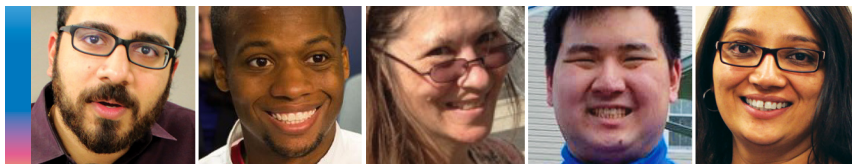




## 4 Things You Can Do for People with Autism and Related Conditions

Autism, or autism spectrum disorder (ASD), is a condition that causes social, communication, behavioral and sensory differences. Because of this, autistics may find COVID-19 vaccination settings challenging. Some people with related conditions, such as intellectual and neurological disabilities, also may experience challenges.



**You can help create a safe, accessible and inclusive vaccine experience by doing just four things:**

### 1. Don't expect autism or related conditions to look a particular way.



If you've met one person with autism, you've met one person with autism. This is also true for people with related intellectual or neurological disabilities. You might meet people who need support from a family member or friend to have a successful visit, while others may do this independently.

#### **What You Can Do**

Be understanding and supportive. If someone discloses they have a condition, direct them to the accommodations that are available rather than questioning them. Keep in mind that some people might not disclose at all.

### 2. Adjust your communication expectations and style.



Autistic people and those with related conditions communicate in a variety of ways. Some use speech, while others have limited or no speech at all. You may encounter someone who types, uses picture systems or a device to communicate. Some people you meet may not use or respond to your gestures or facial expressions, and some may not make eye contact with you even though they are listening and understand you.

#### **What You Can Do**

Assume that the person you are talking to understands and speak to them. For some individuals, you may not be able to rely on speaking to communicate. Offer to write things down, provide a map or brochure, or point to signs or other visual cues at the site.

Some people may need time to respond to your questions or instructions, so don't rush. This is true for those who speak, as well as for those who use other forms of communication.



Autism Speaks is proud to work with AshBritt to provide guidance and best practices on creating an autism-friendly experience at COVID-19 vaccine locations.

### 3. Adjust the surroundings when possible.



Some vaccine participants may be highly sensitive to sensory input, such as lights, sounds, smells or physical contact with staff. Others may seek out sensory input to help them feel calm or organized, especially in new settings.

#### What You Can Do

Help participants know where and when they can expect high and low levels of activity, sounds, smells, voices, lights and more.

When possible, allow participants to use their own methods of feeling calm, such as allowing them to be accompanied by a family member or friend, or use fidgets or other tools, such as earplugs or protective eyewear.

### 4. Try to make things predictable and easy.



Many people with autism and related conditions function best when their environments are predictable and routine. Crowds and long lines can lead to uncertainty and discomfort. Unusual behaviors, like rocking, hand flapping or needing to pace, often are a sign that someone is anxious about or is working hard to be in that place.

#### What You Can Do

If available, guide the participant to a fast-track or shorter line to reduce anxiety during waiting time.

Share the ***"Getting the COVID-19 Vaccine"*** flyer with vaccine participants and those who support them.