

Overwhelming Data Shows Accessibility Matters

Growing Demand for Autism and Sensory Accommodations - Data Shows ROI, Other Benefits

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EINPresswire.com/ -- Travel and entertainment organizations are seeing the power and importance of accessibility to appeal to new audiences, enhance the guest experience, and provide support to empower staff. With 1 in 6 people having sensory needs and 1 in 44 children diagnosed with autism in the US according to the CDC, there is an overwhelming need for more accessibility options in the travel and entertainment industry.

IBCCES

**International Board of Credentialing
and Continuing Education Standards**



This year, the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards ([IBCCES](#)),

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*Myron Pincomb, Board
Chairman of IBCCES*

a training and certification organization focused on autism and cognitive differences, updated its widely referenced autism travel survey to learn more about the needs and habits of autistic individuals and their families. Results from this survey show that 78% are hesitant to travel or visit new locations because they or their child is autistic – this is down from 87% in prior survey years, but still shows a large portion of the population is not having their needs met or feel like they have options. 94% of respondents shared that they would take more vacations or visit more new places if they had access to autism-trained and certified options. In addition, research released earlier this year by Expedia Group Media Solutions shows seven out of

10 consumers would choose a destination, lodging, or transportation option that is more

inclusive to all types of travelers, even if it's more expensive. In the same survey, 92% of consumers think it's important for travel providers to meet the accessibility needs of all travelers.

Understanding this has been a need for quite some time, IBCCES offers training and certification programs specifically for travel and entertainment organizations such as theme parks, attractions, and hotels to help staff feel knowledgeable and empowered to serve these visitors better and to create a more standardized, credible, and long-term approach to efforts toward accessibility and providing accommodations for these guests.



As part of these efforts and in response to the growing demand for more support, many industry leaders are expanding their accessibility offerings by partnering with IBCCES to earn the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) designation. The CAC designation helps these locations improve the guest experience and ensure a strategic partnership and support is in place. As part of the certification process through IBCCES, periodic renewal and updated training is completed. In fact, the first theme park to become certified, Sesame Place Philadelphia, which implemented the program in 2018 and has recently completed the renewal process to continue its commitment to providing the best experience to guests.

“We are excited to announce that Sesame Place Philadelphia has completed the IBCCES Certified Autism Center™ re-certification process in 2022. We continue to learn and grow as an organization and are always looking for ways to enhance our operations to support the needs of our guests. We are committed to providing families with the opportunity to create one-of-a-kind memories together and our partnership with the IBCCES helps us be more inclusive to more families, including those with sensory needs,” says Cathy Valeriano, park president at Sesame Place in Langhorne, Pennsylvania.

Another growing need in this space is how amusement parks and attractions manage accommodations requests in general to meet the ever-increasing demand from visitors with a range of accommodations needs and disabilities who want to make memories and spend time at exciting locations but may need onsite supports to do so. In order to streamline processes onsite for guests and ease staff demands, IBCCES created a pre-arrival program, the IBCCES Accessibility Card ([IAC](#)), which first launched in 2020. The IAC is a digital platform (web and app based) to help amusement parks and attractions better serve guests who may need additional supports while discouraging abuse, alleviating staff time to service these visitors onsite, and

helping ease the sometimes awkward or long process for guests requesting accommodations.

The IAC is a free online portal where individuals who need support or assistance while visiting attractions can register, resulting in a digital card they can present at participating attractions to communicate their needs to staff. This helps protect visitor privacy and help avoid uncomfortable conversations, as well as expedite the process for staff onsite. Staff can then help those visitors with whatever supports, or options are available at that specific location. To learn more visit accessibilitycard.org. Currently, more than 80,000 individuals and families have registered to use the IAC, with more signing up every day.

The IAC is currently in use at more than 30 parks, including all US Six Flags locations, as well as Sesame Place and Knoebels Amusement Resort in Pennsylvania, Splish Splash in New York and Water World Colorado. The IAC card is for any disability or accommodation request and still allows for individual park policies and accommodations to be granted.

IBCCES is the only credentialing board offering these types of programs, which also include onsite reviews, sensory guide creation, along with ongoing support to ensure locations continue to successfully provide accommodations and positive experiences. IBCCES also ensures autistic self-advocates, along with clinical and subject matter expert are featured in training content.

“We know that fun should be for everyone, and we want to ensure our partners in this space have the tools and supports needed so they can do what they do best – provide great experiences and welcome as many guests as possible to make lasting memories. We’re proud of our partners and we will continue to innovate and provide programs such as the IAC along with our certifications as we all move toward a more accessible future,” said Myron Pincomb, IBCCES Board Chairman.

To view all current Certified Autism Center™ locations, related to travel and entertainment, visit AutismTravel.com.

AutismTravel is free online resource for families that lists certified options and connects them to other resources. Each location listed on the site has met the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) requirements and includes theme parks, family entertainment centers, zoos, aquariums, museum, hotels, and more.

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