

First Coast Cultural Center Maintains Autism Certification, Furthering St. Johns County's Accessibility Efforts

ST. AUGUSTINE, FL, UNITED STATES, July 10, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [First Coast Cultural Center](#) renews its [Certified Autism Center™](#) (CAC)

designation through the International Board of Credentialing and Continuing Education Standards (IBCCES). This renewal recognizes the center's continued commitment to accessibility and inclusion for autistic and sensory-

sensitive guests and their families. To maintain the designation, at least 80% of guest-facing staff complete updated autism-specific training and certification through IBCCES, ensuring they remain equipped with current best practices for supporting autistic and sensory-sensitive visitors.



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Ashleigh Cruze, development director at First Coast Cultural Center

Leaders, staff, and community members shared how the Certified Autism Center™ designation continues to support First Coast Cultural Center's mission of creating welcoming and accessible experiences for all visitors.

“We are honored to continue as a Certified Autism Center™ and to serve as a trusted, autism-safe space in our community,” says Silvia Romero, executive director at First Coast Cultural Center. “We believe art has the power to connect and uplift, and we remain committed to ensuring that every individual can access and enjoy creative expression.”

“This certification has changed the way I think about accessibility,” says Ashleigh Cruze, development director at First Coast Cultural Center. “It's not just about accommodations—it's about creating an environment where people feel comfortable from the moment they walk in.”

"This training reinforces that inclusion is part of our everyday work," says Mike Story, retired principal and special education teacher. "Small adjustments can make a big difference in helping every guest feel seen and supported."

"You can tell the difference right away," shares Jennifer Marsey, mother and patron at First Coast Cultural Center. "The staff are patient, understanding, and genuinely welcoming. It makes it so much easier for our family to relax and enjoy our time here."

The First Coast Cultural Center introduced its Spring Artisan Festival in March, a celebration of local art and handmade goods designed to be welcoming and accessible to all members of the community. Held both indoors and outdoors, the event created an inclusive environment where individuals of all abilities could comfortably explore and engage with a wide range of artistic experiences. Following its successful debut, the Spring Artisan Festival will become an annual event.

"By renewing their Certified Autism Center™ designation, First Coast Cultural Center's team demonstrates their ongoing commitment to creating welcoming and inclusive experiences for autistic and sensory-sensitive visitors and their families," says Myron Pincomb, IBCCES CEO and board chairman. "This renewal also reinforces St. Johns County's commitment to accessibility as it continues to build on its efforts toward becoming a [Certified Autism Destination™](#)."



By completing the Certified Autism Center™ (CAC) renewal process, First Coast Cultural Center

continues to support the accessibility initiative led by the St. Johns County Chamber of Commerce and its efforts to achieve the Certified Autism Destination™ (CAD) designation. The CAD designation means visitors have multiple trained and certified options available in the area, including entertainment, recreation, and lodging.

For 25 years, IBCCES has been a leader in providing autism, sensory, and neurodiversity training and certification for professionals worldwide, including those in healthcare, education, public safety, travel, and corporate sectors. As the only credentialing board offering these programs, IBCCES provides training from subject matter experts

and autistic self-advocates, along with long-term support, continuous learning, onsite reviews, and renewal requirements to ensure continued growth and lasting impact.



To further support inclusivity efforts, First Coast Cultural Center is featured on the IBCCES Accessibility App, which is free to download. This app provides individuals with a variety of disabilities real-time guidance on certified destinations, sensory-friendly spaces, and tailored recommendations. By connecting users to accessible locations worldwide, the app helps ensure seamless, enjoyable experiences for everyone.

IBCCES also provides access to resources such as [AccessibilityCertified.com](https://www.accessibilitycertified.com) and [AutismTravel.com](https://www.autismtravel.com), which are free online tools for families that list certified locations and professionals. Each organization listed on the sites has met IBCCES certification requirements.

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About First Coast Cultural Center

First Coast Cultural Center is the place in our community to create, understand, and experience the Arts. We accomplish this through exhibitions of local, regional and national artists in a variety of media; through exciting events for the community; and through quality arts classes, lectures and workshops. Learn more at [Firstcoastculturalcenter.org](https://firstcoastculturalcenter.org).

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 industry leaders and improve the outcomes for the individuals they serve. For 25 years, IBCCES has been a global leader, setting the industry standard in autism and cognitive differences training. IBCCES works in over 125 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 AccessibilityCertified.com – free resources for individuals with a variety of neurodiversities and disabilities, listing certified locations and connecting individuals to other resources and each other.

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