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## Duke Center for Autism and Brain Development *Connections* Newsletter

Summer 2022

### A Message from the Director

I hope you are enjoying the beginning of summer. A spring highlight here at the Duke Center for Autism and Brain Development, was our keynote speaker for Autism Awareness/Acceptance Month, Representative Jessica Benham. More than 250 attendees listened to her story of overcoming stigma and channeling her talents to advocate for change. Afterwards, Duke students enjoyed a small-group Q & A session where she shared advice on self-advocacy in a world that she explained is “built for neurotypical people.”

With **multiple open studies**, our research continues. **If you have participated in any of our research studies, we would like your feedback. You can tell us about your experience by taking a short, 3-minute [Satisfaction Survey here](#).** Your answers are **anonymous** and will help us improve the research experience for all our research families. Our research on intervention therapies was included in the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services Interagency Autism Coordinating Committee’s [Top 20 Advances in Science](#), and several center faculty and clinical researchers presented at the 2022 Annual Meeting of the International Society for Autism Research.

**Have you visited our new [website](#)?** Our enhanced site features a **more mobile-friendly platform** where you can easily access information you need on our [research](#), [news](#), and [resources](#). As always, we thank you for your support and partnership. Wishing you a happy and safe summer!

Geraldine Dawson, Ph.D.  
Director, Duke Center for Autism and Brain Development

Have you or your family ever participated in a Duke Center for Autism research study?

### We want to hear from you!

Please take our quick, 3-min. *Satisfaction Survey*.  
Your responses will help us improve the research experience  
for all our research families.

*Available in English & Spanish!*



### RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

#### Center's Research Included in IACC's Latest Summary of Advances in Autism Research

A clinical trial comparing the effects of intervention intensity and style on outcomes for young autistic children, which was conducted by center researchers, is among the IACC's latest [Summary of Advances in Autism Research](#). Plain language summaries of the top 20 advances in autism biomedical and services research, as selected by members of the IACC, are included.

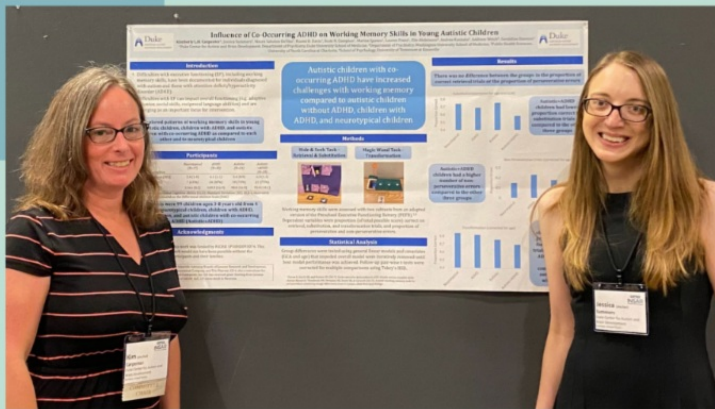


## Do Early Therapies Help Very Young Children with or at High Likelihood for Autism?

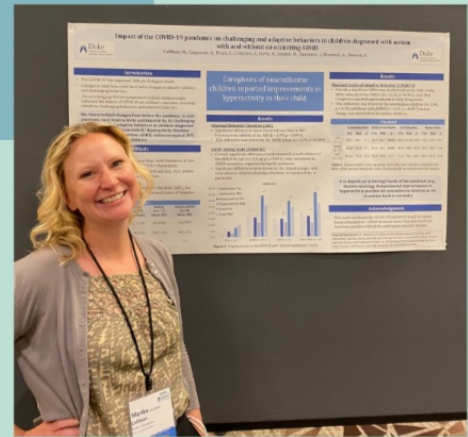


In an analysis of reviews assessing therapeutic or educational interventions for very young children with or at high likelihood for autism, researchers led by Duke Center for Autism Associate Director Lauren Franz, MBChB, MPH, found certain types of interventions can provide benefits. Read about the research, "Early intervention for very young children with or at high likelihood for ASD: An overview of reviews," in [Science Magazine](#). Watch Dr. Franz share a brief overview in a *Developmental Medicine & Child Neurology* YouTube podcast [here](#).

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Kimberly Carpenter, PhD, and Jessica Summers, MA



Marika Coffman, PhD

## Center Researchers Share Study Findings at INSAR 2022 Annual Meeting

Several center researchers presented study findings to attendees at the International Society of Autism Research (INSAR) 2022 Annual Meeting in May. INSAR, an international scientific organization, convenes the meeting each year to exchange and disseminate scientific progress among autism research scientists and their trainees from around the world. Kimberly Carpenter, PhD, and Jessica Summers, MA, presented "The Influence of Co-occurring ADHD on Working Memory Skills in Young Autistic Children." Marika Coffman, PhD, presented "The Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Challenging and Adaptive Behaviors in Children Diagnosed with Autism With and Without Co-occurring ADHD."

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# Would you like to learn more about your child's social development?

**We are inviting school-age children to join our study about social skills development.**

The Duke Center for Autism is studying social skills development in children with autism. The study is called the ABC-CT study.

We are looking for 6- to 11-year-old children with and without a diagnosis of autism to join our study.

Parents receive a detailed report about their child's skills and behavior at no cost.

To learn more or to participate, call 888-691-1062 or email [autismresearch@dm.duke.edu](mailto:autismresearch@dm.duke.edu).



## COMMUNITY & ADVOCACY


### Rep. Jessica Benham Shares Personal Story, Advice, and Encouragement to Our Autism Acceptance Month Crowd of Nearly 300

Rep. Jessica Benham (D-PA), one of only a handful of legislators who self-disclose as autistic, joined our virtual crowd of nearly 300 to share her personal story and how it influences her advocacy efforts, especially toward equitable access to high-quality healthcare and public education for autistic people. After her presentation, "Overcoming Stigma, Not Autism: Why Being Autistic Makes Me a Good Legislator," Duke University students enjoyed a small group Q & A session, where Rep. Benham shared advice on self-advocacy in a world she said is "built for neurotypical people."



### What's 1 Thing? We asked and you told us!

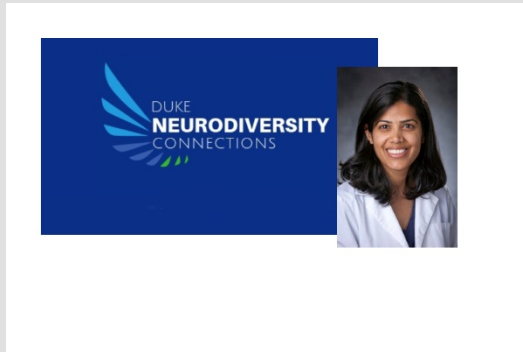
Our "What's 1 Thing?" social media posts for Autism Acceptance Month asked for our followers' input on ways to make the "world more inclusive for neurodiverse people," "make the workplace more inclusive," and ways to "help parents of neurodiverse children." We received answers from all over the world and shared them across our social media platforms. **Are you following us on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)?** It's a great way to hear about research studies, events, and news.

What's 1 thing?		"Begin the discussion at home. Accepting children become inclusive adults."	
	"See the person first. We are not all the same. Realize our individuality."		"Educate by example. Show empathy."
"Expect the best and acknowledge success."		"Be patient. Listen."	

### Team Works to Promote Neurodiversity at Duke

We were proud that our work with the Duke Office for Institutional Equity, Faculty Advancement, and Disability Management teams to support inclusion and equity efforts for neurodiverse individuals was covered in

*Inside Duke Health.* Tara Chandrasekhar, MD, a child and adolescent psychiatrist at the Duke Center for Autism and member of the team coordinating the university-wide efforts, explained, "Supporting people who identify as neurodiverse is central to meaningful diversity, equity and inclusion work."



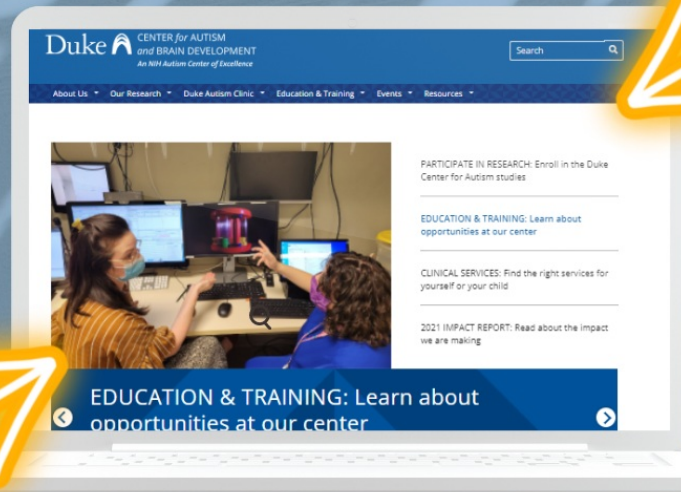
### Spectrum News Spotlights Neurodiversity in the Workplace

Our Duke Center for Autism team member Raghav Swaminathan shined in the [NC Spectrum News story](#), "Duke research shows benefits of neurodiversity in the workforce," highlighting the importance of inclusion in the workplace. Thank you, Raghav!

A banner for the "Sense to Know" study. It features a green and blue color scheme. On the left, a text box says "SENSE TO KNOW" and "It Makes Sense to Know Your Child!". On the right, another text box says "The Duke Sense to Know study is developing new, faster ways to assess child development with technology that caregivers and pediatricians can use!". Below the text are three small images of families interacting with children. At the bottom right, the website "SENSETOKNOW.HEALTH" and the code "Pro 00104066" are displayed.

## RESOURCES

Check out our new Duke Center for Autism website!



We have enhanced our Duke Center for Autism and Brain Development website!

Search [our open studies](#), learn about the [Duke Autism Research Registry](#), browse our new,

user-friendly searchable [library of autism resources](#), and more at [autismcenter.duke.edu!](#)

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**Connect with us on social media!**

