



## Independent Living

*Contributed by Joanna Lofton, Autism Alliance of Michigan Community Resource Specialist*

Independent living is much more than simply moving out of a parent's/guardian's home, going off to college or just turning eighteen. For individuals with a disability, it is often a series of coordinated services and educational skills and processes that must be learned, if one is to experience a higher degree of independence in adulthood.

Students with an Independent Education Plan (IEP) are more likely than their neurotypical peers to be socioeconomically disadvantaged and to encounter problems with health, communication and completing typical tasks independently. Middle and Secondary school systems are charged with teaching academics as their primary focus and often fall short of utilizing the Transition process of the IEP

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(Individualized Education Program) which prepares students to successfully learn to navigate their daily lives independently. Most of that responsibility falls on the shoulders of the parent/guardian, to either teach those skills themselves or to connect with state and federal services for help.

Learning the appropriate skills such as using an alarm to wake up and good personal hygiene, should start early in childhood, but many families are overworked and overwhelmed both emotionally and financially. These and other necessary skills, along with support, allow individuals with disabilities the opportunity to live their lives as they choose. Approximately 76% of high school youth with an IEP say they expect to acquire some post secondary education, while 94% of their peers have the same expectation. This gap of almost 20% makes it even more important to acquire the needed skills to be independent (U.S. Department of Education: Preparing for life after high school: The characteristics and experiences of youth in special education).

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For those who wish to access state and federal services, it begins with applying for Medicaid. Obtaining Medicaid opens the door to Community Mental Health services. Through (CMH) an individual can obtain an array of services to assist them in learning skills to help them live more independently and be an active participant in their community.

Through Community Mental Health (CMH), the individual/family can obtain mental health therapy, medication management, support coordination, respite, community living supports, housing and transportation assistance; all specifically designed to meet their independent needs. Accessing these services can also increase the likelihood of obtaining and maintaining employment.

Employment has benefits far beyond the increase in available financial resources. It has been shown to improve both physical, mental and emotional wellbeing. Working can also increase the opportunity to create lasting friendships and positive community involvement.

Individuals with disabilities want and deserve the same opportunities as everyone else, and with the assistance of family and the community, a fuller life is not out of reach.

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**For additional information and resources on Independent Living and other topics, please reach out**

**to the Autism Alliance of Michigan with any questions or concerns at any time**

[navigator@aaomi.org](mailto:navigator@aaomi.org) or [877-463-2266](tel:877-463-2266).





## Autism Cultural Competency Statistics

*Contributed by AAoM's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee*



Patricia Wright from Next Autism came to speak to the AAoM's Provider Meeting about cultural competency, as it relates to the Autism community. She left us with some things to think about that we would like to share:

### People with Autism

- Life expectancy is 20-36 years shorter than the general population (Hirvoski et al, 2016) (Guan & LI 2017)
- 37% of young adults are disconnected from school/work after high school (Roux et al 2015)
- Less than 8% of youth with LD,ED or SLI were disconnected (Roux et al 2015)
- 42% of young autistic adults never work for pay (Roux et al 2015)
- 38% of employed adults with ASD report being underemployed (Roux et al 2015)
- The cumulative incidence of death by suicide is: 0.17%; the typical population is 0.11% (Kirby et al 2018)
- Females with ASD are three times more likely to die from suicide as females without ASD (Kirby et al 2018)
- Women report higher unmet service need(s)



# Upcoming Community Events



Date	Event
September 23-25	<a href="#"><u>2021 World Autism Conference and Gala</u></a>
September 24	<a href="#"><u>Bluestone VOICES for Autism Golf Outing</u></a>
September 25	<a href="#"><u>Disability Network Oakland &amp; Macomb Meet Me on the Trail Barrier-Free Family Fun Day</u></a>
September 25	<a href="#"><u>The Arc Livingston- Sibshops</u></a>
September 27	<a href="#"><u>On My Own Virtual Open House RSVP</u></a>
September 28	<a href="#"><u>Adaptive Dance Class</u></a>
September 29	<a href="#"><u>Disability Network Oakland Mobile Outreach</u></a>
September 29	<a href="#"><u>Families of Children with Neurodevelopmental Disabilities: Lessons Learned From COVID-19</u></a>





“Improving employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities”



Upbound at Work, a fully integrated program within the Autism Alliance of Michigan, leads and supports disability-employment initiatives throughout the State of Michigan.

Contact Upbound at Work to receive additional information:

Website: <https://autismallianceofmichigan.org/employee-pre-assessment/>

Website: <https://upboundatwork.com/>

Email: [upbound@aaomi.org](mailto:upbound@aaomi.org)

Phone: [248.590.2773](tel:248.590.2773)



**MiPAAC**  
MICHIGAN PARENT, ADVOCATE  
& ATTORNEY COALITION

Michigan Parent, Advocate & Attorney Coalition (MiPAAC) is a newly formed statewide group focused on student-centered advocacy.

MiPAAC aims to educate families of children with special education needs on topics relevant to their advocacy efforts.

To join – complete the [\*\*MiPAAC membership form!\*\*](#)

<https://mipaac.org/>

