



Advocacy

Minnesota often is considered a progressive leader for people with disabilities. When it comes to accessibility, there are many ways in which Minnesota does well. We have laws and policies that address accommodations such as ramps, curb cuts, closed captioning, and a variety of other adaptations. Unfortunately, many lawmakers and community members don't realize that neurodivergent populations, including autistic individuals and those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, also require accommodations. Those accommodations may look quite different from classic ideas of support.

Minnesota needs and deserves accessibility for all its citizens, including those whose disabilities are invisible.

As we head into 2025, the AuSM Advocacy Committee has been hard at work setting our priorities for the upcoming legislative session. If you would like more information, please reach out to the AuSM Advocacy Committee at advocacy@ausm.org or 651.647.1083.

AuSM 2025 Policy Agenda

1: Sub Minimum Wage

In 2023, Minnesota passed legislation making historic investments in the move to pay people with disabilities the minimum wage or higher, as well as increase customized and integrated employment for that population. We continue to advocate for guaranteed minimum wage for people with disabilities, the final step in taking our previous work to its fruition.

2: Medical Assistance-Employed Persons With Disabilities (MA-EPD)

This proposal seeks to eliminate the premiums that are charged to individuals who receive MA-EPD, and prevent the Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) from discharging individuals who cannot afford to pay their current MA-EPD premium.

3: Event Licensing

We are continuing to work on legislation that mandates sensory-friendly accommodations for large public events in Minnesota, requiring event organizers to submit detailed plans for such accommodations as part of their permit applications.



4: Special Education Parent Accessibility

It is essential that parents of children receiving special education services in school can meaningfully participate in the development and revision of their children's individualized education programs. To support all parents, we are continuing to advocate that school districts are required to adopt policies and processes that assist parents who need language assistance or have disabilities.

5. Insurance Coverage for Autism Reform

This bill proposes to expand insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders in Minnesota. The key changes include removing the age limit for coverage (previously limited to children under 18) and adding several new therapy options to the list of covered treatments, such as SCERTS, floortime, play therapy, art therapy, and music therapy. The bill aims to provide more comprehensive and inclusive coverage for individuals with autism spectrum disorders, regardless of age, and to recognize a broader range of therapeutic approaches in their treatment.

6. Waiver Modification for Swim Lessons

In response to multiple recent incidents of children with autism passing away from drowning, AuSM is proposing two new bills to improve water safety in our community. The first will amend waiver rules to allow swimming lessons as an approved item for all individuals receiving waiver services with a diagnosis of autism.

7. Autism Swim Safety Grant Appropriation

The second water safety step in AuSM's advocacy work, this bill would allocate \$500,000 in fiscal year 2025 and 2026 to create autism friendly swim programs. Existing swim programs would be eligible to apply for grant funding to work with autism organizations for training in autism and assistance in developing effective swim curriculum to teach water safety. Additional funds would be awarded to programs after completion of training and curriculum to provide free or low cost swim lessons to the autism community, with 60% of scholarships going to BIPOC families.

8. Autism Society of Minnesota Appropriation

A proposal to appropriate a total of \$1 million over two fiscal years (2025 and 2026) to the Minnesota Council on Disability. This money is to be granted to Autism Society of Minnesota to provide community information and support services specifically tailored for adults and families impacted by autism. These services include advocacy, information and resources, camps and social opportunities, community education, training, and specialized mental health services.