



Autism Services - Family Programs Community STORY

Autism Services of Saskatoon: Family Programs

By Megan Seto, Family Programs Coordinator

Offered through Autism Services, [Family Programs](#) provide individuals diagnosed with or waiting for a diagnosis of Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) the opportunity to participate in recreational activities and therapeutic programs, which help to engage and develop social skills. Some of the programs offered include: music and art therapy, gymnastics, dance, strength training, swimming, and social programs to promote friendship building and social opportunities.

Our Family Programs provide real-world experience for children, youth and adults to build social skills and develop peer relationships. Participants are provided additional staff support to help learn to navigate and succeed in settings that could be challenging. This builds confidence so they can grow and thrive. Participants have reported being less anxious and more engaged in activities than they were before attending our programs. Some participants have grown in their speaking skills and ability to transition from one situation to another.

It's always a joy to see participants growing and expanding their capacities through our programs. Seeing the smiles light up on participants' faces as they succeed in trying new things is incredibly fulfilling. Often, these participants would not otherwise have these kinds of opportunities. The participants' parents are thrilled, too. It brings parents joy to see their children less anxious in the world. Through the real-world capacity building of our programs, families can do more recreational activities together that they weren't able to do before as these environments were previously challenging.

"My son and I had an amazing experience with summer day camp. He thoroughly looked forward to going every week! It couldn't have come at a better time for me, as it prepared us for my son starting Pre-K in the fall. Before summer day camp I had never dropped off my son with a baby sitter or daycare, so leaving him under someone else's care was very new. Both of our anxieties were soon at ease due to the welcoming and accommodating staff at autism services! During the first few sessions my son was struggling with transitioning and would often be very upset when it was time to leave but the staff helped him throughout the day and would successfully transition him from play time to home time with no stress or anxiety. Thank you so much for everything and making this such a wonderful experience for both my son and I."

- 2021 Summer Day Camp Parent Participant

The City of Saskatoon has proclaimed April 2022 as [Autism Awareness & Acceptance Month in Saskatoon.](#)

[Autism Services of Saskatoon is hosting the following events:](#)

- **Window Walk:** where people decorate their windows with puzzle pieces to celebrate autism;
- **Virtual Walk for Autism:** where families and individuals walk in their neighborhoods to start conversations and raise awareness and acceptance;
- **Virtual Panel:** where members of our organization answer questions and have a conversation about autism in our community.

1 in 66 children in Canada are diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). Many people have a connection to someone with autism and yet there is much that is still misunderstood about ASD. Raising awareness provides public education, promotes inclusion, and normalizes ASD in order to increase acceptance for autistic individuals and their families. This improves the quality of life for those with autism and makes for better communities.
