



IS YOUR COMMUNITY
INCLUSIVE**STRONG**?



MADISON
HOUSE
AUTISM
FOUNDATION

WWW.MADISONHOUSEAUTISM.ORG

#INCLUSIVESTRONG

IS YOUR COMMUNITY #INCLUSIVESTRONG?

A community is a social unit defined by something all members share in common. It could be a geographic place, an ideal or belief, or any number of things strong enough to knit us together. Perhaps more important than our ability to recognize and distinguish differences between human beings and our environment is the ability to knit those diverse elements into a healthy whole. The strongest, most resilient communities are those powerful enough to recognize, value, and include the greatest diversity.



WHY IS INCLUSIVITY STRENGTH?



Imagine that our goal was to build physical strength. What would happen if we were to focus our attention only on our bicep, ignoring our other arm, core, chest, back and shoulder muscles? Not only would we be limiting our potential strength, but we would likely cause ourselves injury. That's because our muscles are interdependent. Lack of attention to one muscle will impact how strong and resilient another muscle can be. The same is true of our communities.

We live in a complex web of interdependence. When we fail to account for and include any person in our community, it limits our potential and leaves us vulnerable. Alternatively, the more effectively we attend to and include the diverse expressions of life around us, the stronger we as a community become and the more resilient we are against injury. Inclusivity makes us strong!

WHAT IS NEURODIVERSITY?

Neurodiversity recognizes the diverse ways that individuals process information including neurodivergent conditions such as autism, ADHD, intellectual disability, dyslexia, dyspraxia, anxiety, OCD and more. "Neurodivergent" individuals have brain functions that differ significantly from those who are generally considered to be neurologically typical or "neurotypical."



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BENEFITS OF NEURO-INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES:

There are many benefits to communities which are intentional about being neuro-inclusive.

1. Inclusive housing options increase stability, reduce homelessness, create more opportunities, and lower healthcare costs.
2. Supportive environments create pathways for valuable talents and skills to enter our workforce and make meaningful contributions.
3. Opportunities for social engagement and recreation improve mental and physical health.



WHAT IS MADISON HOUSE AUTISM FOUNDATION DOING TO INCREASE INCLUSIVITY?

Madison House Autism Foundation works to help communities nationwide become more neuro-inclusive through education, advocacy and action.

- We work to [raise the visibility](#) of adults with autism, the lives they lead, and the common barriers that currently stand in the way of meaningful participation.
- We advocate for neuro-inclusive housing and employment opportunities and [provide resources](#) to project starters and decision makers who are committed to a neuro-inclusive vision for the future.
- Finally, we work in the community in which our national office is based to [provide services and opportunities](#) for adults with autism, I/DD and other differences to participate in community life.



We believe that inclusive communities are strong communities. You can help us continue our work to educate and inspire innovation in creating neuro-inclusive communities across the nation. Join us in this exciting movement now!

Learn more about the work we do at www.madisonhouseautism.org/inclusivestrong

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NEURO-INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY CHECKLIST

This checklist is designed to help identify ways to create more neuro-inclusive communities. We can all take little steps to come closer to the ultimate goal. We are stronger together and if we each do our part, we can create a community that is inclusive and welcoming to ALL!

HOUSING



Universal Design: Design for everyone in all spaces

Cognitive Accessibility Features: Signage with simple visual indicators

Easy-to-Clean Features: Make cleaning & maintenance easier

Extra-Durable Features: Building & unit are tough and resistant

Recreational Amenities: Building offers shared recreational activities

Relaxation Amenities: Building offers space to unwind

Pedestrian-Oriented: Located in a walkable neighborhood

Sensory Friendly Design: Designed with low-sensory-input strategies

Security Features: Offers features such as keycard access, security cameras, etc.

Smart Home Features: Includes devices, appliances and other technologies

Transit Access: Conveniently located near public transit

Personal Preference: Physical amenities are determined by the individual

*Nomenclature is from ["A Place in the World: Fueling Housing & Community Options for Adults with Autism and other Neurodiversities"](#)

EMPLOYMENT



Be open to new forms of interviewing: visual resumes, in-person presentations, staff support, social stories...

Provide regular training on workplace inclusivity and diversity for all employees

Become educated and educate staff on learning differences and reasonable accommodations

Be open to different forms of communication: sign language, PECS, etc.

Consider having a modified training and/or employee handbook (universal design)

Consider starting an employee mentor program

Display posters promoting disability inclusion

Create a plan for work before individuals start work to ensure accommodations are in place

Use inclusive, first-person language

Conduct periodic evaluations and check-ins with employees

Present information/tasks in a variety of ways: checklist, task board, etc.

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NEURO-INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY EXAMPLES

The following examples are trailblazers in creating neuro-inclusive communities:

HOUSING

FIRST PLACE AZ

Sensory-Friendly Design: non-fluorescent lighting, natural light, non-toxic low VOC materials

Cognitive Accessibility Features: color palettes and signage, including visual symbols and Braille for multi use functions and way-finding

Security Features: keycard access, concierge

Smart Home Technology

Relaxation Space: Zen room

Recreation Space: organic garden, swimming pool, patio, barbecue, fitness and game rooms, Lego and reading lounges

Transit Access



EMPLOYMENT

MADISON FIELDS

Educated Staff: Has staff who are educated and trained regarding learning differences and reasonable accommodations

Individualized Work Plan: Creates a plan for work before individuals start work - talks to Job Coaches, mentors, Employment Specialists, and individuals to ensure expectations are set and accommodations are in place prior to employment

Person-first Language: Uses inclusive, person-first language

Variety in Communications: Is open to different forms of communication (e.g. sign language, communication device, PECS) and helps other employees and volunteers learn/understand different ways individuals communicate

Check-ins: Conducts periodic evaluations and check-ins with employees

Visual Cues: Utilizes checklists, task boards, and images to present information

