, and CEEDAR.

Link: <https://my.vanderbilt.edu/spedteacherresources/implementing-evidence-based-practices-in-the-classroom/>



Applied Behavior Analysis Concepts

ABA can seem like a new language with terms like mand, tact, or intraverbal that sound intimidating if you're not trained. This section offers simple resources to explain these ideas for parents, caregivers, and autistic individuals. The goal isn't for you to memorize jargon but to understand how communication and learning are broken down in ABA, so you can feel informed and confident when you hear these terms.

Core Principles & Skills

Pairing in ABA (PDF)

Before learning begins, trust must be built. Pairing involves the therapist or caregiver becoming the “fun person” by engaging in the child's interests. This guide explains how to do pairing well and provides a data sheet to.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Mand Training – Increasing Requests (PDF)

Everyone deserves a way to ask for what they need. This resource explains how to teach “manding” (making requests) using natural reinforcement. It combines research background with practical tips you can use.

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC3592491/>

Echoic Training / Verbal Imitation (PDF)

Learning speech often starts with imitation. This step-by-step program shows how to support children in moving from first sounds to short phrases. The focus is on reinforcing attempts, not perfection — making speech goals feel doable.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 3, Subsection “Core Principles & Skills”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Skinner’s Verbal Behavior – Research Article

B.F. Skinner’s work still shapes how ABA approaches communication. This article is on the technical side, but it explains why concepts like mands (requests), tacts (labels), and intraverbals (conversations) are so central in therapy. Great if you want the “why” behind today’s methods.

Link: <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC2774593/>



Verbal Operants – HowToABA

This guide explains communication basics like mands (asking), tacts (labeling), and intraverbals (conversation) simply. A parent-friendly introduction to ABA speech concepts.

Link: <https://howtoaba.com/verbal-operants/>

Teaching Play Skills – HowToABA

Play is a huge part of learning. This resource offers step-by-step guidance for supporting play, from simple actions to imaginative games. It even includes a free play script so families can try it at home.

Link: <https://howtoaba.com/teaching-play-skills/>

Prompting & Reinforcement

Positive vs Negative Reinforcement – YouTube

A quick, clear video that explains what positive and negative reinforcement actually mean in ABA. It's beginner-friendly and makes those confusing terms finally click.

Link: <https://youtu.be/x8WWGwWwRIg?si=ustg7FHrWPAyMpUI>

Unwanted Effects of Reinforcement – PsychCentral

Rewards can motivate, but they can also sometimes create stress or dependency. This article offers tips on how to use reinforcement in ways that support growth without unintended side effects.

Link: <https://psychcentral.com/pro/child-therapist/2019/12/unwanted-effects-of-reinforcement-the-bad-effects-of-a-good-intervention#1>



Alternatives & Debates

ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis) is a common but debated autism intervention. Some families find it life-changing, while some autistic adults raise concerns about its methods and impact. This section offers resources on both views and alternatives, aiming to help you understand the options and make choices aligned with your family's values.

The Controversy Around ABA – Child Mind Institute

A balanced breakdown of why ABA is so widely used, why many families value it, and why some autistic adults strongly oppose it. Helpful if you want the full picture of the debate.

Link: <https://childmind.org/article/controversy-around-applied-behavior-analysis/>

Center-Based vs Home-Based Autism Intervention (PDF)

Explains the pros and cons of home-based vs. center-based intervention. Great for parents weighing which setting feels best for their child and daily life.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Old Horses in New Stables – James Todd (PDF)

A critical look at Facilitated Communication (FC) and RPM. This resource compares them to the “Clever Hans” case, showing how these methods can give the illusion of communication without scientific proof — and why they may be harmful if relied on.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 3, Subsection “[ABA Debates & Alternatives](#)”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Rapid Prompting Method – ASHA

ASHA’s official statement on the Rapid Prompting Method (RPM). It explains why RPM isn’t considered evidence-based and why many clinicians recommend other approaches instead.

Link: <https://www.asha.org/policy/ps2018-00351/>

Unwanted Effects of Interventions – All Day ABA

Not all strategies work as hoped. This explains how reinforcement, punishment, or extinction can backfire and why behaviors worsen before improving (an “extinction burst”). Use interventions carefully.

Link: <https://alldayaba.org/blog/f/unwanted-effects-of-interventions---section-h-5?blogcategory=Vocabulary>



Behavior Supports

All behavior is communication. This section focuses on understanding what behaviors are telling us and how to respond with compassion instead of control. By identifying triggers, adjusting environments, and teaching positive alternatives, we can support growth, safety, and genuine connection.

Encouraging Behavior – IRIS Center (PDF)

This guide shares evidence-based ways to support students positively, using strategies like behavior-specific praise, giving choices, setting clear expectations, and meaningful rewards. It's trauma-informed and culturally responsive, making it useful for both families and educators.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Step-by-Step Guide for ABI (Antecedent-Based Interventions) (PDF)

This guide walks you through how to plan and use antecedent interventions in daily life. Strategies include visual schedules, offering choices, and using personal interests to make environments more supportive. Includes clear steps and space to track progress.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Antecedent Intervention List (PDF)

Think of this as a quick “cheat sheet” for common proactive supports. It covers strategies like sensory adjustments, visual supports, and choice-making in a simple, parent- and teacher-friendly format.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 3, Subsection “Behavior Support”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Helpful Strategies to Promote Positive Behavior – Autism Speaks

Practical tips for daily life: routines, reinforcement, and clear expectations that make things run smoother. It's written simply and is easy to put into practice.

Link: autismspeaks.org/tool-kit-excerpt/helpful-strategies-promote-positive-behavior

***Note: Autism Speaks resource** – I've included it here with caution. The organization has a complicated history in the autism community, and many autistic people (myself included) have concerns about how they represent autism.*



Teaching Social Skills Workshop (YouTube)

A collection of short films and documentaries about people on the spectrum (and other disabilities). These videos are a great way for families, teachers, and peers to see real stories and examples of positive social support.

Link: <https://youtu.be/ZFulP9VHIz4?si=tkhFxlPIVWsDCrsT>

Stimming & Should We Treat It? (YouTube)

Stimming is a natural part of autistic life, but people often wonder whether to step in. This video offers a balanced view: when stimming is a healthy coping tool and when extra support may be needed. Helpful for both parents and professionals.

Link: <https://youtu.be/2LhI23QPoi8>

ABA Visualized – Behavior Strategies Made Simple

Behavior support doesn't have to feel like a mystery. ABA Visualized turns complex behavioral concepts into clear, easy-to-follow visuals for parents, teachers, and therapists. Their free guides, posters, and step-by-step illustrations help you understand how and why strategies work — without the jargon. It's a great bridge between research-based practice and everyday life.

Link: <https://abavisualized.com/>

Prevent-Teach-Reinforce for Families (PTR-F) (Amazon)

A practical, evidence-based guide to using Positive Behavior Support at home. PTR-F helps families identify why behaviors happen, teach new skills, and reinforce positive actions in everyday settings. It's built on collaboration — empowering parents and professionals to create meaningful, sustainable behavior plans together. This resource bridges research and real life beautifully.

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/Prevent-Teach-Reinforce-Families-Individualized-Positive-Community/dp/1598579789>

ABA Visualized Guidebook (2nd Edition)

A step-by-step visual guide that turns behavioral science into something you can see and use. This book pairs friendly illustrations with proven ABA and Positive Behavior Support strategies, making it easier to understand, teach, and apply new skills at home, school, or in therapy. Perfect for parents, educators, and professionals who learn best through visuals and want research they can actually use.

Link: https://abavisualized.com/products/aba-visualized-guidebook-2nd-edition?srsId=AfmBOot5849VWeHDE7mP7mg_LJXOXLqNoiP_LDU1dq1DtDaf4zBE2PD

Link: <https://www.amazon.com/ABA-Visualized-Guidebook-2nd-Approachable-ebook/dp/B0DXQV2P8Z>



Antecedent-Based Interventions (ABI) – AFIRM Module

A free, interactive training that explains how small environmental changes can make a big difference. Easy to follow, with visuals and examples that show how routines, choices, and supports can shape behavior in positive ways.

Link: <https://afirm.fpg.unc.edu/ebp-module/antecedent-based-interventions-abi/>

A Systematic Review of ABI – ScienceDirect

For those who want the research side, this review looks at a wide range of antecedent interventions and how they work to reduce challenging behaviors. A solid resource for professionals or caregivers who want evidence-based depth.

Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S175094671100064X>



Where to Receive Services

Finding the right provider can feel overwhelming — especially with the long waitlists and different approaches across Utah. Some clinics focus only on ABA, while others offer a mix of therapies under one roof. Insurance coverage and availability can also vary. This section highlights trusted resources and well-known providers to help you start your search.

Find an ABA Provider – Utah Medicaid

A searchable tool for families using Medicaid (including ASD-FAP). Makes it easier to see which providers are already enrolled in the system.

Link: <https://medicaid.utah.gov/ltc-2/asd-fap/>

Autism Council of Utah – A-Z Provider List

A statewide directory of ABA providers, many of which also offer speech, OT, or other therapies. Helpful if you want all your options in one place.

Link: https://www.autismcouncilofutah.org/post/_a-z

BridgeCare ABA

Provides in-home ABA therapy throughout Utah. Known for tailoring services to each child and family's unique needs.

Link: <https://www.bridgecareaba.com/locations/aba-therapy-in-utah>

Whole Child Therapy

A multi-service clinic that offers ABA, speech, OT, and mental health supports. A good option for families wanting multiple therapies coordinated in one setting.

Link: <https://www.thewholechildtherapy.com/>

Utah Autism Academy

Offers ABA in-home, in-center, and in the community. They're especially known for creative supports like practice medical and dental visits to ease anxiety.

Link: <https://utahautismacademy.com/>

ABS Kids – Applied Behavior Services for Kids

Provides center-based and in-home ABA therapy throughout Utah and neighboring states. ABS Kids focuses on early intervention, family collaboration, and individualized behavior plans led by BCBAs. They also help with insurance navigation and offer resources for parents beginning ABA services.

Link: <https://www.abskids.com/>



Kids On The Move – Autism Center

KOTM's Autism Center in Orem offers ABA therapy based on respect, inclusion, and collaboration. They focus on assent-based care, supporting each child's autonomy and developing communication, independence, and social skills. Families can select in-home or center-based services with guidance from licensed BCBAs who prioritize flexibility, compassion, and family input.

Link: <https://kotm.org/programs/autism-center/>



Research & Participation Portals

When you search “autism” online, you’ll find a mix of everything — solid science, personal blogs, outdated ideas, and sometimes misleading claims. It’s easy to feel lost. This section compiles trusted research portals, studies, and journals that make exploring autism science easier and more accessible. The goal isn’t to turn you into a researcher — it’s to give you reliable places to start when you want to dig deeper.

Evidence-Based Reports

National Autism Center Reports

Summaries of which autism therapies are backed by research. Great for families who want clarity on “what works and what doesn’t.”

Link: nationalautismcenter.org

What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) – Institute of Education Sciences

A trusted federal resource that reviews research on educational and behavioral interventions, including autism-related practices. The WWC helps families, educators, and professionals identify evidence-based strategies that have been scientifically tested and rated for effectiveness.

Link: <https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/WWC>

National Standards Project – Phase 2 (PDF)

Think of this as the “decoder ring” of autism interventions. It groups hundreds of studies into *Established*, *Emerging*, or *Unestablished* based on real science (not just hype). A must-read if you’re deciding between different approaches.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Social & Daily Living Skills Review (PDF)

A review of strategies like video modeling, peer supports, and pivotal response training that help autistic individuals build independence and connection. A solid summary of what works and why these skills matter.

Link: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1750946711001279?via%3Dihub>

(Find these PDFs in **Section 3, Subsection “Evidence-Based Reports”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Learn & Participate

SPARK for Autism

A nationwide research study you can join from home. Families and autistic individuals can share their stories and help shape future autism research. A great option if you want to contribute directly.

Link: <http://sparkforautism.org/>

Autism Internet Modules

Free, self-paced learning on communication, behavior, sensory issues, and more. Each module is short, clear, and designed for families, educators, and even siblings.

Link: autisminternetmodules.org

Autism Focused Intervention Resources & Modules (AFIRM)

Research-backed guides, videos, and tools on evidence-based practices (EBPs). Easy to follow and very practical — no heavy jargon.

Link: autismpdc.fpg.unc.edu

Academic Journals & Research Organizations

Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders

A leading academic journal for in-depth studies on autism. More technical, but valuable for anyone who wants to explore the latest research.

Link: <https://link.springer.com/journal/10803/volumes-and-issues>

Autism Research (Wiley)

Covers brain research, genetics, interventions, and more. Academic but a strong resource for staying current with science.

Link: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/19383703>

Autism Science Foundation (ASF)

Funds and shares research that matters to autistic people and families. Breaks complex science into everyday insights and supports autistic-led projects.

Link: <https://autismsciencefoundation.org/>

Autism Research Institute (ARI)

One of the oldest autism organizations. Offers webinars, educational resources, and science-based updates, all in one place. Practical for families and professionals alike.

Link: <https://autism.org/>



Section 4: Sensory & Connection

Communication Supports

Communication looks different for everyone. Some people use speech, while others express themselves through pictures, devices, typing, or gestures. This section explores AAC—Augmentative and Alternative Communication—and other supports that help autistic individuals share their thoughts, needs, and voices in the ways that work best for them.

American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

The national organization for speech, language, and hearing professionals — and a trusted resource for families. ASHA’s website helps you understand communication disorders, AAC supports, and how to find certified speech-language pathologists or audiologists near you. It’s a great place to start if you’re exploring speech or hearing evaluations and want to learn what quality care looks like.

Link: <https://www.asha.org/>

Speech & Language Development Chart (PDF)

This chart shows typical speech and language development by age, helping you know what to expect and spot delays. While not a diagnostic tool, it can flag early signs to discuss with a doctor or speech therapist. Whether you’re a parent, teacher, or want to better understand communication, this guide helps identify red flags and support language development.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection “Communication Supports”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Google Live Transcribe & Sound Notifications

Free and available on Android — turns speech and sounds into real-time captions. It’s a great accessibility tool for autistic people who are hard of hearing, in loud environments, or just process language better visually.

Link: <https://www.android.com/accessibility/>



Augmentative & Alternative Communication

Tobii Dynavox – AAC Devices & Eye-Tracking Tools

Tobii Dynavox is a leader in AAC, offering devices with touchscreens, symbols, and eye-tracking to aid those with limited speech. This site provides information, funding help, and free training to find the right support for effective communication.

Link: <https://us.tobiidynavox.com/>

CoughDrop – AAC That Moves With You app

CoughDrop is a cloud-based AAC app compatible across devices like tablets, phones, and Chromebooks, allowing your voice to follow you. It's customizable, enabling supporters like parents or teachers to assist without taking control. You can track progress, adjust boards, and customize the tech. It's a flexible, collaborative option designed to grow with the user.

Link: <https://www.mycoughdrop.com/>

Proloquo2Go – AssistiveWare

A widely trusted AAC app for iPhone and iPad that gives non-speaking or minimally verbal individuals a real voice. Proloquo2Go uses symbols, customizable vocabulary, and text-to-speech to support communication across ages and abilities. It's designed for flexibility—growing with the user from early language stages through advanced expression—and includes resources for families, teachers, and therapists to personalize support.

Link: <https://www.assistiveware.com/products/proloquo2go>

AAC – American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)

This ASHA resource explains what Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is, who it helps, and how different tools—from picture boards to speech-generating devices—can support real communication. A great starting point for families and educators learning about AAC options and how to access them.

Link: <https://www.asha.org/public/speech/disorders/AAC/>

Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) and Autism

This ASHA resource explains what Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC) is, who it helps, and how different tools—from picture boards to speech-generating devices—can support real communication. A great starting point for families and educators learning about AAC options and how to access them.

Link: <https://autisminternetmodules.org/m/1189>



Therapy & Creative Communication

Communication isn't just about words; it's about connection. This section highlights therapies and creative approaches, like music, art, and movement, that help autistic individuals express emotions, build confidence, and connect in meaningful ways. These supports can complement traditional therapies by focusing on expression rather than correction.

Pure Progression Music Therapy

Music can be a powerful way to connect, especially for individuals on the autism spectrum. Pure Progression offers music therapy services that support communication, regulation, and emotional expression — all through the power of rhythm and sound. It's a cool option if traditional therapy settings feel too stiff.

Link: <https://www.pureprogressionmt.com>

Art Access Utah

Art Access offers inclusive art programs for neurodiverse individuals and families. Through painting, sculpture, and creative storytelling, participants explore new ways to communicate and express emotions in a sensory-aware environment.

Link: <https://artaccessutah.org/>



Sensory Tools & Regulation Strategies

Everyone processes the world differently, and for autistic people, sensory experiences can be especially intense or calming. This section explores tools and strategies—like weighted items, fidgets, or quiet spaces—that help regulate the senses and support comfort, focus, and emotional balance. The goal isn't to eliminate sensory needs, but to honor and manage them in ways that make daily life feel more comfortable and safer.

National Autistic Society – Sensory Differences

Breaks down how sensory processing works and offers strategies for managing sensitivities across touch, sound, movement, and more. Includes practical guides for home and school.

Link: <https://www.autism.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/topics/about-autism/sensory-processing>

Autism Community Store – Sensory Toys & Tools

An online shop created by and for the autism community, offering sensory toys, fidgets, weighted items, and calming tools for every age. It's a trusted place to explore products that support focus, comfort, and self-regulation—whether you're building a sensory kit for home, school, or therapy settings.

Link: <https://autismcommunitystore.com/collections/sensory-toys>



Section 5: Education

IEPs, 504s, and Educational Rights

School systems can feel like alphabet soup — IEPs, 504s, accommodations. Knowing your rights and having clear resources can make school meetings less stressful and more productive. These tools help families, autistic students, and educators understand what supports should look like.

Utah Special Education Services

The state's official site for special education programs and IEP services. A reliable first stop for Utah families learning how to navigate school supports.

Link: schools.utah.gov/specialeducation

Autism Speaks – School & Your Child's Rights

Covers IEPs, 504s, and what to expect in schools.

Link: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-school-your-childs-rights>

Note: Autism Speaks resource — I've included it here with caution. The organization has a complicated history in the autism community, and many autistic people (myself included) have concerns about how they represent autism.

Least Restrictive Behavior Interventions (LRBI) Manual (PDF)

Utah's guide for schools on using positive behavior planning instead of punishment. A practical resource for both parents and educators.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection ["IEPs, 504s, and Educational Rights"](#)** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Autism Classroom Resources

Tips, tools, and training for teachers — also helpful for parents who want to understand what good classroom supports look like.

Link: <https://autismclassroomresources.com/autism-internet-modules-free-training/>

Educator Resources – Organization for Autism Research (OAR)

OAR offers free, easy-to-use guides and lesson plans to help teachers create inclusive classrooms and support autistic students through practical, research-based strategies.

Link: <https://researchautism.org/educators/>



Local Schools & Contacts

Education is a team effort—and knowing who to reach out to makes all the difference. This section connects families to local school districts, special education departments, and key contacts who support students with disabilities. Whether you're starting preschool, transitioning to high school, or exploring post-secondary options, these local connections can help you navigate IEPs, 504 plans, and access needed services right here in your community.

Spectrum Academy

A Utah charter school designed for autistic students and those with related needs. Known for small classes, targeted supports, and a focus on inclusion.

Link: <https://spectrumcharter.org>

Provo School District

Shares info on IEP services, preschool programs, and parent resources. Useful for Provo families seeking support contacts.

Link: <https://provo.edu/special-education/>

Nebo School District

Provides parent guides, program descriptions, and contacts for special education services, including autism, useful for families in southern Utah County.

Link: <https://www.nebo.edu/page/special-education>

Davis School District

Davis charges the task of evaluation and support for students with disabilities (ages 0-21), including autism. Their “Child Find” efforts and contact details make it easier for families to engage with supports.

Link: <https://www.davis.k12.ut.us/page/special-education>

Salt Lake City School District

This district's department handles both IEP and 504 processes, offers transition supports, and liaises with parents to ensure accommodations and inclusion.

Link: <https://www.slcschools.org/special-education-and-504-home>

Washington County School District

WCSD offers a continuum of services across its schools for students with disabilities, including special programs and transition supports.

Link: <https://www.washk12.org/special-education/>



Tooele County School District – CLIMBS Program

This district partners with University of Utah for the “CLIMBS” program, offering academic and behavioral support for neurodiverse learners.

Link: <https://www.tooeleschools.org/departments/special-education-services>

Duchesne County School District – Con Amore School (Special Ed)

DCSD includes Con Amore School (K–12) as a dedicated special education option.

Link: <https://www.dcsd.org/>



College & Postsecondary Options

Planning for life after high school can feel overwhelming, especially when balancing support needs, independence, and the unknowns of adulthood. This subsection highlights programs designed to facilitate a smoother transition. Whether the goal is academic achievement, job readiness, or developing life skills, these opportunities meet students where they are and help them take the next step forward.

PASSAGES Program (PDF)

A UVU program for autistic adults to build life skills, social confidence, and community connections. A supportive place to work on independence and relationships while finding community.

Link: uvu.edu/autism/passages

Wolverines Elevated (PDF)

A three-year inclusive college experience at UVU for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Blends life skills, academics, and career training with full campus involvement.

Link: <https://www.uvu.edu/wolverines-elevated/index.html>

Life Journey Through Autism: A Guide for Transition to Adulthood (PDF)

Step-by-step guide for navigating life after high school. Covers jobs, independent living, rights, and self-advocacy. Honest, realistic, and packed with tools for families and students.

Link: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED508625.pdf>

(Find this in **Section 4, Subsection "College & Postsecondary Options"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

ScenicView Academy

A Utah nonprofit that supports young adults with autism and learning differences. Offers independent living skills, job training, and education in a supportive, strength-based environment.

Link: <https://www.svacademy.org>

Aggies Elevated – USU

An inclusive program at Utah State for young adults with intellectual disabilities. Students live on campus, take classes, and gain real independence and employment skills.

Link: <https://cehs.usu.edu/aggieselevated/>



Navigational Handbook for College and Career – IDEA

Federal guide that explains rights under IDEA and ADA for students with disabilities. Helps families plan for postsecondary education, jobs, and independence.

Link: <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/idea-files/policy-guidance-transition-guide-postsecondary-education-employment-students-youth-disabilities-august-2020/>



Transition Planning for Students

The move from school to adulthood can feel overwhelming—but it's also full of possibility. Transition planning helps students prepare for life after high school by focusing on independence, education, employment, and community involvement. This section offers tools and resources to build a clear, person-centered plan so students can set meaningful goals, develop real-world skills, and take confident steps toward their future.

Secondary Transition & Graduation – Utah State Board of Education

Transition planning begins long before graduation. This official Utah resource outlines requirements, timelines, and best practices for preparing students with disabilities for adult life. It covers IEP transition goals, work-based learning, and postsecondary options to help families, educators, and students plan confidently for the future.

Link: <https://www.schools.utah.gov/specialeducation/programs/secondarytransitiongraduation>

Transition to Adulthood Webinar – Organization for Autism Research (OAR)

A free webinar explaining strategies to help autistic youth and families navigate the move into adulthood. Topics include goal setting, community inclusion, higher education, and employment pathways. It's a great resource for parents, teachers, and students beginning to plan beyond high school.

Link: <https://researchautism.org/audience/education/transition-to-adulthood-webinar>



Legal & Advocacy Guides for Families

Laws and policies can feel intimidating, but they also give you power. This section highlights key autism laws, reports, and advocacy tools at both the state and national levels. The goal isn't to turn you into a lawyer — it's to give you solid resources that make navigating systems less overwhelming.

Autism in the Legal System: What Advocates & Judges Should Know (PDF)

Helps attorneys, judges, and advocates understand autism in court. Covers communication needs, sensory issues, and ways to ensure fairness for autistic individuals..

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Multicultural Issues in Autism – Journal Article (PDF)

Explores how culture, race, and access affect autism diagnosis and services. Highlights gaps and why diverse perspectives matter in advocacy.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Culturally Sensitive Collaboration Within Person-Centered Planning (PDF)

Shows how person-centered planning can reflect culture, language, and family values. Encourages trust and individualized support.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

2017 Report to Congress on Autism Activities (PDF)

A federal report to Congress summarizing autism programs, policies, and funding. Useful for understanding how government priorities shape services at the national level.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 5, Subsection "Legal & Advocacy Guides for Families"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

2017 IACC Report to Congress on Autism Activities

Summarizes national autism research, funding, and programs. Dense, but helpful for seeing how federal policy shapes services.

Link: https://iacc.hhs.gov/publications/report-to-congress/2017/report_to_congress_2017.pdf



Autism CARES Act of 2019 – IACC (PDF)

Explains the main federal law that funds autism research and services. A good starting point for understanding national autism policy and where funding goes.

Link: <https://iacc.hhs.gov/about-iacc/legislation/autism/cares-act-2019/>

Special Education Rules for IDEA (PDF)

Utah's version of IDEA explained in plain language. Clarifies what schools are required to provide and what families can expect.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 5, Subsection *"Legal & Advocacy Guides for Families"*** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Section 6: Autistic & Ally Voices

Autistic Voices & Media

Change starts when autistic people speak for themselves. From blogs and podcasts to photography and social media, autistic-led advocacy pushes for rights, acceptance, and belonging. These resources share lived experience in real, unfiltered ways while showing the creativity and diversity of autistic expression.

Journey of a Neurodiverse Gal – Blog

A blog by an autistic woman sharing daily life, challenges, and advocacy in her own words. Relatable, honest, and grounded in lived experience.

Link: <https://journeyofaneurodiversegal.blogspot.com/>

The Tism Time – Podcast

An autistic-led podcast where two hosts share real-world perspectives, challenges, and joys of being autistic. Episodes are fresh, honest, and rooted in lived experience — offering authentic voices and conversations families and professionals can learn from.

Link: <https://linktr.ee/thetismtime>

TheDoctorNextVoice – Instagram

An advocacy page focused on autism, ADHD, and neurodiversity. Shares personal perspectives through lived experience, blending advocacy, awareness, and everyday autistic voice content.

Link: <https://www.instagram.com/thedoctornextvoice/>

History of Autism – YouTube

A short overview of how autism understanding has evolved over time — from early misconceptions to today's science. Helpful for seeing how language, diagnosis, and acceptance have changed.

Link: <https://youtu.be/KRL3RqOmGiU>

Dr. Bernard Rimland Talks About His Journey – YouTube

An interview with Dr. Bernard Rimland, founder of the Autism Research Institute. His work helped shift autism understanding from “blame” to biology — a major turning point in history.

Link: <https://youtu.be/wZPxcsUKfp8>



Don Triplett: Autism's First Child – YouTube

The inspiring story of the first person officially diagnosed with autism. A look at how understanding and acceptance can shape a person's life.

Link: <https://youtu.be/4rNX0Kmu6ak>



Professional & Advocate Voices

Educators, advocates, and professionals — many of whom are autistic themselves — use their voices to connect lived experience with science, policy, and education. Their work inspires understanding, acceptance, and inclusion for people of all ages.

Doc Clegg

An autistic advocate, artist, and educator known for combining technology, creativity, and lived experience to build community and belonging. As part of Utah Valley University's Melisa Nellesen Center for Autism, Doc bridges research, advocacy, and student engagement through art, education, and storytelling. Their work — featured in UVU's Faces of UVU spotlight — shows how neurodiversity can drive innovation, empathy, and connection.

Link: https://www.uvu.edu/news/2020/11/11052020_caleb_clegg.html

Email: Doc.Clegg@uvu.edu

Temple Grandin, Ph.D.

A world-renowned autistic advocate, author, and professor of animal science. Temple Grandin's work has reshaped public understanding of autism through her books, lectures, and the Emmy-winning biographical film about her life. Her advocacy emphasizes practical supports, sensory awareness, and valuing different kinds of thinkers.

Link: <https://www.templegrandin.com/>

John Elder Robison

Author of Look Me in the Eye and leading autistic self-advocate. Robison's writing explores late diagnosis, identity, and belonging from an adult perspective, helping readers and professionals understand autism through lived experience. He also serves as an advisor on neurodiversity and technology innovation.

Link: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/contributors/john-elder-robison>

Jared Stewart, M.Ed.

An award-winning educator, public speaker, and program director known for his work at ScenicView Academy supporting autistic and neurodiverse young adults. Jared uses his platform to promote self-advocacy, independence, and belonging through neurodiversity-affirming education.

Link: <https://www.svacademy.org/meetourteam/jareds>



David Finch

Author of The Journal of Best Practices and autistic writer who shares his experiences navigating marriage, social understanding, and adulthood. His blend of humor and vulnerability helps readers see autism through the lens of love, growth, and partnership.

Link: <https://davidjfinch.com/>

Elliot Francis

Autistic advocate and speaker who works on economic inclusion and neurodiversity in professional settings. Francis highlights the value of accessibility and equity in leadership and employment.

Link: <https://www.interdependence.org/program-speaker/elliott-francis/- .XE8tBFxKhPY>



Parent & Ally Perspectives

Parents, caregivers, and allies also share their journeys. These voices are different from autistic self-advocates, but they can provide encouragement, practical strategies, and a sense of belonging for families walking a similar path.

The Autism Dad – Blog

Rob Gorski, a single dad raising three autistic sons, writes with honesty and heart. His blog blends daily struggles, practical advice, and encouragement for other families navigating similar experiences.

Link: <https://www.theautismdad.com/blog/>

Finding Cooper’s Voice – Blog

Created by Kate Swenson, Finding Cooper’s Voice began as a heartfelt blog about parenting her autistic son and grew into a nationwide community for families. Kate writes with honesty, humor, and compassion, helping parents feel less alone while celebrating the joy and complexity of raising neurodivergent children.

Link: <https://www.findingcoopersvoice.com/>

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCgZfCCbfnkfjlvtsRUuAFaQ>

Forever Boy – Book (Trigger Warning: Emotional Themes)

In *Forever Boy: A Mother’s Memoir of Autism and Finding Joy*, Kate Swenson shares her family’s journey through diagnosis, grief, growth, and acceptance. The book includes raw and emotional reflections about parenthood and resilience—sometimes heavy, but ultimately hopeful. It’s deeply real, honest, and helps families feel seen while emphasizing that love and understanding can coexist with exhaustion and uncertainty.

Link: <https://www.findingcoopersvoice.com/books/ - forever-boy>



Media & Representation

How autism is portrayed in movies, shows, and books shapes how the world understands it. These resources highlight media that aim to represent autism with respect, depth, and empathy. While some offer authentic lived experiences, others use storytelling to spark awareness and conversation.

IRIS Center Film List

A curated collection of films and documentaries about autistic people (and other disabilities). A great starting point for educators, parents, and advocates seeking real stories that bring lived experiences to life.

Link: <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/resources/films/>

Geek Girl – Netflix Series

A witty, heartfelt take on autism and identity, *Geek Girl* (2024) follows Harriet Manners—a neurodivergent teen navigating modeling and self-discovery. Written by autistic author Holly Smale, it's praised for its authenticity, humor, and sensitivity in portraying sensory and social experiences.

Link: <https://www.netflix.com/title/81637842>

Love on the Spectrum – Netflix Documentary Series

Love on the Spectrum follows autistic adults as they navigate dating and relationships. The series brought increased visibility to autism and encouraged open conversations about love, connection, and neurodiversity. It offers moments of honesty, humor, and tenderness that many viewers appreciate.

Link: <https://www.netflix.com/title/81338328>

Atypical – Netflix Series

Atypical follows Sam Gardner, a high-school student on the autism spectrum, as he navigates friendships, family, and growing independence. The show helped bring autism into mainstream conversation and offered visibility at a time when authentic representation was rare. Viewers often connect with its focus on identity, self-advocacy, and family relationships.

Link: <https://www.netflix.com/title/80117540>

Note: These Netflix shows are created for entertainment, not education. While they can spark awareness and understanding, they may also simplify or dramatize autistic experiences for broader audiences. Viewers should remember that every autistic person's story is unique, and these portrayals do not represent the full spectrum of real life.



Section 7: Health Supports

Health & Therapy Supports

Medical visits can be stressful when providers don't understand autism — from ER staff missing sensory needs to clinics overlooking communication differences. These resources help families and professionals work together with less stress. The goal isn't to replace doctors, but to give them tools to meet autistic people where they are.

Resources

Health Support for Autism (PDF)

A quick-reference handout for nurses and medical staff. Outlines simple dos and don'ts to create safer, more supportive environments in clinics, schools, or hospitals.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Paramedics and Emergency Room Staff (PDF)

This guide helps paramedics and ER staff support individuals with autism in emergencies by addressing sensory sensitivities, communication tips, and how autism manifests during trauma. Essential for medical or crisis responders or curious individuals, it ensures autistic people receive safer, informed care when it matters most.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 6, Subsection "Resources"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Services

Planned Parenthood Utah – Reproductive & Health Services (PDF)

Planned Parenthood provides direct health services across Utah — including reproductive care, gender-affirming care, STI testing, cancer screenings, and mental health support. They also offer easy-to-understand health education resources for patients and families. A nonjudgmental place to access care and learn.

Link: <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/planned-parenthood-utah>

(Find this in **Section 6, Subsection "Services"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Utah Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS)

Utah's main health agency and go-to site for medical programs, disability supports, and behavioral health services. The best starting point if you're unsure where to begin.

Link: <https://dhhs.utah.gov/>

DSPD – Division of Services for People with Disabilities

Helps families apply for long-term supports like housing, job coaching, day programs, and respite care. It can feel like a maze, but DSPD is the main doorway for developmental disability services in Utah.

Link: <https://dspd.utah.gov/>



Clinics & Therapy Providers

Sometimes you just need to know where to go. This subsection highlights local Utah clinics and providers that serve autistic individuals and their families — from whole-person health centers to specialists who understand autism.

Mountainlands Community Health

Provides medical, dental, mental health, and pharmacy care with an emphasis on accessibility. Known for affordable, inclusive, whole-person care, making it a strong option for families looking for community-focused support.

Link: <https://www.mountainlands.org/>

Utah Psychological Associates

Serves individuals ages 10 and up with autism evaluations and therapy for co-occurring conditions like anxiety and depression. A reliable option for families seeking both diagnostic support and mental health services in one place.

Link: <https://utahpsychologicalassociates.com/>

Alpine Pediatrics

Alpine Pediatrics offers autism resources alongside their pediatric care — including classes taught by therapists, recommended websites, books, and clinic connections. It's a good fit if you want a medical home base that also points you toward supportive services.

Link: https://www.alpinepeds.com/pe_autism.html

Wasatch Behavioral Health

Wasatch Behavioral Health provides therapy, crisis intervention, and psychiatric services across Utah County. They work with kids, teens, and adults, and many families use them for support with autism-related challenges like anxiety, depression, or behavioral health needs. It's a reliable local option for mental health care.

Link: <https://www.wasatch.org/>

Utah Valley Pediatrics

Utah Valley Pediatrics offers compassionate, family-centered care at multiple Utah locations, focusing on developmental health, behavioral screenings, and supporting families of autistic and neurodivergent children. They provide resources for parents and coordinate with specialists for evaluations or referrals, serving as a trusted, community-based medical support option.

Link: <https://www.uvpediatrics.com/>



Supportive Dental Care

Dental care can be overwhelming for many autistic people due to bright lights, strange tools, textures, and noises. This section highlights providers and resources that understand these challenges and adapt their approach, aiming to make dental visits accessible and fear-free.

Dentably – Dentist

Finding sensory-aware dental care can be tricky. This site helps you locate U.S. dentists experienced in caring for patients with disabilities or special needs, including autism. Whether you seek a more understanding environment, extra accommodations, or someone who understands, this is a great place to start your search.

Link: <https://www.emergencydentistsusa.com/special-needs-dentist-near-me/>

Burg Children’s Dentistry

With 14 locations across Utah, Burg Children’s Dentistry works with children on the spectrum and creates a welcoming environment. They emphasize patient comfort and positive experiences for kids who may have extra sensitivities or anxiety at the dentist.

Link: <https://burgchildrensdentistry.com/>

Little Peoples Dental

This office uses the “tell, show, do” approach to help kids with autism and other special needs have a smoother dental experience. They’re focused on making dentistry less overwhelming and more predictable.

Link: <https://www.littlepeoplesdental.com/services/pediatric-dentistry/special-needs/>

Mountainland Pediatric Dental

Specializes in serving children with special needs, offering a compassionate and flexible approach to make dental care positive. They’re known for creating a supportive experience that works with each child’s unique needs.

Link: <https://mountainlandpediatricdental.com/special-needs-dentistry/>

Pediatric Smiles and Braces

This Utah dental office specializes in kids, from checkups to braces, recognizing each child’s unique needs. Their team collaborates with families to make visits less stressful, offering a supportive, patient-centered experience that eases dental anxiety. It’s ideal for combining pediatric dentistry and orthodontics.

Link: <https://pediatricsmilesandbraces.com/>



UVU Dental Hygiene Clinic

Provides low-cost dental cleanings, X-rays, and preventative services performed by supervised UVU students. The clinic emphasizes compassionate, patient-centered care and welcomes individuals with disabilities. Located on the UVU campus, it's a great local option for accessible and affordable dental support.

Link: <https://www.uvu.edu/dental/clinic.html>



State & Local Health Supports

Families often feel lost trying to figure out where to turn for help. Utah's state and local agencies can be confusing, but they're also the key to unlocking services, providers, and funding. This section points you to official agencies like DHHS, DSPD, and Medicaid lists, as well as county-level resources. The goal isn't to drown you in red tape — it's to give you starting points that connect you with real support in your community.

Utah DSPD – Division of Services for People with Disabilities

This site is a must-bookmark if you or someone you love needs long-term support services in Utah. DSPD helps connect people with programs for housing, day services, job coaching, respite care, and more. It can feel overwhelming trying to figure out where even to start, but this is where you apply for state supports and learn what's available for individuals with developmental disabilities, including autism. It's one of the best spots to learn about funding, waiting lists, and how to build a support plan that works.

Links: <https://dspd.utah.gov/>

Find an ABA Provider – Utah Medicaid

Trying to track down an ABA provider that takes Medicaid? This tool makes it way easier. Instead of cold-calling random clinics, you can search for providers who are enrolled in the system. It's beneficial if you're in the ASD-FAP program or just got approved for services and don't know where to start. Less guessing means more connecting with people who can help.

Link: <https://medicaid.utah.gov/ltc-2/asd-fap/>

Utah Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH)

A state division within the Department of Health and Human Services that oversees mental-health and substance-use treatment programs across Utah. DSAMH supports prevention education, crisis services, and recovery programs to help individuals and families access community-based care.

Link: <https://sumh.utah.gov/>



Section 8: Safety & Crisis Supports

First Responders & Safety Teams

When emergencies happen, understanding makes all the difference. These tools help police, EMTs, and firefighters recognize autism traits, communicate clearly, and support individuals safely. They're ideal for families to share with local departments or for professionals seeking autism-specific crisis training.

Orem Police Department Autism Info

Orem PD has a program allowing families to share key details about their autistic loved ones with officers beforehand. This helps police respond safely during emergencies or when a child wanders off, providing peace of mind to families worried about “what if.”

Link: orem.org/police

West Valley City – Project Safeguard

The West Valley City Police Department offers Project Safeguard, a registry that allows caregivers to share important information with law enforcement before a crisis happens. Their Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) officers are trained to support autistic individuals and can access that info if dispatched. If you live in or near West Valley City, it's worth registering your loved one.

Link: <https://www.wvc-ut.gov/1692/Crisis-Intervention-Team>

First Responder Training – UVU Autism Center

This page outlines how UVU is helping first responders better understand and support individuals with autism in emergency situations. Whether police, EMTs, or firefighters, this kind of training can make a huge difference. It's also a great resource to share with your local agencies if they're open to learning.

Link: uvu.edu/autism/first-responders.html

UVU Autism Center – Crisis Intervention Article

Highlights UVU's efforts to raise awareness among first responders about autism, aiming to create safer encounters by equipping police, EMTs, and firefighters with tools to understand sensory differences and communication needs. A solid example of local advocacy.

Link: https://www.uvu.edu/news/2019/11/1152019_crisis-intervention.html



Law Enforcement and Other First Responders (PDF)

This guide helps first responders better understand what to expect, what to avoid, and how to provide effective support. It's a great resource for police, EMTs, or anyone else who may interact with autistic individuals in stressful situations. The goal here is safety and understanding on both sides.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Community Days (PDF)

This flyer highlights events for autistic individuals and their families to connect, feel seen, and have fun. Community Days are about showing up, being yourself, and creating space where everyone belongs. It's a good reminder that advocacy can look like joy and connection. Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 6, Subsection *"first Responders & Safety Teams"*** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

Autism Speaks – Interacting with Law Enforcement

Provides guidance for both families and officers on how to disclose a disability, what to expect, and how to reduce risks during police interactions. Helpful for preparing ahead of time so everyone feels safer and more supported.

Link: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/interacting-law-enforcement>

***Note: Autism Speaks resource** — I've included it here with caution. The organization has a complicated history in the autism community, and many autistic people (myself included) have concerns about how they represent autism.*

Autism and Law Enforcement: Strategies for Safer Interactions (OAR)

A practical article offering research-based guidance for autistic individuals, families, and police on improving communication and safety during encounters. It explains how preparation, calm communication, and officer training can reduce misunderstandings and stress in emergencies. Pairs well with OAR's Autism ID Card resource for building personal safety plans.

Link: <https://researchautism.org/oaracle-newsletter/autism-and-law-enforcement-strategies-for-safer-interactions/>



Wandering & Safety Planning

Wandering is a common and concerning safety issue for families, often due to curiosity, sensory overload, or seeking safety, not disobedience. This section offers checklists, planning tools, and prevention kits to reduce risks while respecting dignity and independence.

Wandering Prevention Checklist – September 26

Simple, clear steps to help prevent wandering. Great for families or teachers who need a checklist to keep kids safe.

Link: september26.org/wandering-prevention

Fire Safety (PDF)

This one's all about fire safety—but with autistic folks in mind. It discusses how things like alarms, lights, and instructions might go differently and gives simple ways to prep ahead of time. Whether you're a parent, teacher, or want to feel more secure, this is a valuable resource to have on hand.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Life Journey Through Autism: A Guide to Safety (PDF)

This guide covers it all — from wandering to internet safety to how to communicate with first responders. It's made for families, educators, and autistic folks themselves who want to do something to prevent problems, not just stress about them. It breaks everything down in a way that makes sense and gives real, doable steps. If you've ever thought, "Okay, but what do we actually *do* about safety stuff?" — this is the one.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Children's Specialized Hospital Family Safety Handbook (PDF)

A practical, parent-friendly guide that walks families through everyday and emergency safety — from wandering prevention to fire, water, and community awareness. It's easy to read, comprehensive, and a great tool for building individualized safety plans that actually work in real life.

Link: <https://www.rwjbh.org/documents/csh/CSH.Autism.Safety-TS-FamilySafetyHandbook.ENG.Lambert.082620.pdf>

(Find this in **Section 7, Subsection "Wandering & Safety Planning"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Fire Safety Checklist – September 26

This printable fire safety plan was created with individuals with autism in mind. It's good for home use or if you're working with first responders to build a strategy.

Link: september26.org/fire-safety

National Autism Association – Safety Facts

A great go-to for understanding autism safety concerns, like wandering and emergencies. Super clear and parent-focused.

Link: nationalautismassociation.org/resources/autism-safety-facts

Big Red Safety Box – NAA

This free safety kit helps families prepare for wandering risks. It includes door alarms, ID cards, and other life-saving tools. It is highly recommended if your child is a wanderer.

Link: nationalautismassociation.org/big-red-safety-box

Wandering Resources – National Autism Association (NAA)

A comprehensive page focused on understanding and preventing wandering (also called elopement). It explains why autistic individuals may wander, outlines proven prevention strategies, and links to caregiver checklists, toolkits, and emergency-response plans. Designed for parents, schools, and first responders, it's a go-to starting point for building an individualized safety plan.

Link: <https://nationalautismassociation.org/resources/wandering/>

Utah Drowning Prevention Coalition (UDPC)

A statewide coalition dedicated to reducing fatal and non-fatal drownings through community education and advocacy. UDPC promotes the ABCDs of Drowning Prevention — Adult supervision, Barriers, Classes, and Devices — to help families stay safe in, on, and around water. They partner with Utah State Parks Boating Program and actively work to expand swimming-lesson access for at-risk populations, including autistic children.

Link: <https://www.urpa.org/udpc.html>



***Note: Autism Speaks resource** — I've included it here with caution. The organization has a complicated history in the autism community, and many autistic people (myself included) have concerns about how they represent autism.*

Autism Speaks – Safety Products & Services

From door alarms to GPS trackers to free wallet cards, this page gathers tools that can help prevent or respond to safety crises. Some items cost money, while others are free; however, all are designed with real-world situations in mind.

Link: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/safety-products-and-services>

Autism Speaks – Community Safety

This page is about planning for everyday life and emergencies — whether that's navigating busy public places or preparing for natural disasters. It's flexible enough to adapt for your family's unique needs.

Link: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/safety-community>

Autism Speaks – Autism Safety

Covers safety across different parts of life — home, school, and the community. It gives parents and caregivers practical tips for preventing problems before they happen, including how to prepare for emergencies or tough situations.

Link: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/autism-safety>

Autism Speaks – Using Public Restrooms

Practical tips and reminders for making public restroom use safer and less stressful. It covers things like expectations, routines, and safety planning so families can feel more confident in community spaces.

Link: <https://www.autismspeaks.org/using-public-restrooms>

***Note: Autism Speaks resource** — I've included it here with caution. The organization has a complicated history in the autism community, and many autistic people (myself included) have concerns about how they represent autism.*



Teaching Safety Skills

Safety begins with teaching and practice. These research-based videos and trainings show how to help children, teens, and adults learn practical safety behaviors through evidence-based, non-fearful approaches.

Teaching Safety Skills to Children with ASD (YouTube)

Guest presenter Ryan Bergstrom, MA, BCBA, from the Autism Research Group, reviews how to teach safety skills to children with autism. The video outlines evidence-based interventions, highlights research-supported practices, and offers practical guidance to help families and educators identify safe, effective teaching methods while avoiding pseudoscience.

Link: <https://youtu.be/iLaOJ2mbnFA?si=MBFNDf1jm7nZLd3q>

ABA Inside Track “Technology and Safety Skills Training” (YouTube)

This podcast episode explores how technology can enhance behavioral skills training (BST) to teach safety skills to children with autism. Dr. Nick Vaneslow discusses his research using computerized BST and in situ practice to promote safety behaviors, blending science, humor, and real-world application.

Link: <https://youtu.be/wS4w6mTEecI?si=oNb5HnoqN3fLwbIK>



Crisis Lines & Response Teams

When things get overwhelming, knowing who to call can make all the difference. Crisis lines and response teams provide immediate help, safety planning, and connection to local services—whether you're in distress yourself or supporting someone who is. These teams are trained to respond with care, understanding, and respect for neurodiversity, helping families and autistic individuals access calm, safety, and next steps.

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline

Call, text, or chat 988 to reach trained counselors 24/7 for emotional distress, suicidal thoughts, or any kind of mental-health emergency. The Lifeline connects callers to local crisis centers and can coordinate emergency response when needed while focusing on safety and de-escalation.

Link: <https://988lifeline.org/>

SafeUT App — Utah Crisis Chat & Tip Line

Free, confidential chat line and mobile app connecting Utah residents—especially youth and families—to licensed counselors. Offers 24/7 crisis support, suicide prevention, and anonymous tips for school safety.

Link: <https://safeut.org/>

Crisis Text Line

Text HOME to 741741 to connect with a trained volunteer counselor. Available 24/7 for anyone in emotional distress or experiencing a mental-health challenge.

Link: <https://www.crisistextline.org/>

Utah Domestic Violence Coalition (UDVC)

UDVC coordinates statewide prevention, advocacy, and crisis support for survivors of domestic and interpersonal violence. They connect individuals and families to local shelters, 24-hour hotlines, and trauma-informed resources across Utah to promote safety and healing.

Link: <https://udvc.org/>



Section 9: Teens, Transition & Adult Life

Employment & Job Support

Finding meaningful work is a big part of adult life. This subsection highlights services that help with job coaching, workplace readiness, and supported employment. The goal isn't just getting a job — it's building purpose, confidence, and independence

Utah Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) (PDF)

VR is a statewide program that helps people with disabilities, including autistic folks, prepare for, get, and keep jobs. Whether you're seeking help with job training, education, workplace accommodations, or figuring out your goals, VR walks you through that journey. It's a great support if you're ready to start working, thinking about the future, or want to know what's out there beyond school.

Links: <https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/vr/index.html>

Vocational Rehab (VR) Flowchart — Step-by-Step Help for Teens & Adults (PDF)

This guide explains the VR process from applying at age 14 to getting support with school, work, and bus passes. It's useful for parents and young adults wondering 'what now?' after a diagnosis. It shows how VR counselors, students, and families can collaborate on personalized plans based on strengths and goals. It also provides contacts for when things get confusing.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Youth Transition Services – Utah VR (PDF)

This flyer details Utah's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services supporting students with disabilities transitioning from high school to adult life. They provide job training, career counseling, and attend IEP/504 meetings. It's a valuable local resource for support during this transition.

Link: <https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/students>

(Find this in **Section 8, Subsection "Employment & Job Support"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Disability & Employment Barriers (YouTube)

A powerful reminder of how hard disabled people often have to fight just to get hired. It's not a light watch, but it raises awareness about workplace discrimination and inclusion.

Link: <https://youtu.be/L7KTODIJGWg>

Columbus NEXTWORK Academy

This program helps autistic and neurodivergent young adults prepare for employment and independent living. It focuses on real-world skills, paid work experience, and transition support, with coaching along the way. If you're looking for something that combines career readiness with support, this is one to consider.

Link: <https://www.columbusseves.org/>



Housing & Independent Living

Finding and maintaining a safe, supportive living environment is one of the biggest steps toward adulthood. This section highlights programs, rights, and resources that help autistic adults and families balance independence, safety, and community connection — from residential supports to life-skills coaching.

Info & Guides

Utah Fair Housing Act (Title 57, Chapter 21 Utah Code) (PDF)

An interactive online roadmap that guides autistic adults and families through every step of housing planning — from assessing readiness to exploring living options, budgeting, and supports. It's a free, visual tool that simplifies the process of finding the right fit for independent or supported living.

Link: <https://docs.autismspeaks.org/housing-roadmap/>

Housing Rights & Resources Guide (PDF)

This flyer explains housing rights for autistic people under laws like the FHA, ADA, and Section 504, and highlights Utah resources like RISE, Utah Regional Housing, and the Disability Law Center. Housing can be stressful, but this guide simplifies it and reminds you that safe, fair housing is a right, not a privilege.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Accessing Home & Community-Based Services (PDF)

A free, self-advocate-written guide explaining how Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) can support independent living, housing, employment, and inclusion. It breaks down terms, rights, and steps for applying for waivers in clear, accessible language.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find these PDFs in **Section 7, Subsection "Info & Guides"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)

HousingU – Inclusive Housing in Utah

An initiative from the University of Utah focused on creating accessible, inclusive, and affordable housing for people with disabilities. The site offers Utah-specific research, planning tools, and advocacy resources to help families, self-advocates, and providers understand and improve housing access across the state.

Link: <https://housinguc.org/>



Autism Housing Network – National Resource

A nationwide hub connecting autistic adults, families, and housing developers to inclusive living options and planning tools. It features a searchable map of autism-friendly communities, guides on funding and design, and real examples of successful housing models.

Link: <https://www.autismhousingnetwork.org/>

Disability Law Center – Fair Housing Rights of People with Disabilities

Utah's Disability Law Center outlines the housing rights of people with disabilities under the Fair Housing Act, ADA, and Section 504. The page explains how to request accommodations, recognize discrimination, and take action if your rights are violated. It's a key resource for understanding and protecting fair housing access in Utah.

Link: <https://disabilitylawcenter.org/resources/fair-housing-rights-of-people-with-disabilities/>

Neuro-Inclusive Utah – Housing & Accessibility Resources

A statewide initiative that helps neurodivergent Utahns find affordable, inclusive housing and understand accessibility in workplaces and community spaces. The site also offers connection points for asking questions, finding supports, and building a more neuro-affirming Utah.

Link: <https://www.neuroinclusiveutah.org/resources>

Utah Parent Center – Adult & Independent Living Resources

A statewide directory of adult services and independent living providers for people with disabilities. The Utah Parent Center's resource hub connects families and self-advocates to programs supporting housing, employment, daily living, and community inclusion across Utah.

Link: <https://utahparentcenter.org/adult-services/adult-resources-service-provider/-independent-living>

Autism Speaks – Housing and Residential Supports Roadmap

An interactive online roadmap that guides autistic adults and families through every step of housing planning — from assessing readiness to exploring living options, budgeting, and supports. It's a free, visual tool that simplifies the process of finding the right fit for independent or supported living.

Link: <https://docs.autismspeaks.org/housing-roadmap/>

***Note: Autism Speaks resource** — I've included it here with caution. The organization has a complicated history in the autism community, and many autistic people (myself included) have concerns about how they represent autism.*



Services & Providers

Chrysalis

Chrysalis provides residential and day support for individuals with developmental disabilities, focusing on independence, inclusion, and personal growth, including daily living skills, employment, and connections. They are a good option for families seeking long-term, person-centered support in Utah.

Link: <https://www.chrysalis.care/>

RISE Services

RISE provides support services like in-home care and employment programs to help people with developmental disabilities live fulfilling lives. Their flexible, individualized services suit those seeking community involvement and daily support.

Link: <https://riseservicesinc.org/>

Utah State Developmental Center

USDC provides residential and therapeutic services for individuals with significant support needs. While it's a state-run facility, they emphasize safety, skill-building, and medical/behavioral support for those who require more intensive care. It's an important option for families navigating higher levels of support.

Link: <https://usdc.utah.gov/>

Madison House Autism Foundation – Utah Project

Finding safe, supportive housing is a major challenge for autistic adults. Madison House Autism Foundation's Utah Project offers housing, community, and support options in Utah, serving as a valuable resource for families and self-advocates planning for independence beyond school.

Link: <https://madisonhouseautism.org/projects/utah/>

85 North Apartments – Provo

A collaborative housing project between ScenicView Academy and 85 North offering soundproof, autism-friendly apartments for adults on the spectrum. Each unit is designed to minimize noise and sensory stress while encouraging independent living and community connection in a supportive environment.

Link: <https://www.85northprovo.com/>



Ability 1st Utah – Independent Living

Ability 1st Utah helps people with disabilities build the skills and confidence to live more independently. They offer classes and peer support in budgeting, cooking, transportation, and self-advocacy, along with resources to connect you to community supports. You can sign up or request more information directly through their website.

Link: <https://ability1stutah.org/independent-living-resource/independent-living/>



Section 10: Community Supports

Family & Early Support

Sometimes, the best support isn't a giant program — it's something close to home. These early-stage resources guide families toward screenings, services, and connections when they're just getting started.

Help Me Grow Utah

A support network for Utah families, especially if you've got a young child and are unsure where to start. They help connect you to screenings, services, and early intervention options.

Link: helpmegrowutah.org

Utah Parent Center – Resource Hub

This site offers tools for families, from IEP help to support groups. It guides those unsure where to start and is helpful for understanding available resources for your child or family.

Link: <https://utahparentcenter.org/resources/>

Utah Child Care Search

Finding childcare can feel like a guessing game, but this tool makes it easier. You can search by location, schedule, and type of care to see what might actually fit your family's needs. It's a simple way to sort options instead of making endless phone calls.

Links: <https://jobs.utah.gov/occ/cac/search/>

Giant Steps – Wasatch Mental Health

Giant Steps is a preschool program built just for kids on the spectrum ages 3–5. It blends ABA with social skills and classroom learning so kids can grow in both structure and confidence. It's one of those programs that helps kids get ready for school while giving families peace of mind.

Links: <https://www.wasatch.org/children-youth-and-family-services/giant-steps/>

Kids On The Move (KOTM)

Kids on the Move supports families through early intervention, childcare, and parent education programs that strengthen development and connection from infancy onward.

Links: <https://kotm.org/>



Independent Living & Adult Supports

Growing into adulthood means gaining independence while staying connected. These resources help individuals and families plan transitions, build skills, and navigate Utah's adult-service systems with confidence.

Utah DSPD – Division of Services for People with Disabilities

DSPD connects families to long-term supports such as housing, day programs, job coaching, and respite. A key site for understanding eligibility, waiting lists, and service options.

Links: <https://dspd.utah.gov/>

Utah DSPD – Support Coordination

Support Coordinators through Utah's DSPD help create plans and connect families with resources like housing and day programs. They guide you through services, making the system less overwhelming.

Link: <https://dspd.utah.gov/services/support-coordination/>

MNCA Resource Library (PDF)

This little flyer directs you to the Melisa Nellesen Center for Autism's on-site resource library — it's stocked with books, sensory tools, visuals, games, and more. It's perfect if you're looking for real, hands-on stuff that can make life a little easier or more manageable. Whether you're a parent, teacher, or just figuring things out, this is a solid spot to check out free tools that help.

Link: <https://www.uvu.edu/autism/resources.html>

Ability 1st Utah (PDF)

This nonprofit supports people with disabilities, including autism, to live independently through peer support, skills training, advocacy, and transition assistance like moving from high school to adulthood. Open to qualified individuals, it offers support from experienced helpers.

Link: <https://ability1stutah.org>

Creating an Individualized Support Plan (ISP) – Utah DHS (PDF)

This guide explains ISPs, which help people with disabilities receive personalized support. Whether you're determining services, creating a care plan, or assisting someone in transitioning to adult support, this guide outlines the process and its importance.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 10, Subsection** *["Independent Living & Adult Supports"](#)* of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Community Centers

Utah's autism community thrives through centers that bring people together to learn, grow, and connect. These spaces go beyond therapy – they build belonging.

Melisa Nellesen Center for Autism – UVU

This is the autism support hub at UVU, offering community events, advocacy, and resources for families and professionals. A great starting point for trusted local support.

Link: uvu.edu/autism

Carmen B. Pingree Autism Center of Learning

Pingree is one of the most recognized autism centers in Utah. They provide preschool, elementary programs, and therapy for teens and adults, all with a strong ABA focus. Families know them for their experience and resources, but also for creating a learning space that feels supportive and structured.

Links: <https://valleycares.com/pingree-autism-center>

Utah Autism Academy Community Center

Created by Utah Autism Academy, this center is all about connection and belonging. It offers social programs, recreation, and life-skills activities for autistic kids, teens, and adults in a supportive environment. A strong local hub if you're looking for community-based engagement beyond therapy.

Links: <https://utahautismacademy.com/utah-autism-community-center/>



Recreation & Accessible Spaces

Life isn't only about services and supports — it's about joy, play, and connection. These resources highlight recreational programs, community activities, and sensory-friendly places that make fun, exploration, and everyday life more accessible for autistic individuals and their families. Whether it's a camp, park, or local business, each one helps create moments where everyone can relax, belong, and enjoy being part of the community.

Recreation & Activities

Utah Recreation & Parks Association (URPA)

URPA connects recreation professionals, cities, and community leaders across Utah to promote inclusive, safe, and accessible parks and programs. They support statewide initiatives like the Utah Disability Park Coalition and the Utah Drowning Prevention Coalition, helping every community create spaces where people of all abilities can play, learn, and connect.

Link: <https://www.urpa.org/index.html>

Interagency Access Pass – U.S. National Park Service

A free lifetime pass for U.S. citizens and permanent residents with permanent disabilities, including autism. The pass provides free entry to more than 2,000 federal recreation sites—national parks, forests, and wildlife refuges—and discounted fees for camping or guided tours. It's a simple way for individuals and families to enjoy accessible outdoor adventures together.

Link: <https://www.nps.gov/subjects/accessibility/interagency-access-pass.htm>

Autism Adventure Camp – HMHI

A summer camp through the University of Utah for kids ages 8–12 with level 1 autism. It's all about building social skills while having fun in a supportive environment. Campers get to connect, play, and learn in ways that make sense for them.

Link: <https://healthcare.utah.edu/hmhi/programs/autism-adventure-camp>

Utah Parent Center – Recreation Resources

This page gathers recreational opportunities across Utah. Whether you're looking for sports, activities, or just something fun to do as a family, this hub is a great place to explore options.

Link: <https://utahparentcenter.org/resources/recreation/>



Orem “All Together Playground”

An inclusive playground designed for kids of all abilities. With wheelchair swings, sensory-friendly spaces, and creative playsets, it’s a safe and welcoming spot for families to relax and play together.

Link: <https://orem.gov/all-together-playground/>

Draper City Park – Inclusive Play Space

Draper City Park is a favorite local spot for families, featuring an inclusive playground, adaptive swings, and open areas for everyone to explore and connect. The Utah’s Adventure Family guide highlights its accessible design, shaded play zones, and nearby walking paths — perfect for sensory-friendly outdoor fun.

Link: <https://www.utahsadventurefamily.com/draper-city-park/>

Camp K (Camp Kostopulos)

A long-standing Utah camp for people with disabilities. They offer day, residential, and travel camps that focus on independence, recreation, and friendships. It’s a place to try new things in a supportive environment.

Link: <https://www.campk.org/programs/summer-camps/>

SibShops of Utah County

Workshops and activities created for siblings of children with autism. Run by Kids on the Move and BYU, SibShops provide siblings with an opportunity to share experiences, connect with peers, and have fun while feeling supported.

Link: <https://sibshopsofutahcounty.blogspot.com/>

Autism Eats

Family dining events are created so everyone can enjoy a night out without stress. Restaurants accommodate sensory needs, staff are trained, and families can relax knowing it’s a safe and welcoming space.

Link: <https://www.autismeats.org/>

Special Olympics Utah

Provides year-round sports opportunities for kids and adults with disabilities. From local practices to competitions, it’s about more than athletics — it’s about building friendships, confidence, and community.

Link: <https://www.sout.org/>

National Ability Center (NAC)

Based in Park City, NAC offers adaptive recreation like skiing, horseback riding, and cycling. Encourages confidence and community through adventure.

Link: <https://discovernac.org/>



Sensory-Friendly Businesses

AMC Sensory-Friendly Films

AMC partners with the Autism Society to offer sensory-friendly movie showings. Lights stay on, sound is lowered, and everyone is free to move around or make noise. It's a judgment-free movie experience for the whole family.

Link: <https://www.amctheatres.com/programs/sensory-friendly-films>

Haircuts Are Fun – Orem

Haircuts can be overwhelming for autistic kids, but this Orem salon specializes in making the experience fun and stress-free. The staff are patient, playful, and focused on comfort — turning a tough routine into something positive and confidence-building.

Link: https://www.haircutsarefun.com/location/orem-ut - / _ s/sites/unknown/services

Chuck E. Cheese – Sensory Sensitive Sundays

On the first Sunday of each month, Chuck E. Cheese locations—several in Utah—open two hours early for a calmer experience with softer music, dimmed lights, and reduced game sounds, supporting autistic children and those with sensory sensitivities. Staff are specially trained to help families relax and enjoy.

Link: <https://www.chuckecheese.com/allen-tx/sensory-sensitive-sundays/>

Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program

A global inclusion initiative where people with non-visible disabilities wear sunflower lanyards or pins to signal they may need support, recognized worldwide at airports, universities, and public venues. It promotes kindness, understanding, and awareness to make spaces more accessible.

Link: <https://hdsunflower.com/us/>

SLC International Airport – Hidden Disabilities Sunflower Program

Salt Lake City International Airport participates in the Hidden Disabilities Sunflower initiative, supporting travelers with non-visible disabilities like autism, ADHD, or chronic conditions. Wearing a sunflower lanyard signals to staff you may need extra help, making air travel more inclusive and stress-free.

Link: <https://slcairport.com/customer-assistance/accessibility/hidden-disabilities-sunflower/>



Belonging & Community Engagement

Belonging happens when autistic voices lead the way. These programs and organizations celebrate identity, creativity, and advocacy through connection.

Autism Council of Utah

This statewide group brings together families, professionals, and self-advocates to improve autism resources across Utah. It's all about collaboration—connecting people with events, news, services, and real ways to get involved. It's great if you want to stay updated, meet others in the community, or see what's happening across the state.

Link: <https://autismcouncilofutah.org>

Autism Resources of Utah County Council (ARUCC)

ARUCC is a coalition of local groups and companies that work together to strengthen the autism community in Utah County. They share events, highlight resources, and host the annual Uplifting Celebration for Autism at UVU. ARUCC is a great way to stay connected and see how the community comes together.

Link: <https://arucc.org/>

AutCon – Utah's Autistic-Run Convention (ScenicView Academy)

An annual conference led by autistic adults, offering workshops, panels, and creative spaces for connection and advocacy.

Link: <https://www.autconsva.com/>

Autism Incorporated (PDF)

A peer-led student group at UVU is open to *anyone*, whether autistic or simply interested in learning and supporting others. It's a space for connection, creativity, and community. Whether it's art showcases, chill hangouts, or projects that make a difference, this group is all about showing up as you are and building something meaningful together.

Link: <https://linktr.ee/autismincorporateduvu>

(Find this in **Section 10, Subsection "Belonging & Community Engagement"** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



Sexuality and Sex Education Guide – (OAR)

A free curriculum supporting healthy, affirming conversations about relationships, consent, and self-advocacy for autistic teens, adults, and families.

Link: <https://researchautism.org/oaracle-newsletter/oar-releases-sexuality-and-sex-education-guide/>

Utah Developmental Disabilities Council (UDDC)

Offers grants, leadership training, and community engagement projects that help Utahns with disabilities become active participants in their communities.

Link: <https://uddc.utah.gov/>



Parent & Caregiver Tools

Let's be honest — research can feel like a whole different language. However, learning to discern what's solid from what's just fluff is essential. You don't need a PhD to understand good information; you need the right tools. This section helps you break it down so you're not just Googling and guessing — you know what to trust.

A Parent's Guide to Research (PDF)

Navigating autism research can feel like solving a puzzle without the picture. This guide from the Organization for Autism Research simplifies complex info, helping parents and caregivers understand terms, identify solid evidence, and avoid.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Social Validity Questionnaire (DOC)

This questionnaire gauges whether an intervention seems practical, ethical, and realistic to users like parents and caregivers. It shows if a support plan fits real-world needs because even evidence-based interventions fail if families can't or won't use them. It bridges research and lived experience.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

Understanding Motivational Interviewing (PDF)

This guide covers Motivational Interviewing (MI), a respectful, person-centered method that helps people explore change. It's about asking the right questions, building trust, and helping them find their motivation—not pushing. Whether you're a parent, educator, or support provider, it shows how MI fosters meaningful conversations and guides behavior change compassionately. Ideal for those seeking tools that work with individuals, not on them.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

101 Ways to Say Good Job – CCETompkins (PDF)

Sometimes, finding the right words to encourage someone is difficult, especially avoiding repetitive “Good job.” This list offers 101 creative, positive ways to acknowledge effort and celebrate progress, helpful for parents, caregivers, teachers, or anyone aiming to boost confidence and motivation with meaningful praise.

Link: <https://ccetompkins.org/resources/101-ways-to-say-good-job>

(Find these PDFs in **Section 10, Subsection “Parent & Caregiver Tools”** of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



9 Characteristics of Effective Feedback – ABA Learning Lab

Giving feedback can be tricky, especially when trying to help someone grow without discouraging them. This article breaks down nine key things that make feedback helpful, like being timely, specific, and respectful. Whether you're a parent, teacher, or therapist, this is an excellent reminder that how you say something matters just as much as what you say. Super helpful if you're trying to support progress and maintain a positive outlook.

Link: <https://www.abalearninglab.com/9-characteristics-of-effective-feedback/>

Healthy Children – Ages & Stages

This resource gives a stage-by-stage look at how kids grow, from the newborn months through young adulthood. It's practical and written with parents in mind, covering milestones, health, and everyday questions without the heavy medical jargon. It's a great go-to if you want clear guidance on what's typical and when to ask more questions.

Link: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/Pages/default.aspx>



National Resources

Not everything has to be local to be helpful. These national organizations offer toolkits, helplines, guides, and support you can access from anywhere. Whether you're just starting out or trying to figure out your next steps, these are solid go-to spots for real information and real support—no matter where you live.

Autism Society

This nonprofit has been around for over 50 years, providing current info, advocacy tools, and local chapters offering real-life support. For involvement, services, or understanding autism from a community perspective, this is a good starting point.

Link: autismsociety.org

Autistic Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

Run by and for autistic people, ASAN focuses on disability rights, self-advocacy, and public policy. They offer toolkits, plain-language guides, and resources that center autistic voices. If you're looking for neurodiversity-affirming and community-driven support, this is a great place to start.

Link: autisticadvocacy.org

National Autism Center at May Institute

This organization offers evidence-based resources like the Parents' Guide to Evidence-Based Practice and Autism, and the Pathways for Parents webinars. Ideal for families seeking trustworthy, research-backed information to navigate treatment options.

Link: nationalautismcenter.org

The Arc

The Arc advocates for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, including autism. They offer support in areas like education, employment, and independent living, with a network of chapters nationwide.

Link: thearc.org



Madison House Autism Foundation – Housing & Community Solutions

This national nonprofit shines a spotlight on the housing crisis for autistic adults. They share research, toolkits, and models for inclusive communities across the U.S. If you're looking for big-picture resources on housing and long-term planning, this is one of the strongest national voices.

Link: <https://madisonhouseautism.org/>



Neighboring State Resources

Sometimes the support you're looking for isn't in Utah — it might be just across the border or a short trip away. This subsection highlights resources in nearby states that families often turn to when local options don't quite fit. From summer camps and theme parks to specialty stores and programs, these resources can offer unique experiences, tools, or services that are worth the drive or online order.

Camp Yofi – Georgia

Camp Yofi is an overnight family camp designed for children on the spectrum and their families. It's not in Utah, but it's worth mentioning for the way it blends community, connection, and fun. Families get a chance to relax, build relationships, and experience camp life together in a supportive environment.

Link: <https://www.acacamps.org/article/camping-magazine/camp-yofi-family-camp-children-autism>

Morgan's Wonderland – Texas

Camp Yofi is an overnight family camp designed for children on the spectrum and their families. It's not in Utah, but it's worth mentioning for the way it blends community, connection, and fun. Families get a chance to relax, build relationships, and experience camp life together in a supportive environment.

Link: <https://morganswonderland.org/>

Autism Community Store – Colorado

The Autism Community Store in Colorado is more than a shop — it's a hub designed for autistic individuals and their families. They carry sensory tools, therapy supplies, toys, books, and everyday items that make life easier and more accessible. Beyond products, the store also hosts events and serves as a community gathering place. While it's not in Utah, it's a unique one-stop resource many families find worth the trip or online order.

Link: <https://autismcommunitystore.com/>



LGBTQ+ Support & Belonging

For many autistic people and families, LGBTQ+ identity is part of the story too. These resources offer safe, affirming spaces where both identities are understood and celebrated. From mental health support to family guidance and community connection, they're designed to help you feel seen, supported, and truly belong.

Encircle – LGBTQ+ Family & Youth Support

Encircle is dedicated to creating safe spaces for LGBTQ+ youth and their families. They offer free therapy, friendship circles, creative classes, and drop-in centers across Utah. If you or someone you love needs connection, identity-affirming support, or just a place to be fully seen, this is a powerful resource.

Link: encircletogether.org

Encircle LGBTQ+ Resource Guide

This digital guide from Encircle is packed with affirming resources—think mental health tips, family support, coming out help, school rights, and more. It's made for LGBTQ+ youth, families, and allies navigating tough stuff with real support. It's clear, uplifting, and full of tools that make a difference.

Link: <https://issuu.com/encircletogether/docs/lgbtq-resource-digital-final>

Encircle Resource Library – LGBTQ+ Guides & Stories

This digital library is packed with affirming resources—think guides on starting a GSA, understanding gender, and heartfelt stories from LGBTQ+ youth and families. It's a go-to spot for anyone seeking clarity, support, or just a good read.

Link: encircletogether.org/library

Flourish Therapy Inc.

An affirming mental-health clinic offering counseling for individuals, couples, and families. Flourish provides trauma-informed, LGBTQIA+, and neurodiversity-affirming care, helping clients build emotional wellness and connection in a supportive environment.

Link: <https://www.flourishtherapy.org/>



Utah Pride Center

A statewide community hub offering mental-health services, peer groups, and advocacy for LGBTQ+ individuals and families. The center provides counseling, youth and adult programs, and inclusive events that celebrate identity, connection, and belonging.

Link: <https://utahpridecenter.org/>

Coming Out Handbook – The Trevor Project (PDF)

This is one of those must-haves. It breaks down identity, attraction, safety, and how to come out (or not) in a way that feels right for *you*. It has reflection tools, identity maps, mental health check-ins, and plenty of validation. Whether you're out, questioning, or somewhere in between, this guide meets you where you are—no pressure, just support.

Link: bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Find this in **Section 10, Subsection** *"LGBTQ+ Support & Belonging"* of the digital folder, or access it by scanning the QR code.)



References

All the resources in this handbook originate from credible sources—peer-reviewed research, trusted organizations, or lived-experience content created by the autism community. Not every source is academic, but each one was chosen for its clarity, accuracy, and value to real people. I believe in citing sources and giving credit where it's due, but printing out 15+ pages of references? That's not exactly eco-friendly (or necessary).

So instead of adding extra paper weight, you can find everything—**every article, PDF, toolkit, video, and resource**—listed in one easy-to-access file.

View the full reference list here:

[Resource Handbook - Doc Clegg - Version 2.2.0 References](#)
bit.ly/resourcehandbook

(Just open the digital folder and look for that exact title.)

This way, you still get all the transparency and citations, minus the paper waste.



About the Creator – Doc Clegg

Doc Clegg (They/Them) is an advocate, technologist, and storyteller dedicated to fostering belonging and empowering neurodiverse individuals. Diagnosed with autism at age 12, they have embraced their lived experiences with Autism and ADHD as integral to their identity and work.



Doc holds an Associate of Applied Science in Information Systems/Technology and is currently pursuing a Bachelor's in IT with a minor in Autism Studies at Utah Valley University. They serve as an **Administrative Office Assistant** at the Melisa Nellesen Center for Autism, where they support operations, communications, and art installations such as the *Super Spectrum Showcase*. As a member of the leadership team for UVU's Autism Club, Autism Incorporated, Doc helps lead projects such as sensory kits and collaborations with the Passages program, which strengthens peer support and belonging for neurodivergent students.

In 2025, Doc was honored with the **Michael Sprout Community Spirit Award** by the Autism Resources of Utah County Council (ARUCC) for their outstanding dedication, support, and service to the Autism community in Utah County.

Doc's advocacy emphasizes **empowering Autistic voices**, building a **community of belonging**, and ensuring programs are designed *with* Autistic individuals, not just *for* them.

Their vision also extends to the wider neurodivergent community, including **ADHD, OCD, and other lived experiences**. Their current special interest research focuses on the **ethics and effectiveness of OCD treatment when autism and OCD are present**, reflecting a commitment to bridging gaps between lived experience, research, and practice.



Resource Handbook

Version 2.2.0

Thanks for taking the time to flip through this handbook. Whether you're a parent, teacher, provider, or autistic person yourself, I hope you found something in here that made things feel a little clearer, a little easier, or just more doable.

Every resource was carefully chosen to be practical, respectful, and useful in real life. You don't have to know everything or do it all at once—just start where you are and use what helps.

(Find this in the digital folder or access it by going to bit.ly/resourcehandbook or scanning the QR code.)



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