

ABQ BioPark Becomes a Certified Autism Center™, Enhancing Accessibility for Every Visitor

Designation is the first of its kind for Albuquerque's cultural facilities

ALBUQUERQUE, NM, UNITED STATES, February 12, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- In recognition of its efforts to create inclusive and accessible experiences for all guests, the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education

Standards (IBCCES) awards [ABQ BioPark](#) the [Certified Autism Center™](#) (CAC) designation, an impressive accolade and a first for Albuquerque



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Being a Certified Autism Center™ opens the doors to families who may have hesitated to visit before, and now we can provide the tools to help everyone prepare and make the most of their visit...”

Allyson Zahm, ABQ BioPark guest experience manager

“The ABQ BioPark is a leader among Albuquerque’s cultural facilities and has gone above and beyond the requirements for this designation,” says Mayor Tim Keller. “Having a Certified Autism Center™ in Albuquerque improves the quality of life for all, especially for families with autistic individuals that deserve to experience all that our Zoo, Aquarium and Botanic Garden have to offer.”

To earn this certification, 80% or more of the park’s guest-facing staff completed autism-specific training. This training and certification process equips staff with knowledge of the best practices, skills and resources to help create a welcoming and accessible environment for

autistic and sensory-sensitive visitors and their families. IBCCES also conducted an on-site review to create sensory guides and offer additional recommendations.

“It is important that every guest at the ABQ BioPark is welcome to connect with nature in a way that is meaningful to them,” says Allyson Zahm, ABQ BioPark guest experience manager. “Being a Certified Autism Center™ opens the doors to families who may have hesitated to visit before,

and now we can provide the tools to help everyone prepare and make the most of their visit to the zoo, botanic garden and aquarium.”

In addition to the specialized training that led to the Certified Autism Center™ designation, the ABQ BioPark has enacted a number of measures to help ensure an inclusive visit for BioPark guests.

These include:

- Creating a centralized online page with accessibility information.
- Producing social narratives to help guests prepare for a visit.
- Providing on-site sensory information to help guests determine which areas to consider visiting or bypassing, depending upon their needs.
- Scheduling more events tailored to guests with sensory sensitivities.
- Establishing a sensory-friendly morning at the zoo and aquarium and botanic garden each month with limited ticket sales and reduced sounds and lights where possible.

In addition to the online tools available for guests and the training staff received, physical signs to help guests identify areas of high sensory experiences are starting to be installed. The zoo will be the first to receive these, with the aquarium and botanic garden to follow.

“We are proud to celebrate the ABQ BioPark’s achievement of becoming a Certified Autism Center™, recognizing their efforts to best include and accommodate every person that visits the zoo, aquarium or botanic gardens,” says Myron Pincomb, IBCCES board chairman. “This certification is a testament of their dedication to creating a space where every guest will feel welcome and included.”



For more than 20 years, IBCCES has been the leader in cognitive disorder training and certification for healthcare, education, and corporate professionals worldwide. IBCCES is the only credentialing organization providing this type of certification, which includes evidence-based training, as well as the perspectives of autistic individuals, alongside other tools and resources, such as onsite reviews, customized recommendations and renewal requirements to ensure the program is a long-term commitment that has a lasting impact.

IBCCES also created [AutismTravel.com](https://www.autismtravel.com), a free online resource that lists certified locations and professionals. Each organization listed on the site has met Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) requirements.

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About ABQ BioPark

The ABQ BioPark is a living environmental park that protects the natural world and connects communities with nature. It is a refuge for thousands of animals and plants cared for by zoological, marine and botanical experts who lead significant science-based conservation work in New Mexico and around the world. The BioPark consists of four distinct areas: ABQ BioPark Aquarium, ABQ BioPark Botanic Garden, ABQ BioPark Zoo, and Tingley Beach.

The ABQ BioPark is an accessible facility and a division of the Department of Arts & Culture, City of Albuquerque, Tim Keller, Mayor. We are accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums and a member of the American Public Gardens Association. In 2023, ABQ BioPark earned the American Humane Certified™ seal of approval for its excellent treatment of animals and commitment to conservation. For more information, visit www.abqbiopark.com or call 311 locally or 505-768-2000 (Relay NM or 711).

About IBCCES

Delivering the global standard for training and certification in the fields of autism, neurodiversity, and accessibility – IBCCES provides a series of certification programs that empower professionals to be leaders in their field and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. For over two decades, IBCCES has been a global leader, setting the industry standard in autism and cognitive differences training. IBCCES works in over 111 countries and provides training in 8 languages, and its programs have been recognized around the world as the leading benchmark in training and certification.

In addition to individual certification programs, IBCCES partners with cities, destinations, and organizations on initiatives like the Certified Autism Destination™ (CAD) and Autism Certified City™ (ACC), ensuring autistic and sensory-sensitive residents and visitors feel welcomed and

safe. Destinations that achieve the CAD designation have completed a specialized program that ensures a multitude of recreation, hospitality and entertainment organizations have completed an autism and sensory-sensitivity training, certification and IBCCES facilities review process. The ACC designation expands on that program and includes IBCCES training and certification for the public safety, education, healthcare and workplace sectors.

IBCCES also created the Accessibility App, AutismTravel.com, and CertifiedAutismCenter.com – free resources for individuals with a variety of neurodiversities and disabilities, listing certified locations and connecting individuals to other resources and each other.

Meredith Tekin

IBCCES

+1 904-508-0135

marketing@ibcces.org

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