HONESTLY AUTISM DAY

Call for Proposals

Saturday April 17 2027 | West Village Commons | Towson University

Honestly Autism Day invites proposals for engaging, honest, and affirming breakout sessions that bring Autistic people, family members, professionals, educators, and community partners together to learn from one another. We are seeking presentations that presume competence, recognize the gifts and varied lived experiences of Autistic people, address real needs without apology, integrate evidence-based information and inspire meaningful shifts in perspective and practice.

Honestly Autism Day is presented by the Partnership Project, a collaboration among the Autism Society of Baltimore-Chesapeake, the Department of Special Education at Towson University, and Pathfinders for Autism.

What We Are Looking For

Strong proposals will:

- Center Autistic voices, perspectives, expertise, and individual and family's lived experiences
- Reflect the conference commitments to presuming competence, honesty, dignity, acceptance, embracing the full continuum of the autistic lived experience and belonging.
- Offer useful ideas, strategies, resources, or insights that participants can apply in their lives, relationships, communities, classrooms, workplaces, or services.
- Respect the diversity of the autism community, including people with high-intensity support needs, nonspeaking and minimally speaking people, and people across ages, identities, communication styles, and life circumstances.
- Create opportunities for reflection, dialogue, and perspective change rather than relying only on lecture.

Autistic leadership matters. The conference is committed to having Autistic presenters comprise at least 50% of the program. We strongly encourage proposals led or co-led by Autistic people and collaborations that value lived, family, community, and professional expertise.

Who We Hope to Hear From

We welcome a diversity of presenters, including Autistic teens and adults, family members and siblings, educators, clinicians and related service providers, researchers, advocates, employers, and community partners. Academic credentials are not required; lived experience and community knowledge are valued forms of expertise. However, preference will be given to experienced presenters to ensure we maintain the quality of presentations that HAD attendees have grown to know and expect.

Possible Session Topics

Proposals may address these or other topics aligned with the purpose of Honestly Autism Day, topics with an * are the topics of greatest need and will be a priority:

Advocacy, self-determination, identity, and Autistic adulthood	Employment, postsecondary education, transition, housing, independent living, and dignity of risk
Communication, AAC, and support for nonspeaking or minimally speaking people	Family and sibling perspectives, caregiving, and newly diagnosed families
Community, friendship, relationships, and belonging	Health, *mental health and well-being, *sensory needs, *self-regulation, executive functioning, safety
Education, inclusion, literacy, and neurodiversity-affirming practice	*High-intensity support needs and the experiences of people sometimes described as having profound autism

Session Format

- Breakout sessions are 60 minutes and will be presented in person.
- Sessions should include meaningful participant engagement and time for questions or discussion.
- The planning committee may invite selected presenters to offer the same session during more than one breakout rotation.
- Panels and co-presented sessions are welcome. Please identify one primary contact for each proposal.

Proposal Information

Please be prepared to submit the following on the submission form:

- Session title
- Primary presenter's name, pronouns, email address, and phone number
- To help with our mission of at least 50% autistic speakers, please include whether or not you identify as autistic _yes _no. If you are autistic, are you comfortable with this information being shared publicly _yes _no
- Names, pronouns, affiliations, and brief biographies for all presenters (share former presentations and related experience)
- A session description for reviewers:
  - Explains the purpose of your presentation, the specific content, how you will engage participants, autistic, family, or lived perspectives, specific strategies or resources that will be shared and practical takeaways (word count: 250-350 words)
- A short program description for conference participants
  - A concise, inviting description that helps attendees understand what the session covers who it is for and what they will gain (word count: 75-100 words)

- A timed agenda, see example:
  - *60 Minutes Sample Timed Agenda:*
  - Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)
  - Background information (5 minutes)
  - Introduction to primary concepts/content (15 minutes)
  - Application/engagement of participants with content (10 minutes)
  - Identification of key takeaways and resources (10 minutes)
  - Audience questions and answers (10 minutes)
  - Wrap up/closing (5 minutes)
- Three measurable participant learning outcomes using action verbs [see link for examples]
- Intended audience and the age or life stage addressed, if applicable
- Session format and plan for participant engagement
- How the session reflects the values of Honestly Autism Day and centers or meaningfully includes Autistic perspectives
- Technology, accessibility, communication, or room needs (please note that room requests are limited by the conference venue)
- Whether the presenter or team is willing to repeat the session or provide the content in a different format (e.g. poster)

Selection Process

Proposals will be reviewed by a conference subcommittee that includes Autistic, family, educator, and founding-partner perspectives. We will engage in a "blind, double-peer review process." This means that two members of the committee will independently review and score your presentation proposal. All names and identifying information will be removed from your proposal so that the reviewers will not know who authored the proposal. All proposals will be reviewed and rated using the following rubric below:

Criterion	What reviewers will consider	Surpasses Criteria: 3	Meets Criteria: 2	Insufficient Information shared related to criteria: 1
Alignment	Fit with the purpose and non-negotiable commitments of Honestly Autism Day			
Voice	Authentic inclusion and leadership of Autistic people, their parents and siblings and respect for varied lived experiences			
Value	Clear relevance and practical benefit for the intended audience			
Engagement	A thoughtful plan for interaction, reflection, or discussion			

Clarity	A focused, understandable proposal that can be delivered effectively in 60 minutes			
Contribution	Significance of subject matter that contribute to the suggested program topics, ages, perspectives, and support needs			

Final selections will also consider the balance and coherence of the full conference program.

How to Submit

1. Complete the online proposal form at this link: Honestly Autism Day Call for Proposals – Fill out form
2. Submit your proposal by [October 23rd at 5:00pm].
3. The primary contact will receive a decision by [November 13th].

Questions or access support: Jelsie Taggert. jtagger1@students.towson.edu

Presenter Commitments

By accepting an invitation to present, presenters agree to:

- Present in person at Towson University on April 17, 2027.
- Use respectful, accessible, and inclusive language and materials.
- Avoid deficit-only framing, cure-focused messaging, and claims that dismiss or generalize Autistic experiences.
- Provide presentation materials by the established deadline and communicate accessibility needs in advance.
- Honor confidentiality and obtain permission before sharing identifiable stories, images, or information about others.

Help us create a day filled with honesty, connection, revelation, shared ideas, and the momentum for meaningful change.