ABCT AUTISM
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP
September 2026 Digest

The Co-Chair Connection

Dear Autism SIG Members,

As we head into the fall season, our leadership team is excited to share several important announcements and ways to get involved as we prepare for the upcoming ABCT Annual Convention in Baltimore!

Applications and nominations are officially open for our **2026 Autism SIG Awards**. Submissions for our Travel Awards are due September 15, while applications for the Best Student Clinician-Researcher, Mid-Career, Outstanding Mentor, and our inaugural Advocacy Champion Award are due October 5.

We also invite you to **join us on November 12 at the** Kennedy Krieger Institute in Baltimore for our **Pre-Conference Meeting,** featuring networking, guided discussions, an Autistic Expertise Forum, and a keynote address by Colin Killick of the Autism Self Advocacy Network (ASAN).

Additionally, we are actively **seeking applications for our next Co-Chair Elect** (2027–2029) to join our leadership team, with submissions due by October 9. Please apply if you are interested in contributing to ongoing SIG efforts!

Thank you for your ongoing dedication to our wonderful SIG community!

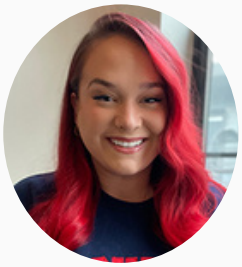
Kudos Corner

- Shoutout to our incredible **Seminar Series Planning Committee** and **Trainee Development Committee** who hosted an incredibly helpful and well attended Internship/Postdoc Panel in August!
- 🎉 Kudos to **all our trainees** beginning their predoctoral internships and those taking the exciting next step into postdoctoral fellowships —we're cheering you on as you begin this next chapter of your professional journey!

Warmly,

Katherine Pickard, PhD

Sadaf Khawar, PhD



Jordan Albright, PhD

2026 Autism SIG Awards Submissions

For the following awards, nominees must be members of both ABCT and the Autism SIG prior to application. Preference will be given to individuals whose research and/or clinical work focuses on neurodiversity-affirming applications and adaptations of CBT and/or behavior therapy with autistic individuals.

Travel Award

Four travel awards are available for $400 each. Two are reserved for trainees and two are reserved for autistic attendees presenting at ABCT.

To apply, submit:

- Documentation of acceptance to present at ABCT
- Abstract of the work you will be presenting
- A brief statement outlining why you are applying for this award (<300 words)
- Itemized travel budget needs, including registration, travel, and accommodation.
- Clearly state if you have received or may receive any other travel funding, including the amount
- Provide the city/town you will be departing from to attend ABCT
- Whether you are applying for the “Travel Award” or “Autistic Attendee Award” in your application.

Submission Deadline: September 15, 2026, at 11:59 PM EDT

Best Student Clinician-Researcher Award

For matriculated Master’s- or Doctoral-level students. Selection will be made based on the current and future impact of the applicant’s clinical and research work in the field of autism.

To apply or self nominate, submit:

- CV
- A personal statement about your current and future clinical and/or research work (<400 words)

Submission Deadline: October 5, 2026, at 11:59 PM EDT

Mid Career Award

Open to clinicians, professors, and researchers who received their doctoral degrees more than 10 but less than 20 years ago. Selection criteria will include noteworth contributions to science and/or practice relevant to autism and potential for future impact.

To apply or self-nominate, submit:

- CV
- A personal statement about your current and future clinical, advocacy/community outreach, academia, and/or research work (<400 words)

Submission Deadline: October 5, 2026, at 11:59 PM EDT

Outstanding Mentor Award

The Outstanding Mentor award seeks to acknowledge and appreciate individuals who have had a significant impact on mentees' careers, professional development, and personal growth.

To nominate someone, submit:

- A brief statement (<400 words) about how you have benefited from their mentorship and why your mentor deserves this award.

.

Submission Deadline: October 5, 2026, at 11:59 PM EDT

Please note: Mentors must be an Autism SIG member

Please send all submissions to Dr. Nicole Hendrix at
nicole.m.hendrix@emory.edu

2026 Autism SIG Awards Submissions

NEW Advocacy Champion Award

The ABCT Autism SIG Diversity Committee is excited to announce the inaugural Advocacy Champion Award! This award honors a clinician, researcher, autistic and self-advocates, caregiver, or community member who has demonstrated outstanding commitment to advancing autism acceptance, equity, and neurodiversity-affirming practice. The award recognizes contributions at any career stage that promote respectful, accessible, and inclusive support for autistic individuals and the broader developmental disability community.

Ideal nominees meet one or more of the following:

- **Advocacy for Autism Acceptance and Equity:** Promotes neurodiversity-affirming practices; challenges ableism and deficit-based narratives; amplifies autistic voices, especially individuals with marginalized identities.
- **Community Engagement and Co-Production:** Collaborates meaningfully with autistic individuals, families, or community interest-holders; integrates lived experience into research, programs, or advocacy initiatives.
- **Advancement of Affirming Clinical or Educational Practices:** Develops or promotes clinical, educational, or support practices aligned with neurodiversity principles; supports autonomy and mental health of autistic individuals.
- **Research, Policy, or Systems-Level Change:** Contributes to policy, research, or systemic change improving equity and access; advances public knowledge or implementation of affirming practices.
- **Mentorship and Leadership:** Mentors emerging advocates, clinicians, or researchers; fosters inclusive spaces; models humility and social justice–oriented leadership

To nominate someone or self-nominate, please submit the following:

- A 1–2 page nomination letter explaining how the nominee embodies one or more award criteria listed above (please submit only ONE nomination letter per nominee)
- The nominee's CV or professional summary (optional for community members)
- Up to two letters of support (optional, but encouraged); each letter should be 1 page maximum

Alternative submission formats (e.g., audio/video) are welcome for autistic/self-advocates or community nominees, describing how the nominee embodies one or more award criteria listed above

We especially encourage nominations of autistic individuals and nominees from historically marginalized communities.

Submission Deadline: October 5, 2026, at 11:59 PM EDT

Please see additional details and submit your application using this Google Form:
https://forms.gle/zFhFJSgMKBHFSxSN9

For questions about this award, please contact Dr. Jenny Phan (Diversity Committee Co-Chair) at jphan25@gmu.edu.

Award notifications will be made on the following dates:

- Travel Award - October 2, 2026
- All Other Awards Recipient Notification - November 1, 2026

Autism SIG's 2026 Pre-Conference Schedule

Date: November 12, 2026
Time: 1:30 PM – 5:00 PM
Place: Kennedy Krieger's Center for Autism Services, Science and Innovation (CASSI), 1741 Ashland Avenue, 8th Floor, Baltimore, MD

Main Event Schedule

Advance Registration Required to Attend!

Pre-doc Trainees/ Community Partners - Free
Postdoc Trainees - $20
Faculty / Clinicians / Staff - $40

1:00 PM — **Check-In Begins**
Semi-structured networking

1:30 PM — **Welcome & Introductions**

1:45 – 2:45 PM

Invited Keynote
Colin Killick, Autism Self Advocacy Network (ASAN)

-- 30 MINUTE BREAK --

Refreshments will be provided, including sandwiches, wraps, finger-foods, etc. We will also provide non-alcoholic beverages, including coffee, tea, water, etc.

3:15 – 4:00 PM — **Autistic Expertise Forum**
An opportunity for autistic people and their allies in the local community to share their work, hobbies, areas of expertise, or personal stories.

-- 5 MINUTE BREAK --

4:05 – 4:45 PM — **Guided Small Group Discussion**
Co-chaired by researchers, clinicians, autistic individuals and community members, these groups will focus on topics such as neuroaffirming practices, advocacy, and more.

4:45 – 5:00 PM — **Closing Remarks**

5:30 PM – — **Happy Hour**
Location TBD!

Questions regarding the pre-conference event can be directed to: asddsig@gmail.com

Call for the Next Autism SIG Co-Chair Elect

The time has come to pass the torch to a new leadership teammate! We are now seeking applications for our 2027 – 2029 Co-Chair.

Who: Current ABCT members who are SIG members at or above the postdoctoral level.

Role Description: This three-year volunteer opportunity includes one year as Co-Chair Elect, followed by two years as Co-Chair. The Elect year begins as a shadowing and support role, with opportunities to lead SIG activities and tasks based on interest. Responsibilities are developmentally tailored based on experience.

Main Responsibilities:

1. Provide broad oversight of SIG-disseminated content (e.g., seminars, social media) to ensure our mission is being carried out.
2. Coordinate and oversee **SIG committees,** including supporting committee leads in setting goals and tracking projects.
3. Support planning of the SIG Pre-Conference and annual conference meeting
4. Develop new SIG initiatives that foster our mission (e.g., creating and sustaining new SIG committees, expanding Convention-related events, improving SIG infrastructure)
5. Collaborate across ABCT with other SIG leaders Central Office towards ABCT's goals
6. Foster an affirming culture that centers autistic expertise, access, and inclusion.

Time commitment: Co-Chairs meet weekly for one hour and host a monthly group meeting with committee leads. Additional time demands vary, with a commitment of approximately 2 hours/week from December – April and up to 10 hours/week in late summer and fall related to annual conference activities. Co-Chairs are also expected to attend the ABCT Convention.

How to Apply (due October 9, 11:59 pm ET):
Email PDF to **katherine.e.pickard@emory.edu** containing a one-page personal statement (1" margins, 12pt font) describing your interest in the position and including:

- Your engagement with the SIG to date
- Leadership experience
- Commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, access, and justice
- How your clinical, research, service, or advocacy work aligns with our **SIG's Mission and Goals** and amplifies the priorities of the autistic community

- Curriculum Vitae

Review Process: Past SIG Co-Chairs and current Committee Leads will independently review and provide feedback to the current Co-Chairs, who make the final selection. Please indicate in your e-mail if there is any sensitive information you would like to disclose only to current Co-Chairs (and not shared with the larger review panel).

Accessibility & Inclusion: We are committed to an accessible, neuroaffirming process. Please let us know if you would like to provide materials in an alternative format or if there are other accommodations that would facilitate your submission.

Autism SIG Spotlight

This section is dedicated to getting to know the incredible individuals who make up our SIG community. Each month, we will feature one or more SIG member(s), ranging from graduate students and early-career researchers to seasoned clinicians and advocates!

Our goal is to highlight the diverse paths, passions, and projects within our group, fostering deeper connections and potential collaborations across the ABCT autism community.

https://intersectionslab.org

Shalini Sivathasan, Ph.D.

Dr. Sivathasan (she/her) is one of the current co-chairs of the Diversity Committee and the Diversity-Liaison for the Awards Committee. She is an early-career Assistant Professor in the Counseling Psychology program at Boston College. Dr. Sivathasan completed her Ph.D. in School/Applied Child Psychology at McGill University, predoctoral internship at the Marcus Autism Center/Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and a postdoctoral fellowship in the Regulation of Emotions in Autistic Adults, Children, and Teens (REAACT) Lab in Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburgh.

She directs the Intersections Lab at Boston College, conducting research that helps us to understand how autistic children, youth, and adults with intersecting and marginalized identities experience and access systems of care. Dr. Sivathasan and her doctoral students currently lead a number of grant-funded research studies to understand the extent to which autistic and neurodivergent individuals have access to neurodiversity-affirming experiences in various contexts (behavioral healthcare systems, schools, workplaces).

Ultimately, Dr. Sivathasan hopes to leverage expert knowledge through collaborations with people with lived experiences, families, community partners, and professionals to develop personalized and systems-level interventions for autistic children, adolescents, and adults across the lifespan. To learn more about the work we do and our recent publications, please visit our website! https://intersectionslab.org/

GREAT WORK Shalini!

Listserv Lowdown

In Case You Missed It (ICYMI) - Below are submissions to the listserv that you may have missed this month!

Research Recruitment Roundup

Seeking Autistic Perspectives

Researchers at Case Western Reserve University are seeking adolescent autistic participants (ages 13-18) to complete an interview and questionnaires about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences. The study is entirely virtual and participants will receive a $20 virtual gift card.

If interested please complete the survey to determine eligibility: **https://redcap.case.edu/surveys/?s=NXA43A83TRLFTXML**

Listening Sessions for BIPOC Autistic Adults

Are you an autistic adult? Do you identify as BIPOC? A neurodiverse team of researchers wants to learn how to make research better for you. Can you help? Must be based in U.S.A., identify as autistic, and be 18+ years old.

Visit **https://tinyurl.com/Toolkit5** or text/call (929)-486-2865.

For questions, email Laura at Laura.Graham@hunter.cuny.edu.

Neurodiversity in the Therapy Room: What's Your Experience

The purpose of this study is to better understand mental health clinicians' perspective on neurodiversity in their practice. We are seeking individuals who:

- Provide mental health services
- See clients under 25 years old

Check out the **STUDY FLYER** for more information

Listserv Lowdown

In Case You Missed It (ICYMI) - Below are submissions to the listserv that you may have missed this month!

Community Corner

Upcoming Virtual Trainings: Introduction to the ADOS-2

UNC Chapel Hill TEACCH Autism Program is offering 2 virtual trainings designed for School Psychologists, Clinical Psychologists, Speech-Language Pathologists, and related professionals who want to learn to use the ADOS-2 in a clinical or research setting.
Continuing education credits available.

- **ADOS-2 Modules 1-4 Workshop: September 16-17, 9am-5pm EST**
- **ADOS-2 Toddler Module Workshop: September 18 9am-4:30pm EST**

Visit the **TEACCH website** for more info and registration details

A Roadmap for Research and Practice in Autistic Females: Invitation to a Virtual Open Community Briefing

On **Friday, September 25, from 2-3:30 pm EST** you are invited to attend a community briefing on progress made in establishing the state of the science for research and practice in females on the autism spectrum and key targets to advance science and clinical and educational service provision.

The briefing is designed to share results of the discussion from the Hillman Fisher Autism Summit 2026: Females on the Autism Spectrum, a think tank convening service providers and scientists focused on girls and women on the spectrum.

Please consider attending the meeting (visit the **event website** to register).

Advocacy in Action

Explore this month's top advocacy updates, policy changes, and immediate opportunities for you to drive meaningful change.

Protect Federal Funding for Psychological Science and Behavioral Health Services

The American Psychological Association (APA) is calling on behavioral health professionals and advocates to contact their Members of Congress regarding a sweeping proposed rule from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB).

If implemented, the rule would significantly alter how federal grants and financial assistance are awarded and managed across government agencies. Key concerns include shifting grant decisions away from expert peer-review processes toward political appointees, restricting funding on certain topics, and weakening the integrity of evidence-based research and provider workforce training.

Take Action: Members are encouraged to use **APA's automated VoterVoice campaign tool** to quickly send a personalized message to your Congressional representatives urging them to oppose or block this proposed rule.

INSAR Public Statement on Vaccines and Autism

The International Society for Autism Research (INSAR) issued a public statement opposing claims or suggestions that childhood vaccination is linked to autism.

- Decades of rigorous research consistently demonstrate that vaccines are safe, effective, and lifesaving, with no credible evidence connecting them to autism.
- Autism is a complex neurodevelopmental condition driven by substantial genetic and biological factors.
- Policies or practices that suggest autism can be prevented by withholding or delaying routine medical care lack scientific support and perpetuate harmful misinformation.

The Autism SIG holds a perspective aligned with INSAR, standing firmly in support of rigorous scientific integrity, evidence-based care, and the rejection of vaccine-related autism misinformation.

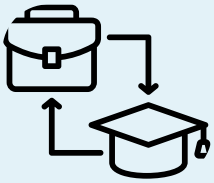
Resource Hub

Autism Resource Library

List of autism-related resources, organized by target audience (e.g., clinicians, young adults) and topics (e.g., gender and sexuality, perspectives from non-speakers).

Autism Research Faculty

Our Training & Development committee recently updated and expanded our database of universities and faculty offering doctoral-level training related to autism and developmental disabilities. Check it out if you are applying to doctoral programs!



Clinical Internship Programs

For doctoral students applying to clinical internship, we also have a database of APA-accredited clinical internship programs with autism-related activities and tracks.

Joining the Autism SIG

We are excited to welcome new SIG members who are also members of ABCT! Non-members can still join our listserv to receive email updates and event notifications. Click or scan to learn more about SIG membership benefits.

How to contribute to the monthly digest

If you want to be featured or share information to be included in the October digest, please use **this form** by October 19th!