



**Contact:** Craig Fahle  
VVK PR + Creative  
Craig@vvkagency.com  
313.307.6658

OR

Kristi Jackson  
Autism Alliance of Michigan  
[kristi.jackson@aaomi.org](mailto:kristi.jackson@aaomi.org)  
248.915.6675

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## MEDIA ADVISORY

### Autism Alliance of Michigan Available to Discuss 5 Steps to Create a Back-To-School Plan for Children with Autism and Their Families

WHAT: The Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM) is available for interviews in preparation for the new school year.

Back-to-school is an important time for all children, especially children with autism who often depend on the structure and routine provided by daily classes. It's easy to get caught up in the back-to-school hype and before you know it August is gone! The Autism Alliance of Michigan has been leading efforts to make Michigan a better place to live for people with autism and their families. **AAoM CEO Colleen Allen** and **AAoM Health Education Coordinator Kathleen Larson** are available for interviews to discuss in detail the five important steps families need to take when planning for back-to-school:

- 1. Prioritize routine health and wellness screenings:** Children cannot participate in school without a routine health screening. Kids must be up to date on pediatric appointments, routine vaccinations and now might be a good time to consider a COVID vaccine. Effective and safe COVID vaccines are currently available for children of all ages and may prevent disruptions to everyday routines.

2. **Establish and communicate a personal safety plan for your child:** Peace of mind comes with establishing a comprehensive safety plan for your child. First, consider meeting with your child’s therapist to create a behavioral intervention plan. Then, you may meet with local law enforcement to create a “911-type alert system” in case of emergency. If your child tends to wander, investigate a wearable GPS tracking device.
3. **Create or update your child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP):** An appropriate, effective IEP, 504 or other education plan is your child’s roadmap to a successful school experience and a smoother transition to life after high school. A well-developed education plan sets high expectations for your child and provides the support and services they need to meet academic and functional goals. And Back-to-School isn’t the only time to plan. Parents should consider re-visiting the plan as needed to discuss any concerns or update the school team with new information about your child’s changing needs.
4. **Consider and coordinate support for the entire family:** School schedules can be hectic and taxing for all family members. Managing different schedules and needs often creates household tension that can trigger mental health challenges for parents and siblings. Make sure you have support services for every family member, not just your child with autism. And remember establishing a recreation and free-time routine every week will benefit the whole family.
5. **Review all wellness activities to make sure they are integrated and supportive of each other:** Diagnostic and intervention services should be combined with a strong educational plan to ensure the best outcomes for your child. Considering every aspect of our children’s lives – health, nutrition, hygiene, necessary interventions, and academics – helps us support our children and helps them achieve at their highest capacity. Back-to-school is the perfect time to think through health and wellness activities to support your child and the entire family.

#### **ABOUT THE AUTISM ALLIANCE OF MICHIGAN**

The Autism Alliance of Michigan (AAoM) is the trusted ally and partner for thousands of families dealing with autism. AAoM’s mission is to lead efforts to raise expectations and expand opportunities for people affected by autism across the lifespan. We work to create a more accepting future for all people by cultivating a world rich in diverse abilities, talents, and ideas. An AAoM navigator can be reached at 877-463-2266 (AAOM) or email at [navigator@aaomi.org](mailto:navigator@aaomi.org). More information about AAoM can be found at [www.autismallianceofmichigan.org](http://www.autismallianceofmichigan.org)

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