

FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Fall 2019



sdsu center for **autism**
+ developmental disorders

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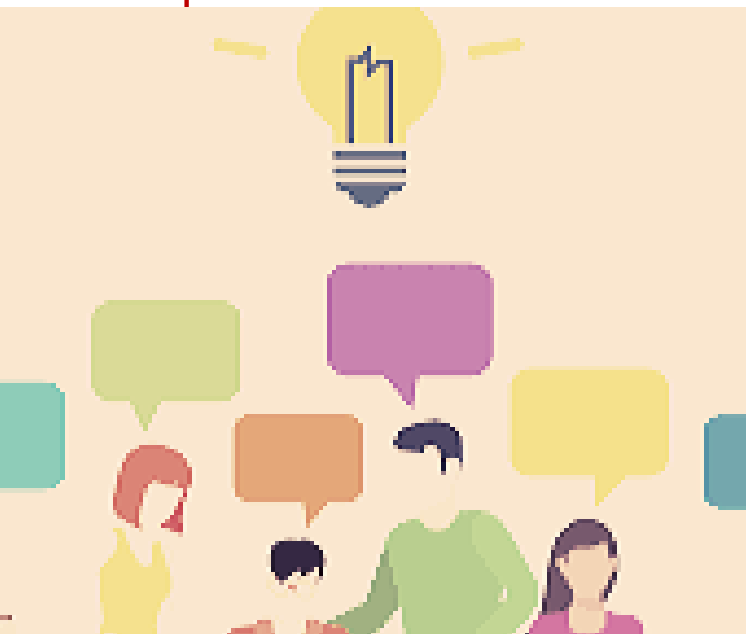
OVERVIEW

Over the course of several months in Fall 2019, the San Diego State University (SDSU) Center for Autism and Developmental Disorders held focus group meetings and discussions with members of the autism community.

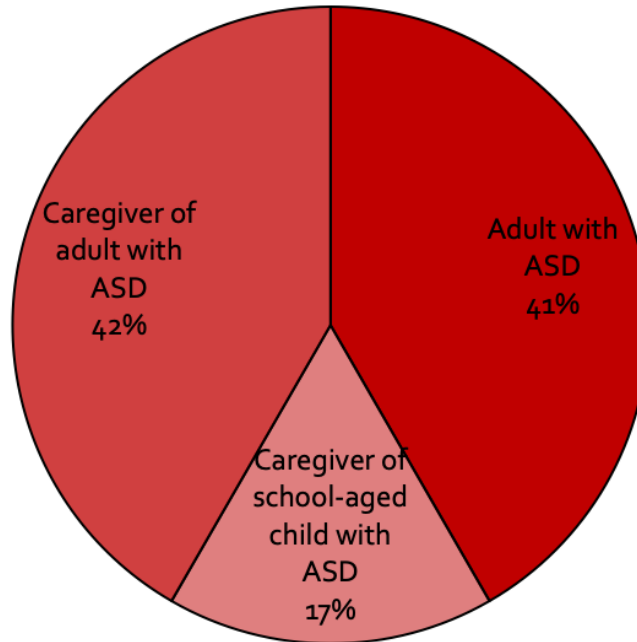
The purpose of these meetings was to learn directly from the members of the community about their current needs, to help us understand how the Center could best serve the autism community in San Diego County. Focus groups were advertised on social media and a total of 12 community members took part in the discussions, across four separate meetings. The following is a summary of the findings from these focus groups.

QUESTIONS

1. What is your relationship to the autism community?
2. What seminars, workshops, and social events related to autism have you attended in the community?
3. What workshop topics would you like us to offer?
4. What did you like and dislike about previously attended events?
5. What barriers prevented you from attending workshops and social events?



PARTICIPANTS



12

Total number of participants

Number of participants per focus group ranged from 2-5.

58%

Caregivers

Of the participating caregivers, two were mothers of nonverbal individuals with ASD.

54 MI

Farthest distance traveled to attend

Participants traveled via private car and public transportation.

92%

Discovered focus group through social media

Facebook and Meetup were the most popular platforms.

"I've had a lot of problems interacting with my coworkers and bosses... We have to learn to interact successfully with neurotypicals."

-Adult with ASD, on difficulties with workplace communication






SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS, AND SOCIAL EVENTS

What makes a workshop or social event **appealing**?




- Catering to a variety of learning styles
- Shared community (lack of judgment)
- Childcare available for the duration of the event
- Having clear objectives
- Time to discuss/process information
- Opportunities for social interaction
- Free or low-cost

A selection of suggested...

Workshop topics

-  Employment
-  Transition planning
-  Social skills
-  Autism awareness
-  Law enforcement training

Social events

-  Mindfulness
-  Caregiver and sibling care
-  Outdoor events

What makes a workshop or social event **difficult** to attend?

- Passive learning
- Large groups
- Geographic distance / access to public transportation
- Language barriers
- Activities that restrict movement and/or require quiet
- Level of functioning

IDEAS AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS TO BARRIERS

The focus groups generated some solutions to the many challenges in attending a workshop or social event.

- Partner with other organizations to provide events in other areas of the county.
- Advertise across a variety of marketing tools (social media, email, website).
- Use trial-and-error to determine best days and times for events.
- Provide simultaneous events for kids and caregivers (or provide childcare).
- Allow remote workshop attendance through teleconferencing or webcast.
- Alternate the settings for events (not always indoors).



PROPOSED ACTIONS



PROVIDE research-based resources for transition-aged population

Many resources developed by Center scientists (Drs. Bonnie Kraemer and Laura Hall) during the Center on Secondary Education for Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder (CSESA) project will soon be made available through a link on our website.

PARTNER with SDSU researchers and community organizations to deliver high-quality workshops


Workshops to look out for in 2020:


- Romantic relationships in ASD
- Challenging behaviors
- Microbusinesses
- Evidence-based practices

CONNECT the San Diego autism community through social events


Families and individuals affected by autism play an important role in the development of our San Diego culture and society!

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We thank our focus group participants for sharing their experiences and ideas. We look forward to serving the San Diego autism community together with you in 2020 and beyond!

