



MINNESOTA AUTISM CONFERENCE

30th Annual Minnesota Autism Conference: Social Narrative

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General Information

I am attending AuSM's 30th Annual Autism Conference at the Doubletree by Hilton Minneapolis Airport. This is the same hotel as last year, but the name has changed. The conference begins Wednesday, April 16th and ends Friday, April 18th. I may attend as much or as little of the event as I choose.

Address:

2020 American Blvd. E., Bloomington, MN
55425



General Information

The conference is a busy event attended by hundreds of people. Attendees include autistic individuals, parents and caregivers, educators, other professionals, and more! It may be crowded in the hotel as I navigate the conference. I can identify spaces in the hotel where I can go if I need a break from other people. This includes the Quiet Room (located in the Cedar Room), which I can find on the map in my program.

I can also ask any AuSM staff members to help me find the Quiet Room or another place to take a break.

General Information

I can review the conference schedule at <https://ausm.org/events/minnesota-autism-conference/minnesota-autism-conference-schedule/>. I will also receive a hard copy of the Conference Program when I register at the event. I will take care to hold onto my Conference Program, as it is the best source of information about the event, and I can't get another one.

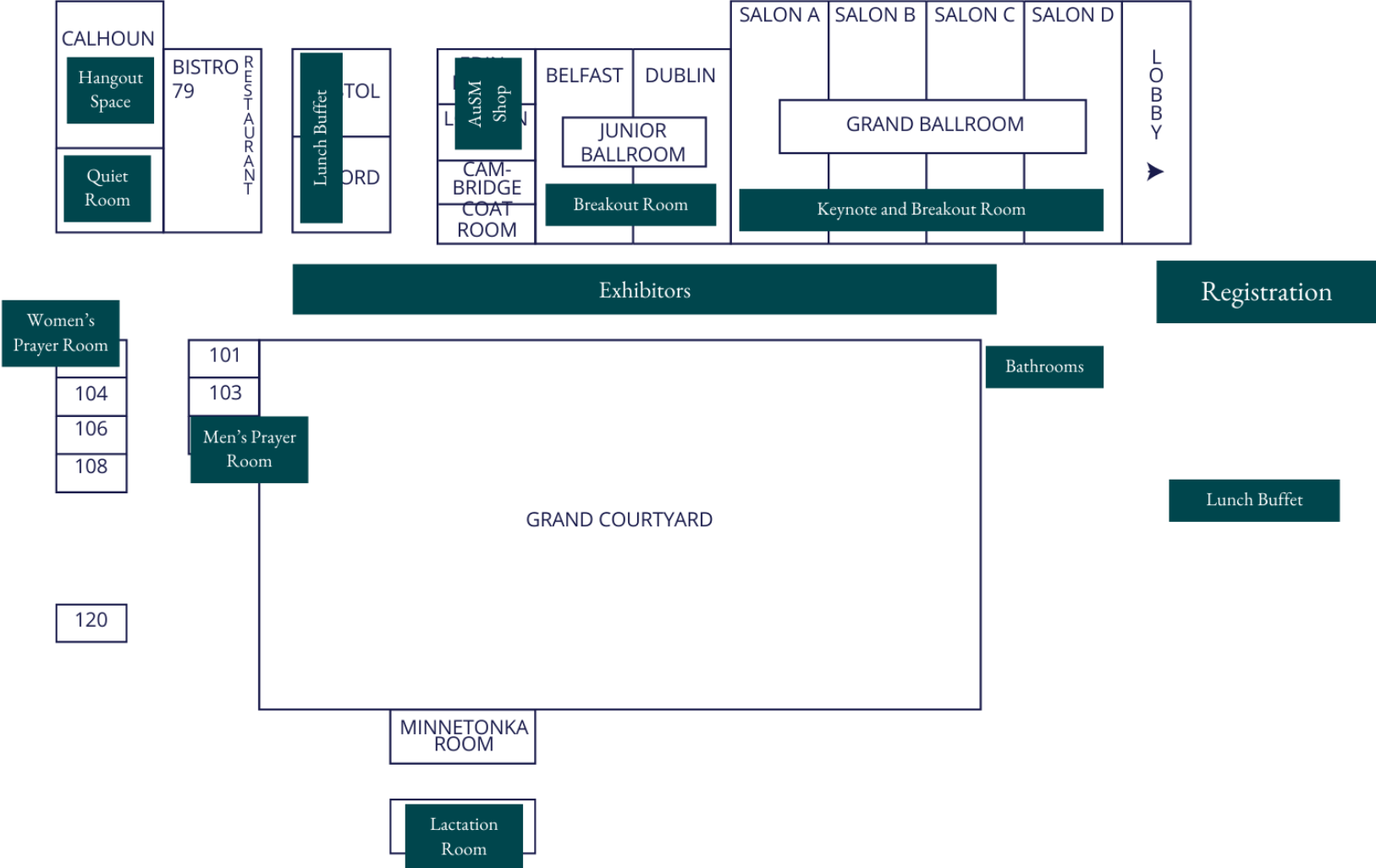
I can select which breakout sessions and/or keynote presentations I want to attend before arriving at the event. I can also decide when I'm at the conference or change my mind in the moment.

I will be sent a link that will give me access to handouts one week before the conference. I will use the password given to me in the email to get access to the handouts and conference materials. If I want a hard copy of a handout, I will need to print it off the AuSM website. If I need a printed copy as an accommodation, I can email manton@ausm.org before the event.

General Information

There is a map of conference session locations in my Conference Program.

I can use the map to locate where each presentation will be held, as well as where to find the AuSM Shop, Quiet Room, bathrooms, exhibitors, and more.



General Information

When I walk into the conference space, there will be a large hallway with exhibitors on either side. To the right, there are doors that lead to Salons A, B, C, and D. These rooms can be combined and when they are, it is called the Grand Ballroom.

All keynote presentations happen in the Grand Ballroom, and all Breakout Sessions happen in Salons A, B/C, and D plus the Junior Ballroom located next to the Grand Ballroom.

There are signs posted on the walls of the hotel to help me locate where to go. Additional signage will be posted to help clarify where everything is. If I need additional help finding anything at the conference, I can ask a Doubletree employee or an AuSM staff member for assistance.

Each presentation in the Conference Program has its location listed after its topic.

Arrival and Check In

The week before the conference, I will receive a confirmation email with details about when to check in at conference.

I can enter the conference at the main entrance of the Doubletree by Hilton Minneapolis Airport.

Arrival and Check In

I will check in at the Registration Table. The Registration Table is located in the lobby of the hotel.

When it's my turn, I will give my name to the AuSM volunteers at the registration table. Once they locate my name in their records, they will give me a bag and folder with conference information inside.

Arrival and Check In

There will be stickers available at the registration tables. I can choose to wear stickers that indicate how comfortable I am with social interaction. The guide to using interaction stickers is in my Conference Program. I can also choose to wear a sticker to indicate to other attendees which pronouns I use.

Pronoun Stickers



An integral part of making the most of everyone's conference experience is helping everyone feel included, respected, and appreciated. A person's name, their clothing, or any other outward signals don't necessarily tell you how that person identifies. To assist with gender-inclusive communication, pronoun stickers are available by the nametags near registration.



I am interested in interacting, but I have trouble approaching others and initiating interaction. Please feel free to initiate conversation with me.



I am interested in interacting with others, but only with those I'm familiar. Please approach or initiate only if you know me.



Please do not approach me or initiate interaction with me at this time.

2025 Conference Schedule

Conference schedule is subject to change. Please check www.ausm.org for the most up to date information.

Wednesday, April 16: Foundational Workshop

Join us for this year's Foundational Workshop, held on April 16, from 12:30 to 4:30 p.m. This workshop is perfect for those beginning their autism journey or experienced participants looking to revisit essential information. CE credits are available. We'll include a fresh focus on trending topics in the autism community, designed to prepare you for the conference sessions ahead. The Foundational Workshop is included in both in-person and virtual conference registrations.

12:30 – 2:15 p.m. Autism 101: includes foundational information, accessing services, and updates on autism prevalence. Conference Orientation (held concurrently)

2:30 – 3:45 p.m. Trending Topics

4:00 – 4:30 p.m. Small Group Discussion/Networking

Thursday, April 17

7 a.m. Conference registration, AuSM Shop, and Exhibitors open

8-9:30 a.m. KEYNOTE - Storytelling as Advocacy: Why Telling Our Stories Matters Presented by Tiffany Hammond aka Fidgets and Fries



10-11 a.m. Breakout Session 1

1. Navigating the Next Steps: Empowering Autistic Adults Post-Diagnosis presented by Jessica Hogan, Alex McLaughlin, and Priyanka Rao
2. Decreasing the Stigma – Talking to Children about Neurodivergence presented by Melissa Fischer
3. Burnout Busters: Navigating Neurodivergent Burnout with Style presented by Tiffany Schroer, Revel Weber, and Chelsey Hendrickx
4. Working with Culturally Diverse Families: A Review of Emerging and Responsive Resources presented by Ellie Wilson and Sarah Mohamed

11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Breakout Session 2

1. The Quiet Revolution: Autism Specific Services in Early Intervention Systems presented by Katie Scott
2. Navigating the Intersection of ADHD and Autism: Addressing Unique Challenges and Enhancing Support presented by Gerard Balan
3. Telling Your Child's Unique Story presented by Tiffany Hammond
4. Social Security Disability 101: What Goes into a Benefits Decision presented by Sarah Dicks

Conference Schedule

I can look at the schedule and decide which sessions I want to go to before I get to the conference. It's possible a session might change though, so I should have a backup plan.

2025 Conference Schedule

Thursday, April 17



12:15-1:15 p.m. Lunch

1:15-2:15 p.m. Breakout Session 3

1. Impactful Early Education for Children with Autism: Case Examples from an Inclusive Montessori Preschool presented by Camille Brandt
2. Choosing Goals and Interventions for Autistic Individuals presented by Megan Helmen
3. Autism: Beyond the Male Phenotype presented by Glenis Benson
4. Strategies for Supporting Independence in Daily Living presented by Lauren Gunhus and Nicole Ogren

2:45-4:15 p.m. KEYNOTE - Using Emotion (Co) Regulation to Stay Upright When You Feel Like Falling Apart Presented by Anne Gearity

Friday, April 18

7 a.m. Conference registration, AuSM Shop, and Exhibitors open

8-9:30 a.m. KEYNOTE - Reading Between the Lines: Ableism in Literacy Education Presented by Mash Makhlyagina

10-11 a.m. Breakout Session 1

1. Communicating With Scripts: An Introduction to Gestalt Language Processing presented by Emily Zimmer
2. Games as a Play-Based Therapy Tool for Clinicians and Families presented by Megan Armstrong
3. Understanding and Addressing Barriers to Accessing Early Support for Young Autistic Children and their Families in Minnesota presented by Christine Friendshuh, Sarah Mohamed, Adele Dimian, and Jessica Simacek
4. Listening to Autistic Voices – Using Lived Experiences to Educate Educators presented by Tami Childs, Jill Pring, Christine Chen, Selvy Somasoundirapille, and Haniya Hopson



11:15 a.m.-12:15 p.m. Breakout Session 2

1. Literacy and Nontraditional Language Learning Styles presented by Sam Stein
2. Empathy in Crisis Intervention: Harm Reduction and Intersectional Approaches for Autistic People presented by Elizabeth Duffy, Santanna Ficken, Nikki Huelsman, and Aster Gallus
3. Neurodivergent Parenting presented by Keeri Tramm, Milena Bates, Mike Schneider, Emma Rohrer, and Jillian Nelson
4. The Importance of Integrated Employment and the Power of Mentorship presented by Olivia Lape

12:15-1:15 p.m. Lunch

1:15-2:15 p.m. Breakout Session 3

1. Everything That's Wrong with IEPs (and How to Fix It!): Legal and Practical Tricks for Creating Better IEPs for Neurodiverse Students presented by Jessica Heiser and Ryan Haenze
2. Beyond the Basics: Further Education in Autistic Sexuality presented by Mason Esposito
3. Proprioception and Sensory-based Strategies for Improved Emotional Regulation using a Family-Centered Approach presented by Oana Zayic and Alyssa Norenberg
4. Accounting for Advocacy presented by Jeremy Goldberg

2:30-3:30 p.m. Breakout Session 4

- Addressing Ableism and Autistic Needs Through Trauma-Informed FBAs and BIPs presented by Elizabeth Duffy, Santanna Ficken, Nikki Huelsman, Bryden Carlson-Giving, and Kathryn O'Brien
- Pathological Demand Avoidance: Understanding, Accepting, and Supporting PDAers presented by Joe Falkner
- Heading into Adulthood presented by Sara Swan
- Activism and Advocacy: How to Find Your Role in Social Justice Movements presented by Chelsea O'Neil

Exhibitor Tables

There will be many exhibitors from various organizations at the event providing resources about their services. I can find a list of exhibitors in my Conference Program.

These tables will be located throughout the hallways in the hotel.



AuSM Shop and Exhibitor Tables

The AuSM Shop and exhibitor spaces can become crowded, especially during registration and lunch hours. I may have to wait in line to visit a vendor or to check out in the AuSM Shop. There will be AuSM staff there to help keep any lines moving as quickly as possible.

I can also wait to visit these areas until the crowds have calmed down, which is usually during the presentation times. The AuSM Shop hours of operation are listed in my Conference Program.

The AuSM Shop

The AuSM Shop will be in the London and Edinburgh rooms. Some keynote speakers will have meet and greet sessions after they speak next door to the AuSM Shop in the Cambridge Room.

There will be many items for sale, such as books, sensory tools, raffle tickets, and more!

I should bring cash and/or credit cards with me to the conference if I want to purchase anything from the AuSM Shop.

I can ask AuSM Shop staff for help finding any items or if I have any questions about what to buy.



Lunch

Lunch is included with my conference registration on Thursday April 17 and Friday April 18. One of the busiest times of the conference is lunch time. If I get overwhelmed by the crowds, I can leave the breakout session that happens before lunch early so I can get my lunch.

Lunch is served on a buffet from 12:15-1:15 p.m. each day. One buffet will be in the lobby and café area of the hotel. The other will be in the Bristol/Oxford rooms. I can choose which one I want to go to.

Lunch

The menu will be posted in the morning and available in the conference program. There will be more than one buffet. Vegetarian, vegan, and gluten free options will be marked. If I need a different special meal, I can ask AuSM staff or the hotel staff. I can eat in the hangout room, the ballrooms, or anywhere else I can find space. The only place I cannot eat is the hotel restaurant.



Break Times

Between sessions there will be breaks. During the breaks I can visit the exhibitors, go to the AuSM Shop, talk to other people, or rest. The hallways can get very crowded during these times. If I'm overwhelmed, the Quiet Room or the Hangout Space are great places to go.



Foundational Workshop and Orientation

The first day of the conference, Wednesday April 16, will be a little different from the other days. On this day, the conference will start at 12:30 p.m. I have two options: I can go to the Grand Ballroom and hear Autism 101, or I can go to the Oxford Room to hear a Conference Orientation, which will give an overview of where things are, what to expect, and what accommodations there are. I can also ask questions. Afterwards I'll hear about trending topics, and then have time to discuss and connect in a small group.

Keynotes and Breakouts

Breakout sessions are an hour in length, and there will be four sessions occurring at the same time. These sessions take place in the Salons A, B/C and D, and in the Junior Ballroom.

For those with accessibility needs, there will be some rows reserved near the front of the room, and space at the back of the room to stand or sit on the floor. I can sit in the front if all the other seats are occupied. If I want to make sure I find a preferred seat, I should arrive to a presentation early. Seating is first-come, first-served. I should keep my belongings under my seat or on the table in front of me so that there are as many chairs available for people as possible.



Keynotes and Breakouts

There will be three different keynote presentations throughout the conference, two on Thursday and one on Friday. Each keynote presentation is scheduled to last 1.5 hours. Keynotes will take place in the Grand Ballroom.

It may be crowded in the Grand Ballroom during keynotes, as there are no breakout sessions occurring at the same time. I can plan to get to the Grand Ballroom early to find a preferred seat.



Sensory and Accessibility Details

There are many spaces throughout the main floor of the hotel where I can sit and relax. I can also visit the Quiet Room, which is in the Cedar Room. There will be some sensory tools available for me to use while I'm in that space – these items stay in the Quiet Room. Another option is the Hangout Space, which is a place to take a break if I want to socialize or talk.

If I need a quiet and comfortable space to pray, I can visit the Prayer Room. There are both men's and women's prayer rooms. They are in Board Rooms 102 and 105.

I can visit the Lactation Room if I need a private space for lactation. It is located in the Nokomis Room. It has a fridge available.

Sensory and Accessibility Details

I can help make the conference more accessible for other people. I should avoid wearing any scented products to the event, as other individuals may be sensitive to smells, and refrain from using flash photography. Some attendees may be uncomfortable with physical touch. I will always ask for consent before touching someone else. There will be air filters in each room.

Some individuals may have mobility issues and/or move at a different pace than I do, so I will pay attention to my surroundings to avoid bumping into others, and I will be careful not to touch mobility devices or service animals without asking for consent first.

Sensory and Accessibility Details

I can expect natural light and several warm light fixtures in the main lobby. I can expect natural light in the hallways where the exhibitors will be present. The windows will be covered by beige sheer curtains.

The area where the Keynote and Breakout sessions take place have large warm lights. Some attendees have noticed slight flickering of the lights in these spaces. If I need to, I can bring sunglasses to make it more comfortable.

Sensory and Accessibility Details

I will hear crowd sounds, such as people talking and laughing, which may echo in larger spaces like the main lobby. Speakers will use a microphone during presentations.

The hotel lobby and the bathrooms have light music. AuSM staff has requested the hotel to turn off the music during the Conference event.

Sensory and Accessibility Details

AuSM has asked attendees and staff not to wear scented lotions or perfumes during the conference, however I may still smell soaps or shampoos while I am at conference. The hotel will be replacing soaps in the restrooms with unscented soap.

The hotel does have a swimming pool. In some areas of the hotel (although none of the conference areas), it may smell like chlorine.

Sensory and Accessibility Details

Bathrooms are located across from registration. I can locate the bathrooms on the map in my Conference Program.

All toilets and sinks in the restrooms are automatic. There may be sound in the restrooms where talking may echo in the space. There are automatic paper towel dispensers for guests to use. The bathrooms, additionally, have paper towel holders next to the sinks.

There is one single stall bathroom located down the hall from the restaurant that guests can use.

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autism society of minnesota

Thank You for Attending!