

A Vision for Our Future

2021–2024 Strategic Plan Executive Summary



The connection is you.™



A Vision for Our Future

A Vision for Our Future is the four-year strategic plan for the Autism Society of America. Given the change in organizational leadership, an unprecedented worldwide pandemic and the ambitious plan of the past, the Autism Society's Board of Directors and administration were determined to produce a plan that is realistic, achievable, and fundable, and that builds a solid foundation for the future of the Autism Society.

To develop this plan, the Autism Society sought volunteers to serve on either the Strategic Planning Committee and/or Task Force Committees. The task forces were developed based on specific areas of focus and included: **Marketing and Branding, Database and Technology, Advocacy, National Programs, Affiliate Relations, and Finance.**

The work of the task forces included: reviewing the achievements from the previous Strategic Plan (2016–2020); assessing the current need and opportunities in the Autism community; and revising the overall mission, vision, and values of the Autism Society.

A Vision for Our Future is the work of more than 150 people and more than 20 affiliates. As the work of the plan is undertaken, scores of additional people will collaborate to help the Autism Society improve the lives of all affected by Autism.

The Autism Society is extremely grateful to all of the individuals who selflessly gave themselves to help create this forward-thinking strategic plan. Their efforts will help ensure a bold and bright future for the Autism Society and our stakeholders.

Mission, Vision, and Core Values

Authenticity and consistency between the Autism Society’s mission and its vision are critical to the development of **A Vision of Our Future.**

Our Mission is:

Our purpose is to create connections, empowering everyone in the Autism community with the resources needed to live fully.

Our Vision is:

Creating a world where everyone in the Autism community is connected to the support they need, when they need it.

Our Core Values are:

Dignity

Where the value and self-determination of every individual is upheld.

Diversity

Where everyone is respected for their unique and individual differences.

Equity

Where everyone with Autism achieves the highest possible quality of life.

Integrity

Where we conduct ourselves with honor, truth, and respect in our thoughts, words and actions.

Inclusion

Where every person is integrated into society without barriers or exceptions in a collaborative environment.



Initiatives

Marketing and Branding

The Autism Society will develop, implement, and establish a brand that reflects its identity and purpose, creates loyalty among our affiliate network, and is supported through a growth-driven marketing plan. This effort will include research and discovery, brand development, a new website, and database integration.

Brand development will include new visual components (logos, brand guidelines, etc.) and new marketing material templates. The new brand will be incorporated into a new website launch, creating a long-term Content Management System (CMS) with advanced technological features for growth, expansion, and future integrations.

The work will also incorporate developing the **Autism Source™** Database, an authoritative source for all Autism-related services domestically, with potential to expand internationally. The database will offer a modernized user experience that integrates with the existing Customer Relationship Management (CRM) platform.

Database and Technology

The Autism Society will develop and implement a cost-efficient, long-term **Systems Architecture Blueprint** to effectively streamline and utilize data. The project will encompass a **Digital Structural Audit** of our current systems architecture and data capabilities. We will also identify **Network-Wide Solution Opportunities** that encompass the highest priority functionality. Finally, we will create a **Four-Year Implementation Plan**, and pursue **Network-Wide Adoption**.



Initiatives (continued)

Advocacy

The Autism Society will create the **Autism Justice Center focused on Empowerment, Advocacy, and Justice** to address important issues surrounding the safety, education, employment and well-being of individuals with Autism.

The Autism Society will assist state and local affiliates to serve as **state advocates** more effectively. The Autism Society will expand on the recently created state advocacy toolkit that will be a regular part of national support to the affiliates.

The Autism Society will advocate for resources necessary to build **Law Enforcement and First Responder Training, Safety Training and Employment programs** that can be coordinated nationally and implemented by state affiliates.

National Programs

The Autism Society will develop several national programs that are significant to the lives and well-being of individuals with Autism and can be replicated across the local affiliate network.

First Responder Training: Beginning with its Law Enforcement Training, this program is designed to connect first responders to the training and resources they need to serve the Autism community safely and effectively.

Water and Wandering Safety: Drowning prevention is a critical safety need in the Autism community. This program will improve training for aquatics professionals and connect individuals with Autism and their caregivers to the education and resources they need to live safely.

Employment: Individuals with Autism deserve access to equitable and fulfilling employment. This Initiative aims to break down barriers, transforming the employment landscape through advocacy, education & training, and community engagement.



Initiatives (continued)

Health Equity: Many people with Autism experience co-occurring medical and mental health issues and an increased need for healthcare services, but often report inaccessible healthcare experiences. In response to COVID-19, the Autism Society created the Vaccine Education Initiative (VEI) to address systemic barriers and promote vaccine education, confidence, and access. The Autism Society works holistically to address health equity outcomes including healthcare, mental health, suicide prevention, employment, and home and community-based services.

Affiliate Relations

The Autism Society's initiatives for Affiliate Relations are intended to strengthen our affiliates to allow them to best serve their communities, expand into unserved areas with meaningful and impactful services, and create new affiliates in areas that are lacking in access to programs and services.

Operate as an Affiliate Support Service

The Autism Society will more effectively provide support services over time and based on the diverse needs of the affiliates to include: **onboarding support, training programs, an affiliate portal, regular and effective communication as a support service, platform for effective resource sharing and toolkits and/or templates.**

Grow Existing Affiliates

The Autism Society will undertake an assessment and may recommend restructuring of affiliates (e.g., combining affiliates) or expansion of an affiliate's geographic area.

Add New Affiliates

The Autism Society will assess geographic gaps in coverage and **evaluate new territories** and markets using metrics such as population density, fund development capabilities, and needs assessment. **The Autism Society will develop a model for starting new affiliates that is replicable and promotes affiliate sustainability.**

The Autism Society is also evaluating new types of non-geographic affiliates that serve specific areas of need within the Autism community, such as a Military Affiliate or Corporate Affiliate.