



Neurodiversity in the Workplace

A Collaborative National Conference

October 27–29, 2024 | The Westin Washington, DC Downtown

Agenda | #Neurodiversity2024

Event Schedule

Sunday, October 27

4 – 7 p.m.

Potomac Registration Desk
Ballroom Level

Registration Open

5 – 6 p.m.

Blossom
Second Level

VIP Event: Meet the Directors of “In A Different Key”

Meet two award-winning filmmakers! Producer/Directors Caren Zucker and John Donovan will personally introduce a screening of their documentary film “In a Different Key”.

If you’re interested in attending the VIP meet & greet, you can review our sponsorship opportunities that include VIP access [here](#).

6 – 8:30 p.m.

River Birch
Meeting Room Level

Open to All: “In A Different Key” Screening & Panel Discussion

Winner of the RFK Humanitarian Prize, the movie covers a remarkable range of matters relevant to our autism community with sparkling insight, engaging storytelling, and a few fascinating surprises. Q&A to follow. Click [here](#) to see the trailer.





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Monday, October 28

7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.
Potomac Registration Desk
Ballroom Level

Registration Open

7:30 – 8:45 a.m.
Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Breakfast

8:45 – 9:30 a.m.
Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Opening Keynote

Catarina Rivera, MEd, MPH, CPACC, Public Speaker, DEI Consultant, Founder of Blindish Latina

Catarina Rivera, MEd, MPH, CPACC, is a disability public speaker, content creator, and diversity, equity and inclusion consultant with over 14 years of experience in the public sector. Catarina works with companies to improve disability awareness, inclusion and accessibility. She is the founder of Blindish Latina, a platform smashing disability stigmas through storytelling and advocacy. Catarina has worn hearing aids from a young age, and was diagnosed with a progressive vision disability at 17 years old. She is a member of the global KeyNote Women Speakers Directory. She has been featured on Nasdaq.com, ABC News Live, POPSUGAR and Telemundo. She was named one of LinkedIn's Top Voices in Disability Advocacy and is a 2024 Webby Awards Nominee. Catarina is a TEDx speaker, and her talk "Creating Inclusive Workplaces for All" has over 44,000 views to date.

9:30 – 9:45 a.m.
Potomac Ballroom Foyer
Ballroom Level

Networking Break

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.
Meeting Room 15
Meeting Room Level

Break-Out Sessions 1

Become an Ally to Autistic Colleagues With INTENT—The Interactive Tool for Empathy in Neurotypicals

Kathy Dow-Burger and Elizabeth Redcay, University of Maryland; Andrew Begel, Carnegie Mellon University

The INteractive Tool for Empathy in NeuroTypicals (INTENT) is a transformational visual novel in the form of a web-based 3D video game, designed to educate non-autistic workers how to be better allies toward their autistic colleagues. INTENT promotes inclusive workplaces through empathy training, reducing everyday challenges for neurodivergent people and improving their ability to thrive and succeed at work. INTENT will foster the creation of innovative and inclusive shared spaces by enabling those with diagnosed and undiagnosed sensory and language processing differences to be more fully accepted and included. This will help meet the expertise, production and employment needs our current and future economies demand.





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Monday, October 28 (continued)

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.
Meeting Room 10
Meeting Room Level

Cultivating Company Culture: The Power of Marketing to Fuel Belonging in the Workplace

Julia Cosentino-Tich, Chase Brexton Health Care

Workplaces have the potential to be transformative — delivering value, pride, purpose, and financial independence. However, without proper empathy and knowledge from company leaders and team members, they can be agonizing, triggering environments for those of us who are neurodiverse. At Chase Brexton Health Care, a federally qualified health center with five locations throughout Maryland, The Institute for Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) has teamed up with the Marketing Department to ensure our neurodiverse staff, patients and community members are supported, heard and receive vital accommodations. In this session, led by a neurodiverse marketing professional at Chase Brexton, you will learn concrete ways to make your business or work environment more inclusive and empowering for all stakeholders. This session will provide real-world examples of small steps that make a huge impact. Perfect for companies of any size, marketing and HR experts, and neurodiverse self-advocates looking to improve workplace culture.

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.
Meeting Room 11
Meeting Room Level

Equity in Hiring: A Blueprint

Nicholas Burton, N. Burton Consulting

A simple and engaging Equity in Hiring Framework to ensure equitable hiring practices from recruitment to onboarding.

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.
Meeting Room 14
Meeting Room Level

Extended Reality for Preparing Neurodiverse Populations for the Workforce: Insights from the Virtuoso and uSucceed Projects

Matthew Schmidt, University of Georgia; Noah Glaser, University of Missouri

The burgeoning field of extended reality (XR), inclusive of virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality technologies, presents unique opportunities for enhancing workforce training and development for neurodiverse populations. Our presentation will discuss the innovative application of XR technologies through two XR research and development projects: Virtuoso and uSucceed. We will focus on the efficacy of XR in providing vocational training and supports specifically for transition-age neurodiverse populations. By dissecting the design, implementation and evaluation of these projects, this presentation aims to showcase how XR can serve as a pivotal modality in preparing neurodiverse individuals for successful workforce integration.





Monday, October 28 (continued)

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.
Meeting Room 16
Meeting Room Level

Ready...Set...WORK! The Benefit of Special Olympics Participation in Workforce Readiness!

Jeffrey Abel and Jason Schriml, Special Olympics Maryland

Throughout the country, there are over 500,000 Special Olympics athletes, but as with many individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, many of those athletes are un- or under-employed! During this session, attendees will hear from a panel of Special Olympics Maryland athletes about how their training on and off the sports field has helped them excel in their places of employment!

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.
Meeting Room 12 – 13
Meeting Room Level

Scaffolding Behavioral Supports in Workplace Environments

**Becca Colangelo, Julia O'Connor and Hannah Wayne,
Kennedy Krieger Institute**

Attendees will gain valuable insight into the process of designing and implementing behavioral support strategies for individuals with greater needs. While these behavioral strategies are designed to support an individual, they can have a profound impact on improving workplace culture and benefiting all company employees.

9:45 – 10:45 a.m.
Meeting Room 1
Meeting Room Level

SPIRIT Club Demo Fitness Club

Join a free SPIRIT Club Demo Fitness Class! Experience an inclusive, fun, and engaging workout tailored for all abilities. Certified trainers will guide you through exercises designed to improve strength, balance, and coordination, while fostering a supportive and positive environment. Whether you're looking to stay active or try something new, this class is a great opportunity to explore what SPIRIT Club has to offer. All fitness levels are welcome — come ready to move, connect, and have fun!

10:45 – 11 a.m.
Meeting Room Level Foyer
Meeting Room Level

Networking Break

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Meeting Room 12 – 13
Meeting Room Level

Break-Out Sessions 2

A Little Bit of Structure: Real-Life Examples of Creating Neuro-Inclusive Workplace Practice

Marina P. Gross, Dopamine Chasers, LLC

Attendees will learn about cost-neutral, easily implementable strategies and practices that make any workplace more neuro-friendly. Topics include communication and collaboration practices, meeting structures and flow, calendaring logistics and role assignment. While the focus is on increasing neuro-inclusivity, take-aways from this session benefit all members of the workforce. Session led by a neurodivergent facilitator and consultant.





Monday, October 28 (continued)

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Meeting Room 11
Meeting Room Level

ABLE Accounts: A New Tool to Support People With Disabilities — Your Employees & Your Community

Sara Weir, ABLER today/National Association of State Treasurers

One in 4 Americans lives with a disability, yet these individuals are not well represented in the workforce or the financial system. DEI is no longer an option; it's a priority. ABLER accounts, created by Congress in 2014, allow people with disabilities to save and earn money into tax-free savings accounts without jeopardizing public benefits. ABLER accounts can lead the HR dialogue for employers to offer information on inclusion workplace benefits. Offering ABLER accounts for people with disabilities — your employees and your community — can be a catalyst for improving your DEI strategy to include people with disabilities.

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Meeting Room 16
Meeting Room Level

Building Healthy Relationships at Work

Katherine McLaughlin, Elevatus Training

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often left out of the conversation about sexuality and relationships, almost as if they are incapable of having thoughts, feelings, and needs. In reality, they too are sexual beings that need information and skills for making healthy decisions about sexuality. In this workshop, we will explore what topics and main points are important to teach, and examine techniques for helping employers manage challenging workplace scenarios.

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Meeting Room 15
Meeting Room Level

Disability-Focused Business Resource Groups (BRGs): Supporting Greater Inclusion, Belonging and Engagement for Neurodivergent Workers

Julie Lewis and Heather Moorshead, T. Rowe Price

Business Resource Groups (BRGs) and Employee Resource Groups (ERG) can provide an important lever for advancing diversity, equity and inclusion strategies many employers are implementing. While BRGs focused on gender, LGBTQ+ and ethnicity are often considered “table stakes” for employers, disability-focused BRGs can help drive greater inclusion, belonging and engagement for workers impacted by disability, chronic condition, neurodiversity and mental health diagnoses. This presentation will focus on the formation and deployment of the THRIVE@ T. Rowe Price BRG and the programming THRIVE has deployed in its first year.





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Monday, October 28 (continued)

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Meeting Room 14
Meeting Room Level

Empowering the Workforce: Implementing Neuroinclusive Approaches in Training and Organizational Development

DeArndra Hendricks, Office of the Director of National Intelligence

Discover ways to drive organizational change with concrete neurodiversityaffirming strategies, emphasizing collaborative innovation in training, recruitment, and development. This interactive presentation unveils specific initiatives that can help empower the future workforce through targeted and inclusive approaches. Gain insights into the impactful implementation of these strategies, showcasing their role in creating an inclusive and forward-thinking environment for all generations of neurodivergent professionals.

11 a.m. – 12 p.m.
Meeting Room 10
Meeting Room Level

Supporting Adults With Lower Support Needs to Thrive in the Workplace

Kristine Nellenbach, Maryland Center for Developmental Disabilities at Kennedy Krieger Institute

Many autistic adults with lower support needs frequently encounter challenges in receiving the appropriate support and accommodations needed to be successful in the workplace, especially adults who were taught to mask well or were diagnosed later in life. Gain insights from a self-advocate with autism and ADHD, who recently changed careers and discovered the powerful impact of accommodations. Explore effective strategies that can enable neurodivergent adults to not only survive, but thrive, in the workplace.

12 – 1 p.m.
Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Lunch

1 – 1:15 p.m.
Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Remarks from “In a Different Key” Directors

Caren Zucker and John Donvan





Monday, October 28 (continued)

1:15 – 2 p.m.

Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Afternoon Plenary: Neurodiversity at the Central Intelligence Agency

**Lori Ann D-J., Matt R., Amelia F., Kat R., Kurt M. and Rose H.,
Central Intelligence Agency**

A professional panel discussion featuring neurodivergent officers employed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) sharing their extensive insights and experiences gained over many years within this distinct organization. During the session, the panelists will reflect on both the obstacles and successes encountered throughout their careers, detailing their strategies for overcoming challenges, navigating organizational transitions, promoting inclusivity and leveraging their distinctive viewpoints to enhance the Agency's overall objectives.

2 – 2:15 p.m.

Potomac Ballroom Foyer
Ballroom Level

Networking Break

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 12 – 13
Meeting Room Level

Break-Out Sessions 3

Accessibility: The Key to Unlocking a Resilient Workforce

Katie McMurray and Lauren Howard, Sensory Tool House, LLC

There is a workforce that is untapped, talented and ready to work, yet there are barriers in our hiring and employment practices that often limit access for these individuals. Employers must have a basic understanding of neurodivergence to effectively recruit and retain neurodivergent workers. Get an introduction to how your business or workplace can gain a competitive edge by increasing diversity in skills, ways of thinking and approaches to problem solving.

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 9
Meeting Room Level

Embracing Neurodiversity: Our Journey at AtkinsRéalis

Richard Tregaskes, AtkinsRéalis

AtkinsRéalis is committed to fostering an inclusive workplace where every individual thrives. Our journey toward neurodiversity is a constant work in progress, guided by the belief that diverse minds drive innovation and excellence.

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 16
Meeting Room Level

Is it Really Rude? Inclusivity Through Re-Thinking Norms of “Being Professional”

**Laura Meyer, Elina Clavelli and Ellie Jeffries, ASRC Federal;
Becky Pike, NASA**

Let's discuss the concept of being professional in a hybrid environment, how it affects the inclusion of neurodivergent people in the workforce, and suggestions for adjusting expectations to heighten inclusivity and success of all employees.





Monday, October 28 (continued)

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 10

Meeting Room Level

Let's Talk About It: Practicing Direct, Neuro-Inclusive Communication to Transform the Workplace

Marina P. Gross, Dopamine Chasers, LLC

In this interactive, skill-building workshop, attendees learn and practice effective interpersonal communication. We focus on effective, clear and inclusive dialogue practices. Attendees can expect a short overview and time to practice with each other. While the focus is on increasing neuro-inclusivity, take-aways from this session benefit all members of the workforce. Session led by a neurodivergent facilitator and consultant.

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 11

Meeting Room Level

Powering Neuroinclusion: A Transformative Framework for Leaders to Evolve Workplace Culture

Lirone Losoff, Lirone Losoff LLC

This session is ideal for leaders who are ready to take practical, actionable steps toward embedding neuroinclusion into the core of their organizational identity. Take part in an engaging session introducing the Neuroinclusive Organization Continuum, a transformative framework designed to help leaders strategically evolve their workplace cultures. This workshop offers a collaborative space to equip you with the tools needed to make sustainable, long-term changes that align with your broader organizational goals, fostering a culture of inclusion that supports lasting growth and success. Together, we'll explore how to assess your organization's current position on the continuum and how to implement tailored strategies that allow both neurodivergent and neurotypical employees to thrive. By embracing diverse perspectives and ways of thinking, you'll unlock new levels of innovation, productivity, and collaboration across your teams. Whether you're just beginning your neuroinclusion journey or looking to refine your approach, this session will provide you with valuable insights and practical steps to move forward.

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 14

Meeting Room Level

Strategies for Success: Embracing Neurodiversity at Work

**Anthony DiArchangelo, CIA Neurodiverse Solutions;
Teresa Thomas, The MITRE Corporation**

Businesses, government organizations and most importantly, neurodivergent individuals are realizing the importance and long-term success of neurodiversity in the workplace. Although awareness is important, companies must go beyond awareness and integrate neurodiversity into their organizational culture. Companies across the country agree that the challenge comes in the doing, and are asking how to execute a plan that will be successful. Through building the business case, acquiring neurodiverse talent and creating a neurodiverse-friendly workplace, organizations can fuel productivity and innovation in the workplace to ensure continued success for the employer and employee.





Monday, October 28 (continued)

3:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Meeting Room Level Foyer

Meeting Room Level

Networking Break

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 12 – 13

Meeting Room Level

Break-Out Sessions 4

Creating Inclusive Communities: Examining the Impact of Autism-Friendly Business Training on the Autistic Worker's Experience

Cortney Fish, Julie Muckerman and Heidi Royer, University of Missouri Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment

Individuals with autism bring many unique strengths and skills to the workplace. Despite the need for neurodiversity in the workplace, many adults with autism are underemployed and unemployed due to a lack of opportunities and employers' unawareness or misconceptions of autism. This session will explore how to implement autism-friendly business trainings in your community, and the important role they play in employment experiences for those with autism.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 14

Meeting Room Level

Developing an Autism-Affirming Training: A Case Study of STEM Faculty Training

Jennifer Wessel and Alexander Williams, University of Maryland

Institutions often implement inclusion/diversity training as a tool for creating more inclusive environments for marginalized individuals. Not all training is created equal, however, and varies in terms of adherence to best practices in training development. In this presentation, we will walk the audience through our systematic process of creating an autism-affirming training for Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) college faculty. Specifically, we will outline how to follow best practices in training development and the social model of disability perspective to create a training that is tied to clear objectives focused on transforming environments for meaningful inclusion, informed by autistic voices and guided by best practices in training development. The two members of this research team presenting this work provide appropriate expertise for this topic: a faculty specialized in the area of diversity in organizations and a current engineering doctoral student who is also an autistic self-advocate.





Monday, October 28 (continued)

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 16

Meeting Room Level

Evaluating the Impact of Employment Programs: Roundtable Discussion Based on the Autism Hiring Program at Towson University

Kaitlyn Wilson, Judy Martini, Courtney Bosnick and Briella Baer Chen, Towson University

The Autism Hiring Program at Towson University's Hussman Center for Adults with Autism is a new initiative in partnership with the Autism Society of Maryland. The program seeks to advance neurodiversity and acceptance in the workplace by providing training and support to both employers and employees; results translate into meaningful employment opportunities and a more inclusive workforce. This presentation will facilitate meaningful discussion about program evaluation through a case study of the Autism Hiring Program, which has been successful across Maryland and for which Towson University has developed an evaluation system for further investigation of impacts.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 11

Meeting Room Level

Is Accessible Really Accessible: Facilitating Return to Work for Persons With Spinal Cord Injury

Nia Wallace Ward, Kennedy Krieger Institute, International Center for Spinal Cord Injury

Spinal cord injury has a massive impact on a patient's function and quality of life. Rehabilitation approaches are evolving and people are recovering functions, but the community has to be ready to meet them. This panel will feature a discussion of the changing demographics and prognosis after spinal cord injury, and a conversation among people living with spinal cord injury about their post-injury workplace experiences.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 15

Meeting Room Level

Learn To Earn—Leveraging Community Engagement to Increase Job Opportunity

Kelly Papparazzo, Tona Craviotto and Dayana Millien, SEEC

By leveraging Community Engagement alongside the four guideposts of Community Life Engagement developed by the University of Massachusetts Boston Institute on Community Inclusion (UMass Boston ICI), providers, job seekers, and their families can chart a path towards employment. This session aims to share anecdotes and strategies illustrating how CE is deployed to aid individuals with significant support needs who have been isolated or lack experience with community employment in their journey to work. Additionally, the presentation will delve into concepts surrounding the utilization of Community Life Engagement as a wraparound service for employed individuals seeking or requiring additional support during non-work hours.





Monday, October 28 (continued)

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 10

Meeting Room Level

Preparing and Developing Neurodivergent Employees for Leadership & Management in the Workplace

Shea Belsky, HubSpot

In the workplace, neurodivergent employees look to grow their careers and skillset much the same as anyone else. What they lack is the support, encouragement and advocacy of their team to become leaders and important decision makers. We will discuss effective lived experiences, tools, techniques and methodologies for neurodivergents and their teammates to empower them as managers and respected leaders.

3:30 – 4:30 p.m.

Meeting Room 9

Meeting Room Level

Speak Up: Supporting Transition to Adulthood Through Self-Advocacy

Lindsay Wagner, League School for Autism; Michael John Carley, League School of Greater Boston

Having agency over one's life, including having the ability to make decisions for one's self, developing personal goals and values, and having opportunities to make informed choices, is a primary factor that is crucial for a high quality of life. Using current evidence, Autistic perspectives and practical strategies for integrating student voice into transition planning, supporting adults can ease the path from student to adult. Including self-advocacy initiatives such as disability peer mentoring, quality of life factors, community-building and multidisciplinary collaboration are key to transition planning. Now is the time to listen to disability self-advocates and better our practices, using their knowledge and experience as a baseline for growth.

5 – 7 p.m.

Potomac Ballroom

Ballroom Level

Evening Networking Event

Cody Clark, Autistic Self-Advocate and Magician

Cody Clark is a professional magician and autistic self-advocate from Louisville, Kentucky. He places his magic within real life's magic moments, giving his shows a personal and relatable touch. He also shares the honest ins and outs of being autistic, both in his shows and in his magi-talks that he gives to educators, students and corporations. Cody's biggest honors are sharing the Louisville Palace Theatre stage with magic legend Lance Burton, receiving the Society of American Magicians Rising Star of Magic award, and being given the title of Kentucky Colonial by his home state for making an impact on Kentucky's arts and social advocacy scenes. This is Cody's second time presenting at Kennedy Krieger's Neurodiversity at Work conference.





Neurodiversity in the Workplace

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Tuesday, October 29

7:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Potomac Registration Desk
Ballroom Level

Registration Open

7:30 – 9 a.m.
Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Breakfast

9 – 9:45 a.m.
Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Morning Keynote

Haley Moss, Autistic Lawyer and Author

Haley Moss was diagnosed with autism at 3 years old. Her parents were told she might never finish high school or get her driver's license. Today, Haley is a lawyer, neurodiversity expert, keynote speaker, educator and the author of several books that guide neurodivergent individuals through professional and personal challenges. She is a consultant to top corporations and nonprofit organizations that seek her guidance in creating an inclusive workplace, and she is a sought-after commentator on disability rights and the Americans with Disabilities Act. Her articles have appeared in outlets including The Washington Post, Teen Vogue, GQ, Bustle, Fast Company, Law360 Pulse and the ABA Journal, published by the American Bar Association.

9:45 – 10 a.m.
Potomac Ballroom Foyer
Ballroom Level

Networking Break

10 – 11 a.m.
Meeting Room 12 – 13
Meeting Room Level

Break-Out Sessions 5

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Employment: Fostering an Autism Inclusive Workplace

Loden Coleman and Katie Cappelen, Els for Autism Foundation®

This presentation aims to equip the audience with an understanding of evidence-based practices for autism that can be seamlessly integrated into the workplace environment. Examples of evidence-based practices will be integrated through the use of visual supports, social narratives and video modeling. We will also discuss how these can be implemented through the recruitment, interview and hiring processes before revealing real-life case examples in which autism inclusion in employment was achieved. Additionally, the presentation will include how to create a sensory-friendly workplace environment. A special emphasis will be placed on how evidence-based practices in employment can transform a company's culture and HR policies and practices, while simultaneously matching the needs of autistic employees.





Tuesday, October 29 (continued)

10 – 11 a.m.

Meeting Room 10
Meeting Room Level

Building Healthy Relationships at Work (Repeat Session)

Katherine McLaughlin, Elevatus Training

People with intellectual and developmental disabilities are often left out of the conversation about sexuality and relationships, almost as if they are incapable of having thoughts, feelings, and needs. In reality, they too are sexual beings that need information and skills for making healthy decisions about sexuality. In this workshop, we will explore what topics and main points are important to teach, and examine techniques for helping employers manage challenging workplace scenarios.

10 – 11 a.m.

Meeting Room 15
Meeting Room Level

Creating a Neurodiverse Workforce: Exploring Barriers to Accessibility

Erica Jones and Emily Calhoun, Neurodiversity Consulting

Many neurodivergent individuals in the workforce are overqualified and underemployed, leading to untapped potential and a disparity between employee skills and company need. By evaluating current recruitment and interview practices, we can work to eliminate barriers to employment for these individuals.

This presentation explores the following topics:

- Accessibility of the application process
- The power of job descriptions
- Best practices
- Accessibility of the interview process
- Role of organizational leaders
- Onboarding and mentorship
- Best practices

10 – 11 a.m.

Meeting Room 11
Meeting Room Level

Is Some (Risky) Communication Advice Better Than No Help?: The Perils and Rewards of ChatGPT Use by Autistic Workers

JiWoong (Joon) Jang and Andrew Begel, Carnegie Mellon University

Autistic individuals are critically underemployed relative to their qualifications, and encounter substantial communication difficulties in mixed-neurotype teams. Non-judgmental advice and training for workplace communication challenges would help autistic individuals, but this is often too difficult or too expensive to obtain. We present our emerging research on how, if at all, this gap is being addressed by ChatGPT and similar language models, which has demonstrated potential uses in offering social guidance. Given the potential opportunity and risks we observe, we hope to engage with the audience on possible future directions for ChatGPT and similar models as potential social communication aids for autistic individuals, and the larger dilemma of using such technology to address communication challenges in the absence of other resources or alternatives.





Tuesday, October 29 (continued)

10 – 11 a.m.

Meeting Room 9

Meeting Room Level

Neurodiversity-Inclusive Supervision: Fostering Affirmation and Support

Sara Uram and Lindsey Lyons, Sheppard Pratt Health System

Supervisors play a pivotal role in fostering an inclusive environment for neurodivergent individuals in the workforce, emphasizing the necessity of neurodiversity-affirming supervision. Additionally, employers should promote community inclusivity and engagement, highlighting the importance of understanding and empathy in supporting neurodivergent employees. Implementing strategies to address communication barriers and providing necessary supports enhance productivity, innovation and overall employee well-being, extending inclusivity to customer interactions for a more welcoming environment.

10 – 11 a.m.

Meeting Room 16

Meeting Room Level

The Autism Hiring Program: How a Small, Grassroots Effort Got Started, Grew and Succeeded

Melissa Rosenberg, Autism Society of Maryland; Doug DeHaan, MEd, Hussman Center for Adults with Autism / Towson University; Abraham Sanchez Valadez, Pete Pappas and Sons; Chinmay Vyas, CV, Inc.

Hear about the development and success of this grassroots program from the perspective of the organization, a program graduate and an employer. Learn about the future of the program at Towson University and this unique partnership that will strategically move autistic workers into better jobs, address barriers to employment and move them closer to financial independence.

10 – 11 a.m.

Meeting Room 14

Meeting Room Level

Transforming Employability and Workplace Readiness Through Youth and Adult Programming

Eliana Neuwirth, Special Olympics International

According to the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics in February 2024, the unemployment rate for working-aged individuals in the U.S. with disabilities was 8.3%, nearly double that of those without disabilities (4.1%). An individual's identity development, crucial for meaningful employment, is shaped by their experiences in the school and broader community. Therefore, tailored youth and adult programming are essential to improve meaningful employment of people with IDD. This presentation describes Special Olympics resources for youth and adults that improve their transition and employment outcomes. Attendees will learn about the three-component model of Special Olympics Unified Champion Schools (UCS), which fosters positive self-identity, a top indicator for successful post-secondary transition, as well as the Athlete Leadership & Skills curriculum, which has proven to increase intrinsic motivation and improve well-being. Attendees will be equipped to leverage these strategies within their communities to improve their own and others' transition and employment outcomes.





Tuesday, October 29 (continued)

10 – 11 a.m.
Meeting Room 8
Meeting Room Level

Unmasking Neurodivergence to Create a Supportive Work Environment

Cari Sullivan, Kennedy Krieger Institute

This presentation will discuss challenges faced by neurodivergent individuals who may be perceived by others as neurotypical. Neurodivergent individuals may mask their diversity for many reasons. We will explore reasons for masking and solutions to support individuals and teams to create a more inclusive work environment. This presentation will largely focus on ADHD, but will also have carryover for neurotypes including ASD, SPD, dyslexia and other learning differences.

11 – 11:15 a.m.
Meeting Room Level Foyer
Meeting Room Level

Networking Break

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Meeting Room 14
Meeting Room Level

Break-Out Sessions 6

Accessing Career Experiences (ACE): An Employment Program Aimed at Improving Access to Gainful Employment Through Independence and Skill Development

Jennifer DeLaPorte and Jaclyn Benigno, MU Thompson Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment

Accessing Career Experiences (ACE) is an innovative employment program dedicated to fostering inclusive workplaces and providing gainful employment for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism. This presentation will provide an overview of the key features and benefits of the program, and how caregivers and other stakeholders can assist with fostering independence. Created by a behavior analyst and former special education teacher, ACE merges the two fields of Education and Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) to provide individualized employment support for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism.

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Meeting Room 15
Meeting Room Level

Can Autistic Self-Advocates and Behavior Analysts Get Along?

Lauren Eaton, Marley Swisher, Katelyn Szymanski and Thomas Lane Jr., Itineris

Please join autistic self-advocates and behavior analysts for a lively discussion of: a) the history of autism, public policy, scientific practices and context surrounding the pros and cons of Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA); b) how Itineris values neurodiversity-affirming practices and behavior analysis; and c) how autistic self-advocates and BCBA's can work together on a shared mission of social justice, inclusion, trauma-informed care and evidence-based interventions and services.





Tuesday, October 29 (continued)

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Meeting Room 11
Meeting Room Level

Dyslexia and Innovation in the Workplace

Gil Gershoni, Gershoni Creative

Creative director and entrepreneur Gil Gershoni viewed his dyslexia as an albatross and tried to keep it hidden for many years—until he recognized that it was the secret superpower to his agency's success.

Now, Gil is on a mission to transform workplaces by helping leaders harness the unique talents of neurodiverse and nonlinear thinkers. Linear thinkers, typically accustomed to structured methodologies, stand to gain significantly from integrating dyslexic thinking strategies into their professional toolkit. Through engaging anecdotes and introspective reflections, Gil illustrates how utilizing the cognitive strengths associated with dyslexia can revolutionize traditional approaches to tasks, leading to breakthrough solutions.

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Meeting Room 12 – 13
Meeting Room Level

Extended Reality for Preparing Neurodiverse Populations for the Workforce: Insights From the Virtuoso and uSucceed Projects (Repeat Session)

Matthew Schmidt, University of Georgia; Noah Glaser, University of Missouri

The burgeoning field of extended reality (XR), inclusive of virtual reality, augmented reality and mixed reality technologies, presents unique opportunities for enhancing workforce training and development for neurodiverse populations. Our presentation will discuss the innovative application of XR technologies through two XR research and development projects: Virtuoso and uSucceed. We will focus on the efficacy of XR in providing vocational training and supports specifically for transition-age neurodiverse populations. By dissecting the design, implementation and evaluation of these projects, this presentation aims to showcase how XR can serve as a pivotal modality in preparing neurodiverse individuals for successful workforce integration.





Tuesday, October 29 (continued)

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Meeting Room 16
Meeting Room Level

Neuro-Inclusion and Neuro-Sensitivity in the Workplace: Achieving Equity and Increasing Productivity Through Inclusion and Understanding

**James Orman, People On the Go Maryland; Winter Plott,
Autism On the Go**

The modern American workplace is designed to maximally extract time and effort from the worker, rather than aiming to create the conditions for the worker to be successful as individuals. This environment creates unequal opportunities for neurodivergent employees, a stressful work environment for neurotypical employees, and a contentious relationship between the employer and the employee. By being intentional about ensuring the employee has all the needed supports and accommodations to do their jobs, workplaces can grow and thrive while creating the conditions for content and successful employees.

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Meeting Room 1
Meeting Room Level

SPIRIT Club Demo Fitness Club

Join a free SPIRIT Club Demo Fitness Class! Experience an inclusive, fun, and engaging workout tailored for all abilities. Certified trainers will guide you through exercises designed to improve strength, balance, and coordination, while fostering a supportive and positive environment. Whether you're looking to stay active or try something new, this class is a great opportunity to explore what SPIRIT Club has to offer. All fitness levels are welcome — come ready to move, connect, and have fun!

11:15 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.
Meeting Room 9
Meeting Room Level

Unlocking the Hidden Potential of Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Susan Fitzell, Susan Fitzell and Associates

Divergent thinkers are often labeled disruptors, non-conformists, and social misfits in the workplace. These labels and attitudes limit the potential of teams and organizations.

In this engaging session, Susan Fitzell reveals how teams may more effectively champion neurodiversity, equity and inclusion to increase innovation, productivity and creativity.

Attendees will:

- Learn what neurodiversity looks like in the workplace
- Understand the benefits of being a neurodiversity-welcoming business
- Foster an understanding of why neurodiversity is essential to organizational success
- Gain tools and strategies for tapping into the power of people





Tuesday, October 29 (continued)

12:15 – 1:15 p.m.

Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Lunch

1:15 – 2 p.m.

Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Afternoon Plenary

Rick Guidotti, Founder and Director, Positive Exposure

This lecture will create opportunities to hear from and explore the experiences of people living with a variety of genetic, physical, behavioral and intellectual differences. The lecture will provide a lens into various genetic disorders and give a voice to those featured in the photographs and their respective families. Audiences will be able to hear from individuals and their families living with genetic disorders through innovative multimedia tools developed by Positive Exposure.

2 – 2:15 p.m.

Potomac Ballroom
Ballroom Level

Networking Break

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 15
Meeting Room Level

Break-Out Sessions 7

Become an Ally to Autistic Colleagues With INTENT—THE Interactive Tool for Empathy in Neurotypicals (Repeat Session)

**Kathy Dow-Burger and Elizabeth Redcay, University of Maryland;
Andrew Begel, Carnegie Mellon University**

The INteractive Tool for Empathy in NeuroTypicals (INTENT) is a transformational visual novel in the form of a web-based 3D video game designed to educate non-autistic workers how to be better allies towards their autistic colleagues. INTENT promotes inclusive workplaces through empathy training, reducing everyday challenges for neurodivergent people and improving their ability to thrive and succeed at work. INTENT will foster the creation of innovative and inclusive shared spaces by enabling those with diagnosed and undiagnosed sensory and language processing differences to be more fully accepted and included. This will help meet the expertise, production and employment needs our current and future economies demand.





Tuesday, October 29 (continued)

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 16
Meeting Room Level

Embracing Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Kevin Davis, EPIC Insurance Brokers & Consultants; Kristin Austin, Rewriting the Code

In this talk, the hosts will explore the benefits of neurodiversity in the workplace, as well as strategies for creating a more inclusive and supportive work environment for neurodiverse individuals. In this presentation, they will outline some strategies that employers can use to support neurodiverse employees.

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 14
Meeting Room Level

Exploring the Workplace Experiences of Neurodivergent College Educators

Maria Hannah, Augustana College

This presentation explores the experiences of neurodivergent educators within higher education institutions. Through a pilot study guided by a strengths-based approach to neurodiversity (Dwyer, 2022; Vromen, 2023), the perceived strengths, challenges and disclosures of neurodivergent educator experiences can be demystified. This research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the needs of neurodivergent individuals in higher education, with the aim to foster a more informed and inclusive working environment.

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 12 – 13
Meeting Room Level

Filling the Void—Meeting Needs of Employers Through Individualized Training and Ongoing Support

John Katz, Sunflower Bakery

Successful and sustainable employment is dependent on the convergence of meeting employer needs and the training of individuals to meet those needs. This session will address proactive steps for making that happen.

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 11
Meeting Room Level

Finding Balance in the Chaos

Jessi Wright, Maine CITE

This presentation offers a comprehensive approach to fostering workplace inclusion through accommodations and best practices for neurodiverse individuals. Participants will gain insights into articulating common accommodations, implementing effective onboarding strategies benefiting all staff, and identifying key resources for further exploration of assistive technology and neurodiversity. Through interactive discussions and real-world examples, attendees will leave empowered to create more inclusive environments where every employee's unique talents are celebrated and valued.





Neurodiversity in the Workplace

A Collaborative National Conference



Tuesday, October 29 (continued)

2:15 – 3:15 p.m.

Meeting Room 10

Meeting Room Level

LEAD, Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Kyle Britt, Autism Foundation of Oklahoma

Discover the benefits of neurodiversity in the workplace! LEAD, a Neurodiversity in the Workplace training project through the Autism Foundation of Oklahoma, is designed to enhance employer knowledge by providing a better understanding of the challenges and barriers people with autism face in attaining and maintaining gainful employment, and how to create a more inclusive and accommodating workplace. Learn. Educate. Advance. Develop.

3:15 – 3:30 p.m.

Potomac Ballroom Foyer

Ballroom Level

Networking Break

3:30 – 4:15 p.m.

Potomac Ballroom

Ballroom Level

Conference Closing

