

NEW LESSONS, NEW STRATEGIES

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Abstract

The Autism Programs at the Center for Development & Disability (CDD) is a large, statewide program that provides community services, training, supports, and dissemination for families and individuals with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and to the providers that support them. New Mexico is a large, rural state, 5th largest geographically but just 36th in population. Just under half of our population resides in the Albuquerque metropolitan area; 33% of our state's counties are classified as "frontier" with fewer than 8 people per square mile. New Mexico is one of five minority-majority states, more than 1/2 the population is comprised of people of color. 26.5% of New Mexicans speak Spanish as their primary language. Issues of access to behavioral health, therapies, specialty health care, diagnostic services and case management are continually endorsed by our constituents. We have re-examined our goals in light of the pandemic, statewide closures, ongoing health concerns and access issues for our population. As a program, we have realized the need to be responsive, flexible and resourceful particularly in times of stressful, emergency situations.

We will share new strategies to reach our population including the use of culturally sensitive visual information and health education resources.

Native American Outreach

Tribal communities

The Autism Programs place great importance on outreach to the Native American community. New Mexico has 23 federally recognized tribes located throughout the state as well as many tribal members living off the reservation in urban communities. Native Americans make up 10% of the state's population.

Strategies

This makes our outreach efforts diverse and we utilize many strategies to get our messages out to the community. From radio, to targeted COVID safety messages, social media,

podcasts, trainings, and storytelling, we have been able to outreach to many communities and families.

Challenges

The biggest challenge we have encountered is outreach in very rural and frontier areas. Radio has been helpful in reaching these areas.

Moving forward

Our goal is to ensure that the Native American community is knowledgeable about autism and able to access our resources. We will continue to work to ensure that our programs are culturally sensitive and accessible to all communities in our state.

COVID Education



Native Voices Project

YONA

"I am Navajo from Arizona but live in New Mexico. My son 'Yona' has autism and is 15. I had a lot of ups and downs when I was pregnant with him, he was 9lbs 5 oz and I had a c-section. The minute I held him, my motherly instinct told me he was different. He was slowly hitting milestones, but it was a lot of extra work. I mentioned to my doctor that he might have autism but had to advocate for a diagnosis until he was diagnosed by age 5 by UNM CDD. We had to constantly advocate for services, ultimately switching schools. Yona is now in high school and doing better. He has a great team helping him work toward independence. He pushes toward his independence now and is making plans for life after high school. It's been a major journey to get from not talking to being able to tell me his life plans!

We are traditional Navajo and my son participates and is a part of that. We found our harmony and balance through our culture and ceremonies. My son understands that this is who we are as a people and this is how we help ourselves. He connects with it on a deep level. The ancestors are there to help guide and move him forward in life. He will be looked after, after I am gone and he is older.

As a family, we researched autism and had to educate ourselves on it. We realized that we had to do more for Yona and that things take longer for him to learn. Adjustments needed to be made. Smaller steps needed to be taken to teach. We would like families to know that early intervention and finding a way to work with your child is best. You have to work together with the programs and laws to make things happen. You have to advocate. Also, allow your child to practice independence. And don't be afraid to reach out. I see a semi-independent life for Yona. I am choosing to be realistic and satisfied with the level he is choosing to live. I just want him to have a good life."

Weaving Colors

Weaving Colors: AUTISM & THE NATIVE COMMUNITY

A presentation series dedicated to discussing important topics on autism and how they are viewed and addressed in the native culture.

Join us Wed. October 19th 2022
1 - 2:30pm MST

Autism and Early Childhood Intervention with the Native American Professional Parent Resource organization (NAAPR)

Presenter:
Sarah Braaten,
Service Coordinator/Developmental Specialist III, Special Education, MA

To register, please scan the QR code or Click Here



Hilos Sobre el Autismo

Why it was created

Spanish speaking families may face unique challenges based on their unique cultural and language differences in their attempt to navigate services to support their loved one with ASD. This population also has inherent strengths in their sense of community, resiliency and family.

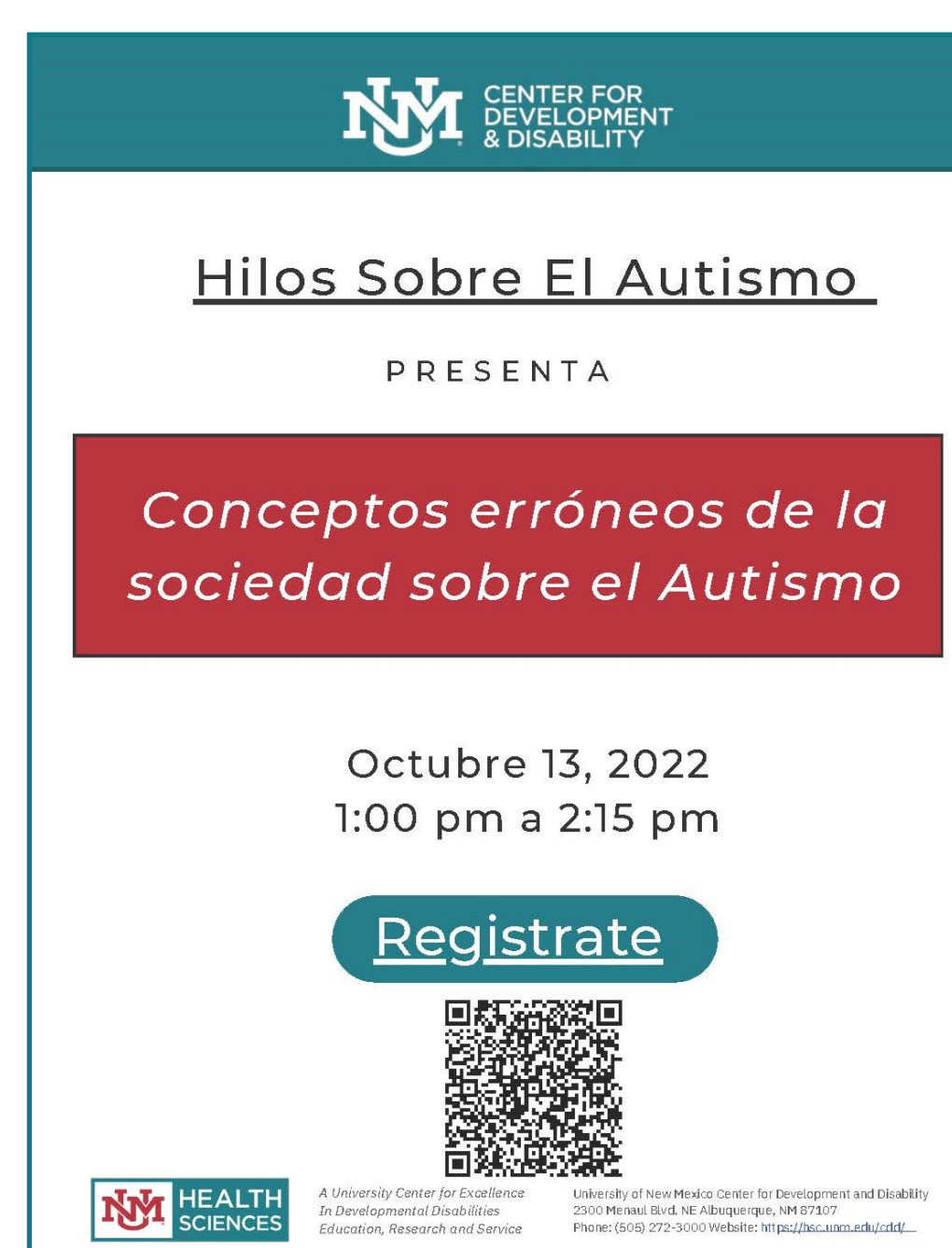
A team was developed which included professionals that grew up within the Hispanic culture and understands some of the specific challenges that the community faces. Hilos Sobre el Autismo has been providing resources, strategies and tips as well as a safe place where Spanish speaking families can come and share their struggles as well as their achievements with other Spanish speaking families

Topics addressed

The topics that we have covered have come directly from the needs that families have expressed. We have done 23 trainings in Spanish to date with additional trainings planned. Some of the topics covered include: Addressing Challenging Behavior; Supporting Siblings; Understanding IEP/Special Education; Anxiety; Finding Resources for Your Child; Puberty; Parenting Tips; Finding Health Care Supports; Back to School Prep; and ASD Conscious Places to Visit.

How it has evolved

Hilos has become a model within our Autism Programs for support to other diverse populations in our state.



Goals

Our goals are to outreach and share information about autism with rural NM communities.

Method

Needs are identified through dialogue with community members and leaders. Through community conversations, we identify subject experts, resources and information necessary to respond to community requests. Our conversation is then produced into a podcast which is marketed to both the community and to our state.

Challenges

Many groups were shut down or hard to contact during the pandemic. Some parts of the state still do not have active support groups at this time.

Outcomes and successes

We have done 15 podcasts up to this point, with additional podcasts planned. Some of the topics covered include: Self-Care: Ideas to support your loved one and yourself; Stress, Mental Health and Coping; Embracing community and finding understanding; Navigating Relationships: From Friendships to Romance.

