



GUIDEBOOK

Building a better world together.



what is autism?

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), refers to a broad range of conditions characterized by challenges with social skills, repetitive behaviors, speech and nonverbal communication.

We know that there is not one autism but many subtypes, most influenced by a combination of genetic and environmental factors. Because autism is a spectrum disorder, each person with autism has a distinct set of strengths and challenges. The ways in which people with autism learn, think and problem-solve can range from highly skilled to severely challenged. Some people with ASD may require significant support in their daily lives, while others may need less support and live entirely independently.

Our vision

A world where all people with autism can reach their full potential.

Our impact

Autism Speaks is enhancing lives today and accelerating a spectrum of solutions for tomorrow.

Our mission

Autism Speaks is dedicated to promoting solutions, across the spectrum and throughout the life span, for the needs of people with autism and their families. We do this through advocacy and support; increasing understanding and acceptance of people with autism and advancing research into causes and better interventions for autism spectrum disorder and related conditions.



Autism Speaks U (ASU) is a program that supports students, faculty and alumni in their awareness, advocacy and fundraising efforts for Autism Speaks.

Chapters are made up of students who want to make a difference in the autism community. Many chapters include students on the autism spectrum or students who have family members or friends on the spectrum.

The program's inaugural event took place at Penn State University in 2006 and ASU launched nationally in 2008. Autism Speaks University events have raised millions of dollars and Autism Speaks Walk collegiate teams have brought in millions more!

Your ASU staff lead at Autism Speaks guides students through the process of starting chapters and planning events, while connecting them with their local community and college students across the country.

Why should you join?

Today autism is considered a major public health crisis but it is a major social concern as well. Nearly two thirds of autistic children between the ages of 6 and 15 have been bullied and many adults report feelings of isolation. More than 85 percent remain unemployed although many are ready and willing to work. As a student leader, you can help your school change the conversation and make a real difference in lives of the autistic community.

Joining or starting an ASU chapter will help you learn to serve as a leader and autism advocate on campus and in the local community. Here are a few other reasons why you should join the ASU family:

Help create a world where all autistic people can reach their full potential.

Gain philanthropic leadership experience for your resume and earn volunteer hours.

Acquire skills in marketing, fundraising, event planning, volunteer development and community outreach.

Connect with leaders, expand your knowledge and future growth opportunities.

Collaborate with other ASU students nationwide.





AUTISM SPEAKS U CHAPTER

Below are the steps to becoming an Autism Speaks U chapter. A school can register on the [Autism Speaks U website](https://autismspeaks.org/u) anytime throughout the year.

1. Register on the ASU website.

- Visit autismspeaks.org/u and click on the “Register” button.
- Be sure to express your interest in starting an ASU chapter on your campus.

2. Set up a preliminary call with your ASU staff lead.

- Once registered on the website, you will receive an email from your *ASU staff lead* about setting up an introductory phone call.

3. Take action.

- Begin working on the action items provided by Autism Speaks, including contacting your *Student Life* office and requesting a letter recognizing your status as a “*Registered Student Organization (RSO)*”.

4. Follow up.

- Once you have received your *RSO* letter, a follow up call will be scheduled between the chapter president, vice president and the *ASU staff lead* to review your chapter’s submission progress.

Here are some of the things that will be covered on the introductory phone call:

- Tell us about yourself (your major, where you’re from, personal connection to autism, etc.).
- Why do you want to start an ASU chapter on your campus?
- What is “student life” like at your school?
- Gain more information about ASU and next steps to becoming a chapter.



Once all the action items are completed, the documents will be reviewed to confer “provisional” status and recognition by Autism Speaks. The chapter’s community and fundraising efforts will be assessed after one year for final approval of “official” status.

New chapters must adhere to this process to ensure the future of the chapter and its ability to grow and succeed. Since student leadership changes frequently, it is essential to have a strong foundation in place for each chapter.

At the end of the first year as a “provisional chapter,” chapters will be evaluated to determine their readiness for “official” Autism Speaks U chapter status.

Evaluation assessment is based on:

- Participation in Spring/Fall office hour advisement calls
- Attendance on all webinar calls
- World Autism Month participation (Spring semester only)
- Submission of Spring/Fall semester survey/report
- Hosting a large-scale fundraisers in Spring/Fall semesters

ASU Chapter Benefits

Provisional Chapters Receive:

- Access to ASU downloadable templates and resources.

Official Chapters Receive:

- Listing as “Official Chapter” on the ASU website.
- Custom ASU chapter banner with school name (used year round).
- Approval to have a Facebook account for the chapter (created by the ASU national office, **DO NOT** create a Facebook account on your own).
- Custom chapter logos to be used on marketing materials and social media sites.



STARTING AN ASU

EXECUTIVE BOARD

EXECUTIVE BOARD POSITIONS

Whether your chapter has a status of provisional or official, it is imperative to have an e-board of at least five members. These members are responsible for organizing and planning events, having general chapter meetings at least once a month as well as separate e-board meetings, and ensuring the chapter's overall success. Once official status is gained and more members are acquired, consider adding in additional positions (secretary, recruitment chair, greek liaison chair, etc.). Larger chapters should add "assistant" positions to train future officers who will be succeeding them (finance assistant; events assistant; marketing and membership assistant, etc.).

President

Oversees chapter logistics and all e-board positions; organizes, plans and runs meetings; acts as point of contact for ASU national office as well as for the chapter and school; in charge of submitting paper work to ASU national office; attends all advisement calls, webinars and other scheduled meetings (if possible); can act as second signature on bank accounts; hosts elections in November for a January-December term.

Vice President

Supports the chapter president; runs meetings if the president is unable to attend; 2nd point of contact for ASU national office and school; assists vice president of finance in securing rooms and venues for chapter meetings/events; can act as second signature on bank accounts.

Vice President of Finance

Establishes and maintains chapter's bank account (when applicable); keeps record of expenses and deposits; prepares annual/large event budgets; processes reimbursements; deposits all funds raised and sends quarterly/semester check plus accounting spreadsheets to the ASU national office.

Vice President of Events

Plans and executes all of the chapter's fundraising events; contacts clubs and organizations to partner on events; selects chapter members to serve on fundraising committee for large events, conducts meetings for those events and delegates tasks and roles to those members (tasks include gaining connections and vendors).

Vice President of Marketing & Membership

Creates plan for how the chapter will get promoted on campus and in the community; posts 2-3 times a week; designs advertising materials and submits all designs to ASU national office for approval; engages students who express interest in joining and informs students of upcoming meetings and events; executes a strategic plan to promote chapter to potential new members.



Successful provisional chapters reach – or surpass – their fundraising goals, meet the minimum requirements of local volunteering, have a good rapport with the school, attend important semester events held by Autism Speaks and submit any important documents. See below for a broader explanation.

1. Membership Goals

- Aim to secure 10-20 active members by the end of the year. An active member is someone who attends at least 50% of the meetings and 75% of the chapter's events.
- Aim to secure 30-50 total members by the end of the year. A general member is on the chapter's mailing list and shows up occasionally throughout the semester.

2. Local Volunteering Goals

- It is very important to maintain a strong relationship with the local community. Chapters should volunteer at least 3 times per semester.
 - **Plan in August for September-November.**
 - **Plan in January for February-April.**
 - **NOTE: Tri-semester schools should still plan during their first month of the new semester.**

3. Fundraising Goals

- Chapters should aim to fundraise a minimum of \$1,500-\$2,000 in their first year.

4. Meetings/Webinars

- Attend meetings and webinars held each semester. Webinar dates and times will be emailed to officers at the beginning of each semester.

5. Semester Survey/Report

- Make sure the chapter is submitting their semester survey/report on time.

6. Chapter Advisement Meetings

- These calls happen in August/September and are to prepare for the upcoming semester and school year. A link to schedule these calls will be sent via email.



To maintain official status chapters will gradually increase their fundraising goals, meet the minimum requirements of local volunteering, maintain good rapport with the school, attend important semester events held by Autism Speaks and submit required timely documents to Autism Speaks. See below for a broader explanation.

1. Membership Goals

- Once official status is gained, we ask that the chapter:
 - ***Secure or maintain 20-30 active members by the end of your first year.***
 - ***Secure or maintain 50-80 total members by the end of your first year.***

2. Local Autism Community Goals

- It is very important to maintain a strong relationship with the local community. Chapters should volunteer at least 3 times per semester.
 - ***Plan in August for September-November.***
 - ***Plan in January for February-April.***
 - ***NOTE: Tri-semester schools should still plan during their first month of the new semester.***

3. Fundraising Goals

- Chapters should aim to raise more than \$3,000 every year.

4. Meetings/Webinars

- Attend meetings and webinars held each semester. Webinar dates and times will be emailed to officers at the beginning of each semester.

5. Semester Survey/Report

- Make sure the chapter is submitting their semester survey/report on time.

6. Chapter Advisement Meetings

- These calls happen in August/September and are to prepare for the upcoming semester and school year. A link to schedule these calls will be sent via email.



The Chapter's Vice President of Finance is responsible for managing the chapter's bank account and budget.

VP of Finance Responsibilities

- 1. Work with the Autism Speaks staff lead for instructions prior to setting up a Chapter bank account. (bank account is optional)** Set up a call with your staff lead at Autism Speaks to make sure the account is opened correctly.
- 2. Create a budget for chapter events and keeping event expenses under 8%-10%** of what is raised for Autism Speaks.
 - *If your projected event revenue is \$1,000, the event expenses should NOT exceed \$80-\$100.*
- 3. Submit all funds raised to the ASU national office** at the end of spring and fall semester or quarter (before leaving for break). Send funds in the form of check or money order. **DO NOT SEND CASH.**
- 2. When opening up a bank account for your ASU chapter, try getting an account through the school** by going to your student activities office (a lot of schools offer it this way).
- 3. If the school does not offer an on-campus banking solution, the next option is opening a bank account at an on-campus bank** or the closest bank to campus.
 - **NOTE: The chapter's bank account is your local student group's bank account not an official Autism Speaks bank account.**
 - **Look for a bank account that offers free checking so you don't get hit with fees!**
- 4. Have two people on the account** (the vice president of finance and president or vice president) and have all checks require dual signatures.

Chapter Bank Account

- 1. If your chapter would like to open up a bank account,** you must set up a call with your staff lead at Autism Speaks to make sure the account is opened correctly.
- 5. When the vice president of finance's tenure is up,** make sure to put the successor's name on the bank account along with the second name and remove the current names on it.



Chapters are required to host one small-scale fundraising event each month and two large-scale fundraising events per year.

Fundraising

- Small-scale fundraisers can be marketed and promoted two to three weeks prior to the event, by tabling on campus, posting flyers around school and sharing to social.
- Large-scale fundraisers take long-term planning, requiring the full semester to plan and execute.
- We encourage chapters to create event fundraising sites for their large-scale fundraisers and do online fundraising. [Click here](#) to register your event for Fundraise Your Way. Easier to access. Easier to promote. Easier, period!

TIER 1: Example Small-Scale Fundraisers

Coffee and Sweet Treats: Hold a bake sale (or purchase large containers of coffee and donuts, cupcakes, etc.) in a busy part of campus and sell items for \$1-\$3 depending on purchase cost.

Restaurant Night/Week: Invite local restaurants to participate in fundraising days/nights and donate a percentage of proceeds to your chapter. If the restaurant has a food truck that will park on campus, even better!

Puzzle Piece Campaign: Sell Autism Speaks puzzle piece cards for \$1-\$2 each at your school and in the local community and hang them up on campus to help raise awareness. Puzzle piece cards can be sold virtually through a fundraising event site or at an in-person tabling event.

Bingo/Game Night: Host a bingo night with small prizes or ASU swag – bonus points for making the bingo night a theme or costume-friendly!

Halloween “Boo” Bags / Valentine Candy Grams: Have people sign up and pay in advance to have a goodie bag delivered to a recipient of their choosing. Students can pick up their bags at a designated time, or members can deliver to front doors.

TIER 2: Example Large-Scale Fundraisers

On campus walk or endurance event: Walk Your Way or TeamUp Your Way are a great way to raise funds. Run or walk, whenever, wherever and however works best for you. Join together with your friends, family and fellow ASU members to fundraise for Autism Speaks.

Sporting Event Tournaments: Host a football, dodgeball, pickleball or kickball tournament on campus and have teams pay an entry fee. Encourage other campus groups or Greek Life to participate.

Dinner/Dessert Meal Kits: Can't host a spaghetti dinner event or bake sale? Consider purchasing the items (or even better, having a sponsor purchase and donate items) packaging individually and selling as a meal kit!

Raffle Events: Reach out to local and large-scale companies and ask if they have items they'd be willing to donate. Have friends, family and community members purchase raffle tickets. This can also be incorporated into a bingo/game night or other event.

Start a Kindness Campaign: The Autism Speaks Kindness Campaign encourages acceptance, understanding and inclusion with daily acts of kindness. It's a great way to celebrate kindness any day of the year but especially around World Autism Month in April or World Kindness Day in November. Your commitment to kindness gets us one step closer to a world where all people with autism can reach their full potential.



Fundraise Your Way is a tool available for an ASU fundraiser. Fundraising sites are typically used for larger scale events that have a minimum fundraising goal of \$500.

1. How to get started.

- Choose the type of fundraiser you'd like to launch. (fitness event, tournament, in person event, online fundraising challenge).
- Register as an ASU team [here](#).
- Choose your team captain.
- Set your team fundraising goal.
- Customize your team page.
- Once completed, you can recruit team members and start fundraising.

2. Why should our chapter use a fundraising site?

Fundraise Your Way is one way to offer an online fundraising platform.

- Donations can be made using a credit or debit card.
- Sites are directly connected to the backend of Autism Speaks, so once a donation is made it comes right back to us.

- Can be shared on social media platforms giving you easy access toward collecting donations from friends and family across the globe.
- Donations are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

3. How Does a Site Work Once it is Live?

- Chapter members should register as an individual in order to receive their own personal fundraising page to begin peer-to-peer fundraising.
- Peer-to-peer fundraising is when you empower your members to raise funds on behalf of Autism Speaks by sharing the cause with friends and family.
- Members should post their event link and their individual page link on social media platforms and/or email it to friends and family members.
- Have a contest within your chapter and award a prize to the individual who raises the most!



Autism Speaks Walk is the world's largest event to raise awareness and funds in the autism community. Create a team with your chapter members, friends and family! Chapters should register, fundraise, and participate in the Walk closest to their school.

Find a Walk

- You can find the closest Walk to your campus here: autismspeakswalk.org
- If the closest Walk is too far, create your own Chapter Walk team through: [Walk Your Way](#)

Your Walk Team

- Create a Walk team with the president or vice president being designated as the team captain.

Autism Speaks Data Services will be able to track any donations coming in from your chapter.

- Share your team page with friends and family encouraging them to join your team donate.



Work with other clubs, organizations and academic departments to recruit new members, fill e-board positions and host fundraising and awareness events.

Center For Students with Disabilities

- Reach out to your school's *Center for Students with Disabilities Office* and ask if they can send out an email announcing the chapter being established.
- For chapters already established, reach out to your school's *Center for Students with Disabilities Office* asking them to send out emails announcing when the next chapter meeting and/or event is.

Student Clubs/Organizations/Academic Departments

- Social, professional and service fraternities and sororities
- Greek Life organizations
- National Student Speech Language Hearing Association (NSSLHA)
- Best Buddies Program
- Clubs in education/special education, neurology, psychology, marketing and communication
- Sports Teams
- Academic Departments
 - *Sports, education, marketing, speech and hearing, communications, etc.*



April is World Autism Month and April 2 is World Autism Awareness Day. Autism Speaks kicks off the month on April 2. Getting involved is fun and easy, join us to increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism.

Making a world of difference.

All chapters should participate in *World Autism Month* activities. By participating, the chapter will gain exposure on campus and increase understanding and acceptance of people with autism throughout the school and the community.

Tips to Participate in World Autism Month

- **Start Early!** Share your World Autism Month plans with the *Student Activities Office* and school president/chancellor during the first week in January.
- **Get media coverage** by contacting the local newspaper letting them know what the chapter is trying to accomplish. They can run a story about the chapter's efforts and encourage the school and community to participate.

Below are a few ways for the chapter to raise autism awareness in April.

- “Puzzle Piece Campaign” in the main campus center building (Student Union; Student Activities Center; etc.).
- Pass out informational flyers with Autism Speaks silicone bracelets, puzzle piece stickers and/or blue candy. Consider creating goodie bags to deliver!
- Post signs on campus with facts such as “Autism affects 1 in 44 children and 1 in 45 adults.”
- Organize a “Wear All Blue Day” where students and faculty sport blue to show their support.
- Sell blue glow sticks, cotton candy, ice cream and any other blue snacks.
- Organize a panel on autism and invite college students on the spectrum, family members, local professors, clinicians, researchers and Autism Speaks staff to come speak to members of the campus community.
- Start a Kindness campaign on campus. See the “Events and fundraising” page for details!



It is important that the chapter adheres to the branding guidelines listed below. Chapters are required to submit proofs of all promotional materials (ex: flyers, t-shirts, banners, posters, etc.) to the Autism Speaks U national office for approval prior to use.

LOGOS TO USE

When the chapter has completed steps for starting a chapter and spent one year as a “provisional Autism Speaks U chapter,” it will be given custom chapter logos to use on all marketing and recruitment materials.

THESE ARE THE ONLY LOGOS THE CHAPTER IS AUTHORIZED TO USE. See below for examples:



Vertical Logo



Horizontal Logo



Brandmark

LOGOS NOT TO USE

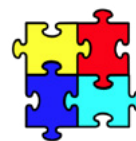
Use of the Autism Speaks master brandmark should not be used for individual student or chapter activities without written permission from Autism Speaks. In addition, chapters should refrain from the use of any other logos that are not ASU chapter logos, whenever promoting Autism Speaks fundraising activities. Examples include:



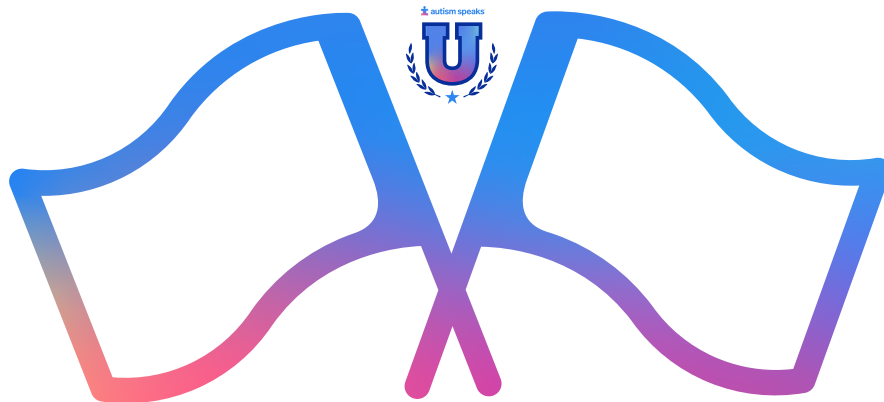
Autism Speaks Corporate Logo



Autism Awareness Ribbon



Multi Colored Puzzle Pieces



Reach out and get started!

The staff would like to thank you for your support and dedication to Autism Speaks by starting and maintaining an Autism Speaks U chapter. We are so lucky to work with such amazing students each and every day. We hope the skills you acquire through fundraising, volunteering and leadership opportunities and the experiences you have make a meaningful impact on your professional careers and social responsibility in the future.

AUTISM SPEAKS SCHOOL AND YOUTH PROGRAMS

Theresa Sanchez
Senior Coordinator,
Nationwide Peer-to-Peer Programs
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LOCAL AUTISM SPEAKS FIELD STAFF

Each Autism Speaks U chapter is assigned a local *Autism Speaks Field Staff* contact. Your local *Field Staff* contact is an excellent resource to you and can work with your chapter on:

- Volunteer opportunities within the local autism community.
- Involvement in local Autism Speaks Walks.

Email your local Autism Speaks staff lead for questions, resources and support materials.