

RUTGERS CENTER FOR ADULT AUTISM SERVICES

RUTGERS UNIVERSITY-NEW BRUNSWICK

Case for Support





RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY, IS COMMITTED TO BECOMING A NATIONAL LEADER IN THE AREAS OF RESEARCH, PROFESSIONAL TRAINING, AND PRACTICAL SERVICE IN SUPPORT OF ADULTS WITH AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDER (ASD). AS PART OF THIS COMMITMENT, THE UNIVERSITY IS CREATING THE RUTGERS CENTER FOR ADULT AUTISM SERVICES.

The center will provide customized vocational and residential services for adults with ASD, situated within integrated community settings, while equipping Rutgers students with the clinical and professional expertise desperately needed to support this underserved population. The center will also serve as a hub for Rutgers' interdisciplinary research collaborations on the subject of adult autism, yielding the translational research outcomes needed to inform public policy and best practices in meeting the needs of adults with ASD for years to come.

**THE CENTER'S WORK WILL
FOCUS ON TWO CORE
ON-CAMPUS PROGRAMS:**

- **a Workday Program**, *providing 50 to 60 adult participants with prevocational, vocational, and recreational opportunities; and*
- **a Pilot Residential Program**, *providing residence and services for 20 adult ASD participants who will live alongside 20 Rutgers graduate students and work on campus.*

AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH

THE RUTGERS CENTER FOR ADULT AUTISM SERVICES will offer adults with ASD a one-of-a-kind support program that makes an independent and fulfilling life possible. Simultaneously, it will advance research and ensure that each year, a cadre of graduates leaves Rutgers prepared to enter careers in support of this underserved population.

For most adults with ASD, gaining greater independence is a palpable and distinct goal. It is achievable when these adults are given the tools they need to earn a living and participate in the social aspects of community life, from navigating everyday interactions to building meaningful relationships. Unfortunately for most, services diminish greatly after high school, leaving adults with little support outside of their own families, and making it exceedingly difficult for them to achieve their potential.

In an effort to address these and other issues faced by adults with ASD, the Rutgers Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology is forming the Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services. Located on Rutgers' Douglass Campus, the center will feature a comprehensive program that is designed to support adults ages 21 to 60 with mild to moderate ASD through a wide range of services specifically tailored to meet their individual needs. Staffed by a highly experienced senior team and trained graduate students, these programs will provide the support needed for all participants to fully integrate into Rutgers and the surrounding community. From vocational training to social support and clinical services, the center will equip program participants with the tools they need to enhance and maintain autonomy—all while engaging students in innovative training and facilitating translational research to inform best practices going forward.

IN SUM, THE CENTER WILL DRAW UPON RUTGERS' EXTENSIVE RESOURCES IN AUTISM RESEARCH AND SUPPORT, PUTTING THEM INTO PRACTICAL ACTION CENTERED ON THREE KEY OBJECTIVES:

- **providing unmatched services** *for adults with ASD in an inclusive and integrated community;*
- **establishing a centralized location for academic research** *by leveraging and expanding on the university's existing interdisciplinary resources in the area of autism; and*
- **developing comprehensive clinical training and educational programs** *to prepare Rutgers students to meet the needs of adult clients with ASD in the future.*

This kind of integrative service, research, and training program is unmatched anywhere; as such, the center will serve as a model for organizations around the world that seek to rise to the challenge of providing services to an ever-increasing number of adults with ASD.



AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY

THE WORKDAY PROGRAM

The Workday Program will ultimately provide 50 to 60 adults with ASD, ages 21 to 60, with meaningful vocational experiences at Rutgers. This top-quality, highly customized support program will be funded by New Jersey's Department of Developmental Disabilities and supplemented with fundraising. It will run Monday through Friday, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

THE PILOT RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

The Pilot Residential Program will provide residence and support for adults with ASD, ages 21 to 60, allowing them to live and work as independently as possible in the university community. With the customized support of clinicians, professional staff, and trained students, they will enjoy a lifestyle that is individualized according to their own preferences, comfort, and fulfillment.

Services for the Pilot Residential Program will be funded by annual participant tuition and will ultimately support 20 adult residents who will live in an integrated apartment building alongside 20 Rutgers graduate students. These services will be provided as needed around the clock, including overnight and on weekends. After demonstrating the success of this model, Rutgers aims to help others develop similar programs.

The Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services will make an independent and fulfilling lifestyle attainable for adults with ASD by providing assistance and support in all aspects of participants' lives, from vocational and recreational support to life skills development.

ASD is one of the fastest growing developmental disabilities in America, with an estimated one in 68 children nationally and one in 45 in New Jersey carrying a diagnosis. By law, public schools are required to provide children with various disabilities, including autism, with access to special services that can accommodate their unique needs as they grow up. Whether it takes the shape of one-on-one teaching aids, a special education curriculum, or home instruction programs, the law mandates that children be given the tools they need to make educational progress. While it is not perfect, the public education system strives to be a resource for children with autism and their families.

However, once they leave the public school system, there are few resources that have the kind of expert support necessary to help many adults with ASD locate and be successful in jobs and other aspects of their lives. The challenge is clear: experts and families agree that despite millions of dollars in research funding to



RUTGERS IS MUCH LIKE ANY OTHER COMMUNITY: IT HAS TRANSPORTATION, RECREATION, AND PLACES TO WORK. BUT IT ALSO HAS A VAST BREADTH AND DEPTH OF AUTISM EXPERTISE THAT CAN BE EMPLOYED TO CREATE A COMMUNITY-INCLUSIVE MODEL UNLIKE ANYTHING THAT CURRENTLY EXISTS.

study autism, the United States lacks practical services to support adults with ASD. The Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services intends to demonstrate how universities can become part of the answer by providing a model that integrates academic research, student training, and comprehensive community inclusion of adults with ASD.

JOBS THAT MATTER

Experts say the best gauge of whether an individual with autism can maintain autonomy is determining whether he or she can secure and maintain a paid job. Benefiting from Rutgers' on-campus resources—from bookstores and libraries to offices, dining halls, and an operational farm—participants will work with a team of vocational experts to find jobs that match their unique interests and strengths. The center will tap into Rutgers' vast network of facilities to find jobs for participants that align with who they are, what they like to do, and where their talents lie. Would they prefer to be outdoors or indoors? Do they have computer skills? Do they thrive in bustling or quiet environments? These are just some of the preferences and abilities that will be considered during the job matching and sampling process.

Bookworms might find success in one of the university's many libraries; sports fans might want to assist in sports or recreational facilities; animal lovers may enjoy working on Rutgers' operational farm; computer aficionados might do well with data entry. Before their first day, participants will receive prevocational training in a new building designed and customized with that purpose in mind. Once they're on the job, oversight and assistance can take the shape of one-on-one accompaniment to the job site for each shift, or it could simply mean checking in every so often. It is a model that is completely guided by the needs of the individual.

AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY (continued)

TRANSPORTATION AND ACCESS

Transportation is paramount to independence, and a lack of transit options is often a barrier to gaining employment that might otherwise be available to individuals with developmental disabilities. Rutgers benefits from having the largest campus bus system in the country, as well as many walking and bike paths. With assistance, as dictated by need, participants will learn to use the bus and pathways to access their jobs, recreational facilities, dining options, and other destinations on campus and in the local community. Ultimately, this means that participants will gain complete or supported autonomy as it relates to transportation, translating to greater freedom overall.

TIME FOR RECREATION

The center will create an environment in which adults with ASD can enjoy full participation and inclusion in campus life, and that includes recreation. Whether through formal programming or independent exploring, participants will have full access to all Rutgers has to offer, from amenities like gyms, tennis courts, and pools to sporting events, stage performances, and dining. Clinical staff will be available for one-on-one supervision, convening a small group to attend an event together, or providing minimal guidance, as dictated by individual need.

The university's host cities and towns offer additional shopping, dining, and entertainment options. Close proximity to New Brunswick's train station provides easy access for family visits, as well as outings to Manhattan or other parts of New Jersey.



LIFESTYLE SUPPORT

In existing models, effective life skills education does not exist much beyond the teenage years. But most adults with ASD can continue to improve on established life skills and also learn new ones. At the Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services, staff will approach this area as an ongoing learning opportunity. Residents who need it will have support in learning to cook, clean, develop social and hygiene skills, budget, and complete chores independently or as part of a group.

Indeed, skill levels among participants will vary. The center's model is that each resident is supported to the extent needed, so the focus always remains on an individualized approach to completing daily tasks independently, or interdependently, with staff.

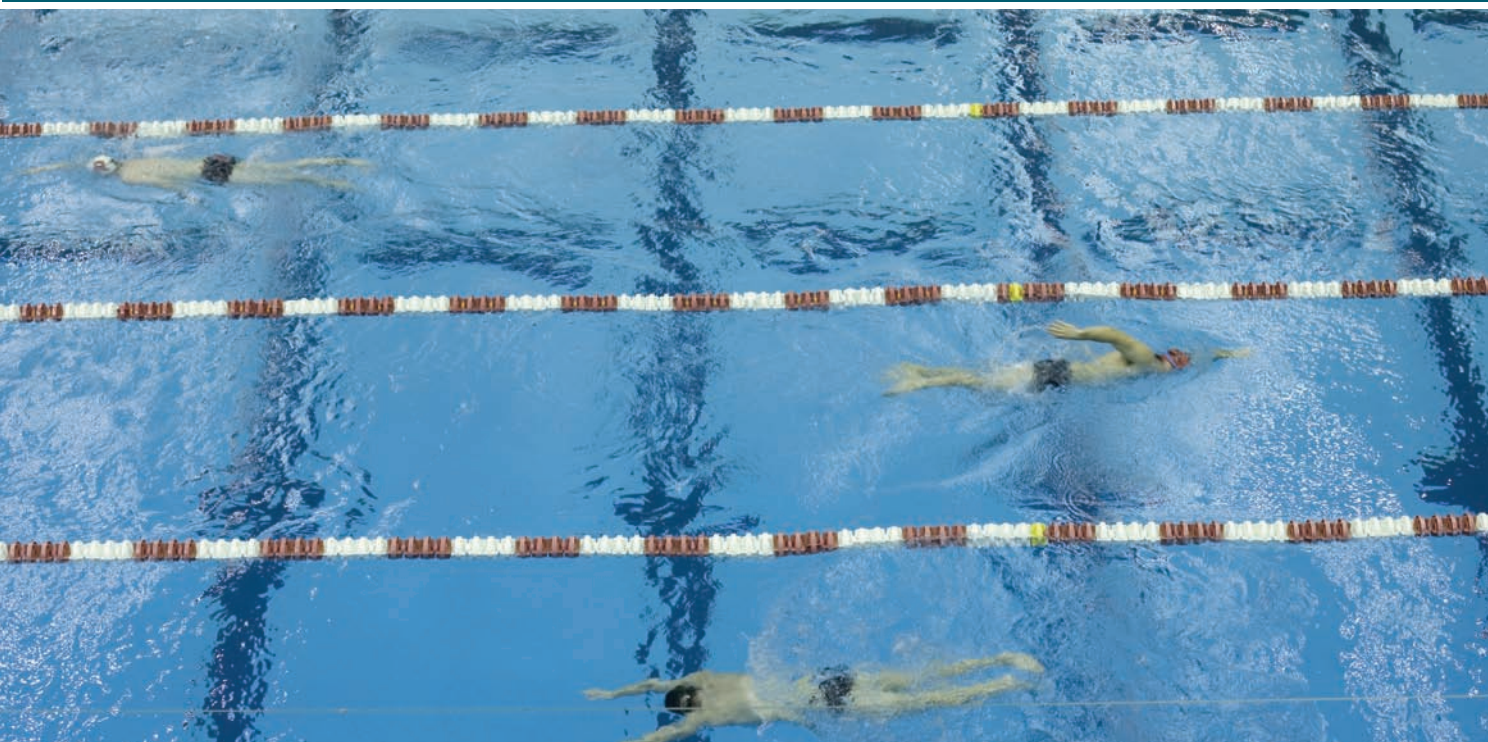
A COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS

The Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services' Workday Program will benefit from a new building on the picturesque Douglass Campus. This building will serve as a meeting point and include staff offices, professional kitchen equipment, state-of-the-art computers and other technology, and dedicated life skills teaching areas.

The Pilot Residential Program will be in a second new building, also on the Douglass Campus, with the goal of accommodating 20 adults with ASD and 20 Rutgers graduate students living side by side. The building will consist of one-, two-, three-, and four-bedroom residences, each equipped with its own kitchen as well as its own dining, living, and laundry rooms.

The center's buildings will be within walking distance of amenities like the Douglass Campus Center and recreational facilities and will be five minutes from a main Rutgers bus stop.

CENTER RESIDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO THE AMENITIES CURRENTLY ENJOYED BY STUDENTS AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE RUTGERS COMMUNITY, INCLUDING THE BUS SYSTEM, EATERIES, AND RECREATIONAL FACILITIES SHOWN HERE.



TRAINING AND RESEARCH IN ACTION

The Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services will not only prioritize interdisciplinary research to drive innovation, but also provide Rutgers students with the specialized training they need after graduation to serve the growing ASD population.

TRAINING FOR TOMORROW

With autism affecting more than two million individuals in America and tens of millions worldwide, most professionals can expect to meet many adults with ASD in their working lives and beyond. But regardless of occupation, there simply are not enough trained professionals to work with this population. And, all too often, services generated specifically to serve this group provide minimal or no staff training on how to interact and work with adults with ASD. For a new generation of professionals and clinicians to be prepared to meet the needs of this underserved group, they must be exposed to its unique challenges and potential, and receive exceptional training that is based on credible research and best practices.

By working or living alongside the center's residents, 50 graduate and undergraduate students each year will receive the hands-on, evidence-based training needed to serve adults with ASD, both on campus and as professionals after graduation. Rutgers students training in the center will be supported by expert faculty clinicians and professional staff mentors, as well as motivated by personal involvement and their course of study, to learn and implement best practices. Upon graduation, these students will become nurses, social workers, businesspeople, psychologists, physicians, and other professionals equipped to work with the adult ASD population. Their increased awareness may also inspire them to pursue

opening similar programs and residences to meet the urgent demand for creative and innovative approaches to workday programs and community housing.

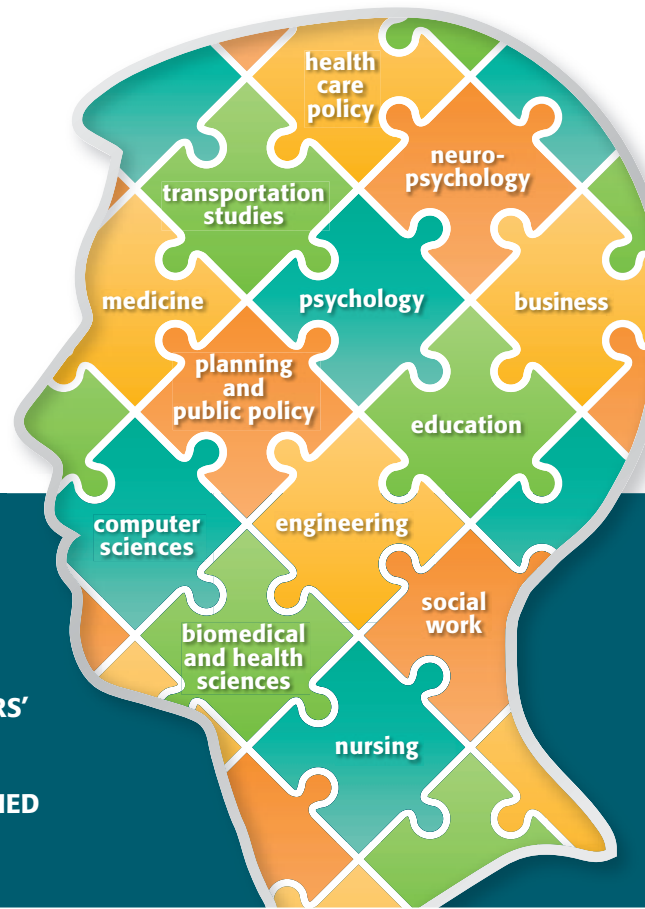
Students working with the ASD population at the center will leave Rutgers with a professional education that prepares them to meet the needs of the adult ASD population beyond the university's gates.

INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND RESOURCES

Rutgers is home to a tremendous breadth and depth of autism expertise that crosses disciplines and units. Resources include the Rutgers University Cell and DNA Repository, which contains the world's largest collection of autism biomaterials; Rutgers University Behavioral Health Care, which provides integrated behavioral health service and delivery systems supported by multidisciplinary clinical training, consultation, and supervision opportunities for students and professionals; the Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology, which is home to the Douglass Developmental Disabilities Center, an on-campus K–12 autism unit; and the Project: Natural Setting Therapeutic Management program, a behavioral consultation and training program designed to assist families in maintaining a therapeutic environment at home.

Under the guidance of a dedicated executive director and an experienced professional staff, the center will

leverage these and other university resources to work hand in hand with local agencies and communities. Additionally, a newly appointed endowed chair in adult autism will be tasked with discovering, developing, and optimizing evidence-based best practices benefiting ASD individuals. Ultimately, the findings that grow out of the center's research will be translated into real-world solutions that inform education, intervention, and public policy as they pertain to adults with ASD.



WITH 18 SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES AND 175 CENTERS AND INSTITUTES AT ITS DISPOSAL, THE RUTGERS CENTER FOR ADULT AUTISM SERVICES IS UNIQUELY POISED TO LEVERAGE RUTGERS' DIVERSE FACULTY INTERESTS ACROSS DISCIPLINES, YIELDING THE MOST ADVANCED CLINICAL AND APPLIED RESEARCH IN SUPPORT OF ADULTS WITH ASD.

IN ADDITION TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED AND PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY'S EXPERTISE, SOME OF THE CENTER'S PLANNED PARTNERS AND ANTICIPATED GOALS AND/OR CONTRIBUTIONS INCLUDE:

Center for Advanced Infrastructure and Transportation: *research and develop policy to enhance public transit systems, promoting greater independence and quality of life for adults with ASD*

Computer Science: *develop assistive and adaptive software and hardware technology to support clinical interventions and lead discoveries in sensor technologies, facilitating state-of-the-art smart home technology designed for adults with ASD*

Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy: *research and develop innovative public policy in residential, vocational, and recreational services that can inform regional, national, and international communities about best practices in support of the ASD population*

Graduate School of Education: *collaborate on advanced training for educational practitioners and leaders who will graduate ready to serve the adult ASD population*

Institute for Health, Health Care Policy, and Aging Research: *advance research and policy in support of evidence-based practices for the adult ASD population*

Rutgers Biomedical and Health Sciences: *collaborate on innovative translational and longitudinal research to improve outcomes for the ASD population*

Rutgers Business School–Newark and New Brunswick: *create social entrepreneurship and internship programs in partnership with employers, to develop and expand vocational opportunities for adults with ASD*

Rutgers' medical and nursing schools: *contribute faculty expertise and collaborate on clinical and pharmacology training and research opportunities for students*

School of Arts and Sciences: *develop skills of psychology, neuropsychology, and other science students to meet the needs of ASD individuals*

School of Social Work: *provide valuable guidance and training in case management and transition planning, as well as provide direct services to program participants*

INVITATION FOR SUPPORT

Rutgers has a threefold mission of research, teaching, and service that the Rutgers Center for Adult Autism Services will meet from all angles. Convening university experts from a variety of disciplines will ensure that the most innovative research is supported at the center. Integrating adults with ASD into the Rutgers community will provide a critical service, and through their participation in this program, undergraduate and graduate students will gain a hands-on learning experience that is unmatched elsewhere.





RUTGERS INVITES ITS SUPPORTERS TO INVEST IN THIS PIONEERING INITIATIVE FOR NEW JERSEY. UPON OPENING ITS DOORS, THE RUTGERS CENTER FOR ADULT AUTISM SERVICES WILL PROVIDE UNPRECEDENTED SUPPORT FOR AN UNDERSERVED POPULATION.

Over time, it will generate cutting-edge translational research, transforming policy and best practices as they pertain to adults with ASD for years to come, and motivate scores of graduating students each year to pursue careers in support of this group.

To learn more, contact Mary Chrow, director of development at Rutgers University Foundation, at 848-445-3959.

DONATIONS OF ALL LEVELS WILL HELP THE RUTGERS CENTER FOR ADULT AUTISM SERVICES REACH ITS FUNDRAISING GOAL.

**GRADUATE SCHOOL OF APPLIED
AND PROFESSIONAL PSYCHOLOGY**

Mary Chrow, Director of Development
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
152 Frelinghuysen Road
Piscataway, NJ 08854

CALL

848-445-3959

CLICK

gsappweb.rutgers.edu
support.rutgers.edu

EMAIL

chrow@rci.rutgers.edu